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INDIA:
WHAT CAN IT TEACH US?
% Course of Lectures
DELIVERED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
BY

F.

MAX MULLER, K.M.

TEXT AND FOOT-NOTES COMPLETE.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY

PROF.

ALEXANDER WILDER, M.D.

NEW YORK

FUNK & WAGNALLS,
10

Publishers,

and 12 Dey Street.

NOTE OF THE AMERICAN PUBLISHERS.

This volume contains the entire text of the English edition, also all the footnotes. Those portions of the Appendix which serve to illustrate the text are inserted

in their appropriate places as foot-notes

That part of the Appendix which is of

special interest only to the Sanscrit scholar is omitted.

Professor Max Muller writes in this book not as a theologian but as a scholar, not intending either to attack or defend Christian theology. His style is charming, because he always writes with freedom and animation. In some passages possibly his language might be misunderstood.

We have thought it best to add a few notes.

The notes of the American editor are signed " A. W.;" ours, " Am. Pubs."

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DEDICATED
TO

E.

B.

COWELL

M.A., LL.D.,

PROFESSOR OF SANSKRIT AND FELLOW OF CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

My dear Cowell As these Lectures would never have been written or delivered but for your hearty encouragement, I hope you will now allow me to dedi:

cate

them to you, not only as a token

of

my sincere

admiration of your great achievements as an Oriental scholar, but also as a

memorial of our friendship, now

more than thirty years old, a friendship which has grown from year to year, has weathered many a storm, and will last, I trust, for what to both of us may remain of our short passage from shore to shore.

I must add, however, that in dedicating these Lectures to you, I do not wish to throw upon you any responsibility for the views which I have put forward in them.

I know that you do not agree with some of my views on the ancient religion and literature of India, and I

am

well aware that with regard to the recent date which I

commonly called

have assigned to the whole of what

is

the Classical Sanskrit Literature,

stand almost alone.

I

No, if friendship can claim any voice in the courts of science and literature, let me assure you that I shall consider your outspoken criticism of my Lectures as the very best proof of your true and honest friendship.

I

have through life considered it the greatest honor if real scholars, I mean men not only of learning, but of judg-

ment and character, have considered my writings worthy of a severe and searching criticism and I have cared far more for the production of one single new fact, though

;

DEDICATION.

VI

it

spoke against me, than for any amount of empty

praise or empty abuse.

Sincere devotion to his studies

and an unswerving love of truth ought to furnish the true scholar with an armor impermeable to flattery or abuse, and with a visor that shuts out no ray of light, from whatever quarter it may come. More light, more truth, more facts, more combination of facts, these are his quest.

And if in that quest he fails, as many have failed before him, he knows that in the search for truth failures are sometimes the condition of victory, and the true conquerors often those whom the world calls the vanquished.

You know better than anybody else the present state
You know that at present and

of Sanskrit scholarship.
for some time to

come Sanskrit scholarship means dis-

Every one of your own works
advance, and a permanent occupation of
But you know also how small a strip has

covery and conquest.

marks

a real

new ground.
as yet

been explored of the vast continent of Sanskrit
how much still remains terra incognita.

literature, and

No doubt this exploring work is troublesome, and often young students must learn the truth by a distinguished member of the Indian Civil Service, whose death we all deplore, Dr. Burnell, "that no trouble is thrown away which We want men who will work saves trouble to others." disappointing, but

of a remark lately made

bard, even at the risk of seeing their labors unrequited

;

we want strong and bold men who are not afraid of
storms and shipwrecks.

The worst sailors are not those

who suffer shipwreck, but those who only dabble in puddles and are afraid of
wetting their feet.

It is easy

now to criticise the labors of Sir William

Jones, Thomas Oolebrooke, and Horace Hayman Wilson,

but what would have become of Sanskrit scholarship if

DEDICATION'.

Vll

they had not rushed in where even

now so many fear to

become of Sanskrit scholarship if
their conquests are forever to mark the limits of our
knowledge ? You know best that there is more to be
discovered in Sanskrit literature than Xalas and Aakuntalas, and surely the young
men who every year go out
tread ? and what will

to India are not deficient in the spirit of enterprise, or

even of adventure ?

Why, then, should it be said that

the race of bold explorers, who once rendered the name
of the Indian Civil Service illustrious over the whole

world, has well-nigh become extinct, and that England,
which offers the strongest incentives and the most brilliant opportunities for the
study of the ancient language,
literature,

and history of India, is no longer in the van

of Sanskrit scholarship ?

some of the young candidates for the Indian Civil
my Lectures, quietly made up
their minds that such a reproach shall be wiped out, if a
few of them at least determined to follow in the footsteps of Sir William Jones,
and to show to the world
that Englishmen who have been able to achieve by
pluck, by perseverance, and by real political genius the
If

Service who listened to

material conquest of

India, do not

mean to

leave the

laurels of its intellectual conquest entirely to other countries,

then I shall indeed rejoice, and feel that I have

paid back, in however small a degree, the large debt of

owe to my adopted country and to

some of its greatest statesmen, who have given me the opportunity which I could find nowhere else of realizing the dreams of my life the publication of the text and commentary of the Rig- Veda, the most ancient book of Sanskrit, eye of Aryan literature, and now the edition of the translations of the " Sacred Books of the East." gratitude which I

—

I

have

left

my Lectures very much as I delivered

yin

DEDICATION.

them at Cambridge.

I

am fond of the form of Lect-

because it seems to me the most natural form
which in our age didactic composition ought to take.
As in ancient Greece the dialogue reflected most truly
the intellectual life of the people, and as in the Middle
Ages learned literature naturally assumed with the recluse in his monastic cell the
form of a long monologue,
so with us the lecture places the writer most readily in
that position in which he is accustomed to deal with his
fellow-men, and to communicate his knowledge to
others.

It has no doubt certain disadvantages.

In a

lecture which is meant to be didactic, we have, for the
sake of completeness, to say and to repeat certain things
which must be familiar to some of our readers, while we
are also forced to leave out information which, even in
ures,

imperfect form, we should probably not hesitate to

its

submit to our fellow-students, but which we feel we
have not yet sufficiently mastered and matured to enable
us to place it clearly and simply before a larger public.

But the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. A
by keeping a critical audience constantly before

lecture,

our eyes, forces us to condense our subject, to discriminate between what

is

important and what

is

not, and

often to deny ourselves the pleasure of displaying what

may have cost us the greatest labor, but is of little consequence to other scholars.

what students are so apt to forget,
that their knowledge is meant not for themselves only,
but for others, and that to know well means to be able
stantly reminded of

to teach well.

I

confess I

can never write unless

I

think of somebody for whom I write, and I should never wish for a better audience to have before my mind than learned, brilliant, and kind-hearted assembly by which I was greeted in your University,

the

bEDidAfiosr.

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must confess that I did not succeed in bringing
wished to say, and more particularly the evidence

Still I

all I

on which some of my statements rested, up to the higher
and I have therefore added a number
of notes containing the less-organized matter which resisted as yet that treatment
which is necessary before our
level of a lecture ;

studies can realize their highest purpose, that of feeding,

invigorating, and inspiriting the minds of others.

Yours affectionately,

F.

Oxfoed, December, 1882.

MAX MULLER.

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INTRODUCTION.

Professor Max Muller has been so long and widely known in the world of letters as to render any formal introduction unnecessary. He has been from his early youth an assiduous student of philology, justly regarding it as an important key to history and an invaluable aux-

A glance at his personal

history to intellectual progress.

career will show the ground upon which his reputation is established.

Friedrich

Maximilian Muller, the son of Wilhelm

Muller, the Saxon poet, was born at Dessau, December 6th, 1823.

He matriculated at Leipzig in his eighteenth

year, giving his principal attention to classical philology,

and receiving his degree in 1843. He immediately began a course of Oriental studies, chiefly Sanskrit, under the supervision of Professor Brockhaus, and in 1844 engaged in his translation of the "Hitopadesa." He removed from Leipzig to Berlin, and attended the lectures of Bopp, Rucker, and Schelling. The next year he went to Paris to listen to Eugene

France.

Burnouf at the College de

He now began the collecting of material for

his great quarto edition of the

"Rig-Veda Samhita" and

the "Commentary of S&ganadrnja. "

He visited Eng-

land for this purpose to examine the manuscripts in the

Bodleian Library and at the Indian

House.

At the

recommendation of H. IL. Wilson, the Orientalist, he was commissioned by the East India Company to publish

INTRODUCTION.

XIV

liis

edition in

England

at their expense.

The first vol-

ume appeared in 1849, and five others followed during the next few years.

In 1850 he delivered a course of " Lectures on Comparative Philology" at Oxford, and the next year was

made member of Christ Church, curator, etc., and appointed Taylorian Professor of Modern European Languages and Literature.

He

received

also

numerous

other marks of distinction from universities, and was

made one of the eight foreign members of the Institute of France.

The Yolney prize was awarded him by the French Academy for his " Essay on the Comparative Philology of Indo-European Languages and its Bearing

on the Early Civilization of Mankind."

His writings have been numerous. Besides editing the translations of the " Sacred Books of the Principal Religions," he has published a " Handbook for the Study of Sanskrit," a " Sanskrit-English Dictionary and Grammar," " Lectures upon the Science of Language," " An Introduction to the Science of Religion," " Essays on Mythology," " Chips from a German Workshop," etc.

He seems to have no intermission, but penetrates where others would not have ventured, or have faltered from utter weariness.

In the field of philology he has few peers, while in early Sanskrit learning he has virtually taken the part of an innovator.

While reverently fol-

lowing after Sir William Jones, Colebrooke, Windischmann, Bopp, and others of equal distinction, besets aside the received views in regard to chronology and historical

occurrences.

The era of Vikramaditya and the Golden

Age of Sanskrit literature, bearing a date almost simultaneous with the Augustan period at the West, are post-

poned by him to a later century. It may be that he has overlooked some canon of interpretation that would have

INTRODUCTION.

XV

Those, however, who hesitate to

modified his results.

accept his conclusions freely acknowledge his scholarly

enthusiasm, persistent energy, and great erudition.

judgment constitutes an essential element of a liberal education. While heartily admiring

the employment of some of the best talent and noblest genius of our age in the study of development in the outward world, from the first growth of the earth and the beginning of organic life to the highest stages, he pleads Sanskrit in his

earnestly that there

is

an inward and intellectual world

also to be studied in its historical

development in strict

analogy with the other, leading up to the beginning of rational thought in its steady progress from the lowest to

the highest stages.

In that study of the history of the

human mind, in that study of ourselves, our true selves, India occupies a place which

is

second to no other coun-

human mind may be whether language, religion, mythology, or philosophy, whether laws, customs, primitive art or primitive science, we must go to India, liecause some of the most valuable and most instructive try.

Whatever sphere

of

the

selected for special study,

materials in the history of

man are treasured up there,

and there only. He inveighs most eloquently against the narrowing of our horizon to the history of Greeks and Romans, Saxons and Celts, with a dim background of Palestine, Egypt, and Babylon, leaving out of sight our nearest intellectual relatives, the Aryans of India, the framers of that most wonderful language the Sanskrit, the fellow-workers in the construction of our funda-

mental concepts, the fathers of the most natural of natural religions,

the makers of the most transparent of

mythologies, the inventors of the most subtle philosophy,

and the givers of the most elaborate laws.

It is the purpose of historical study to enable each generation to

INTRODUCTION.

XVI

from the experience of those who came before,
and advance toward uglier aims, without being obliged
to start anew from the same point as its ancestors after
profit

1

He who knows

the manner of every race of brutes.
little

of those who preceded

for those coming after.

is

very likely to care little

" Life would be to him a chain

of sand, while it ought to be a kind of electric chain that

makes our hearts tremble and vibrate with the most
ancient thoughts of the Past, as well as with the most
distant hopes of the Future."

In no just sense is this an exaggeration.

Deep as sci-

ence and research have explored, extensive as is the field

which genius and art have occupied, they have an Herculean labor yet to perform
before India will have yielded up

all

The literature of

her opulence of learning.

the world in

all

ages has been richly furnished, if not

The Wisdom of
much lauded in the earlier writings of

actually inspired, from that fountain.

the Ancients, so

Hebrews, Greeks, and Phoenicians, was abundantly represented in the lore of these Wise Men of the East.

The first Ionian sages lighted the torch of philosophy
The conquest of Asia Minor

at the altar of Zoroaster.

by the Persians brought Thales, Anaximenes, and Heraclitus

into

contact with

the

Iranian dogmas.

The

light thus imparted had a potent influence upon the
entire

trace

We find it easy to

miss of Grecian thought.

its

action upon opinions in later periods and among

the newer nations. Kant, Hegel, Stewart, and Hamilton,
as well as Plato, Zeno, and Aristotle, had their prototypes

in the world and antiquity beyond.

illustra was

Religion and Science of Light.

this

Even the first Zoro-

aster was an exponent and not the originator of the

We are thus carried by

the route back to the ancient Aryan

Home for the

sources from which so many golden streams have issued.

INTRODUCTION.

XVII

In the Sanskrit books and mantras we must look for the treasures

that

make human

souls

rich.

Perhaps we

have been too much disposed to regard that former world as a wonderland, a repertory of folk-lore, or a theatre

We are now

of gross and revolting superstition.

required by candor and justice to revise such notions.

These primeval peoples, in their way and in a language

akin to ours, adored the Father in heaven, and contemplated the future of the soul with a sure and certain

hope.

Nor did they, while observing the myriads of races intervening between man and the monad, regard the world

beyond as waste and void. Intelligences of every grade were believed to people the region between mortals and the Infinite.

The angels and archangels, and the spirits

of the just made perfect

devas and pitris they called

them ministered about the throne of the Supreme Being, and abode in the various spheres of universal space.

Much of the difference between our thought and theirs consists in the names and not in the substance of our

—

—

beliefs.

We may thus be prepared to receive what India can
In her

teach us.

classic dialect,

may

men who

the Sanskrit, we

read with what success the children of the

journeyed from the ancient Aryan Home into the Pun" to look inward upon
jab and Aryavartha have ventured
themselves, upward to something not themselves, and to
see whether they could not understand a little of the

true purport of that mystery which we call life

earth."

It

was perfectly natural, as well

upon

as perfectly

right, that as the beholder caught a glance of the Infinite

Beyond, the imago impressed itself upon his sensorium,
from looking at the sun, and he
would as a result perceive that Infinite in all that he

as would be the case

INTRODUCTION.

XY111

looked upon.

Thus to the Sanskrit-speaking Aryan, as
to the enlightened mind of to-day, not to see it was utter
blindness.

What we call science, law, morality, relig-

was in his view pervaded alike throughout by this
concept of Divine presence, or else it would have been
less than a dream that had not come to the awaking.
He was a follower of the light, not from the senses or the
logical understanding, but from the eternal world.

Let

Clouds

us not dwell on any darker shade of the picture.

but on the

are dark to those who are beneath them

upper side, where the sun shines, they glow with golden
splendor.

Let us be willing to contemplate India fraternally, and upon that side where the
radiance of the

Divine sheds a refulgent illumination.

ion,

;

ALEXANDER WILDER.

Newakk, N. J., May 14th, 1883.

4

*

INDIA.
LECTURE I.
WHAT CAN INDIA TEACH US

?

When I received from the Board of Historical Studies
Cambridge the

at

invitation

to

deliver

a

course of

intended for the candidates for the

lectures, specially

Indian Civil Service, I hesitated for some time, feeling

extremely doubtful whether in a few public discourses I
could say anything that would be of real use to them in
passing their

examinations.

To enable young men to

pass their examinations seems now to have

become the

chief, if not the only object of the universities ;

no class of students
their examinations,

and

and to

of greater importance to pass

is it

to pass

them well, than to the

candidates for the Indian Civil Service.

But although

I

was afraid that attendance on a few

public lectures, such as I could give, would hardly benefit

a

candidate

who was not already fully prepared to

pass through the fiery ordeal of the three

London ex-

aminations, I could not on the other hand shut

completely to the fact that, after

all,

my eyes

universities were

not meant entirely, or even chiefly, as stepping-stones to

an examination, but that there

is something else which

ought to teach nay, which I

quite sure they were originally meant to teach—

universities can teach and

feel

—

LECTURE

20

I.

something that may not have a marketable value before a Board of Examiners, but which has a permanent value for the whole of our life, and that

is

a real interest in

our work, and, more than that, a love of our work, and,

more than

that, a true joy and happiness in our work.

If a university can teach that, if it can engraft that one

small living

germ in the minds of the young men who

come here

to study and to prepare themselves for the

what is still more difficult to endrudgery of life, then, I feel convinced, a university has done more, and conferred a more lasting benefit on its pupils than by helping them to pass the most difficult examinations, and to take the highest place among Senior Wranglers or First-Class men.

Unfortunately, that kind of work which is now

battle of life, and, for

counter, the daily dull

required for passing one examination after another, that

cramming and crowding which has of late been brought to the highest pitch of perfection, has often the very opposite effect, and instead of exciting an appetite for work, it is apt to produce an indifference, process of

if

not a kind of intellectual nausea, that

may last for

life.

And nowhere is this so much to be feared as in the

After

case of candidates for the Indian Civil Service.

they have passed their first examination for admission to the Indian Civil Service, and given proof that they have received

the

benefits

of

a

liberal

acquired that general information in

education,
classics,

and

history,

which is provided at our public schools, and forms no doubt the best and surest foundation for all more special and professional studies in later life, they suddenly find themselves torn away from their old studies and their old friends, and compelled to take and

mathematics,

WHAT CAN INDIA TEACH US ?

up new subjects which to many

of

21

them seem strange,

Strange alphabets, strange

outlandish, if not repulsive.

languages, strange names, strange literatures and laws

have to be faced, " to be got up" as it is called, not from

The whole course of

choice, but from dire necessity.

study during two years is determined for them, the sub-

books prescribed, the examinations regu there

and

is no time to look either right or left, if

lated,

jects fixed, the

a candidate wishes to make sure of taking each succes-

sive fence in good style,

and without an accident.

be helped.

I am

not speaking against the system of examinations in general, if only they are intelligently conducted

may, as

an old examiner myself, I feel bound to say that the

amount of knowledge produced ready-made at these examinations is to my mind perfectly astounding.

But

while the answers are there on paper, strings of dates,

lists of royal names and battles, irregular verbs, statistical figures and whatever else you like, how seldom do we

find that the heart of the candidates is in the work which

The results produced are certainly

they have to do.

most ample and voluminous, but they rarely contain a

spark of original thought, or even a clever mistake. It is

work done from necessity, or, let us be just, from a sense

I know quite well that this cannot

;

of duty, but it is seldom, or hardly ever, a labor of love.

Now why should that be

—

?

Why should a study of

Greek or Latin of the poetry, the philosophy, the laws
and the art of Greece and Italy seem congenial to us,
why should it excite even a certain enthusiasm, and command general respect, while
a study of Sanskrit, and of
the ancient poetry, the philosophy, the laws, and the art

—

of India is looked upon, in the best case, as curious, but
is

considered by most people as useless, tedious,

absurd ?

if

not

Lecture

f.

And, strange to say, this feeling exists in England more than in any other country. In France, Germany, and Italy, even in Denmark, Sweden, and Russia, there is a vague charm connected with the name of India. One of the most beautiful poems in the German language is the Weisheit der Brahmanen the "Wisdom of the Brahmans," by Riickert, to my mind more rich in thought and more perfect in form than even Goethe's IYest-ostlicher Divan.

A scholar who studies Sanskrit in Germany is supposed to be initiated in the deep and dark mysteries of ancient wisdom, and a man who has travelled in India, even if he has only discovered Calcutta, or Bombay, or Madras, is listened to like another Marco Polo. In England a student of Sanskrit is generally considered a bore, and an old Indian civil servant, if he begins to describe the marvels of Eleplianta or the Towers of Silence, runs the risk of producing a count, out.

There are indeed a few Oriental scholars whose works who have accjuired a certain celebrity in England, because they were really men of uncommon genius, and would have ranked among the great glories are read, and

of the country, but for the misfortune that their energies

—

were devoted to Indian literature I mean Sir William Jones, "one of the most enlightened of the sons of men," as Dr. Johnson called him, and Thomas Colebrooke. But the names of others who have done good work in their day also, men such as Ballantyne, Buchanan, Carey, Crawford, Davis, Elliot, Ellis, Houghton, Leyden, Mackenzie, Marsden, Muir, Prinsep, Rennell, Tumour, Upham, Wallicli, Warren, Wilkins, Wilson, and many other's, are hardly known beyond the small circle of Oriental scholars and their works are looked for in vain in libraries which profess to represent with a ;

WHAT CAN INDIA TEACH US ?

23

certain completeness the principal branches of scholarship and science in England.

How many times, when I advised young men, candidates for the Indian Civil Service, to devote themselves

before all things to a study of Sanskrit, have I been told,

"What is the use of our studying Sanskrit ?
translations of /Sakuntala,

There are

Mahabharata, and the Hitopadesa,

and what

else is there in that literature that is

worth reading ?

Kalidasa

is

may be very pretty, and the Laws

of Manu are very curious, and the fables of the Ilitopa-

but you would not compare Sanskrit with Greek, or recommend us to waste

time in copying and editing Sanskrit texts which
either teach us nothing that we do not know already, or

;

teach us something which we do not care to know ?"

This seems to me a most unhappy misconception, and
it will
it,

be the chief object of my lectures to try to remove

or at all events to modify

it,

as much as possible.

I shall not attempt to prove that Sanskrit literature

is

I

as

good as Greek literature. Why should we always compare ? A study of Greek literature has its own purpose,
and a study of Sanskrit literature has its own purpose
but what I feel convinced of, and hope to convince you
;

of, is that

Sanskrit literature, if studied only in a right

of human interests, full of lessons which
even Greek could never teach us, a subject worthy to
occupy the leisure, and more than the leisure, of every
Indian civil servant
and certainly the best means of
spirit, is full

;

making any young man who has

to spend five-and-twenty years of his life in India, feel at home among

the Indians, as a fellow -worker among fellow-workers,
and not as an alien among aliens. There will be abun-

dance of useful and most interesting work for him to do,
if

only he cares to do it, work such as he would look for

I

LECTURE I.

24

in vain,

whether in Italy or in Greece, or even among

the pyramids of Egypt or the palaces of Babylon.

You will now understand why I have chosen as the
my lectures, "What can India teach us?" True,

title of

there are

many things which India has to learn from

but there are other things, and, in one sense, very
important things, which we too may learn from India.

us

;

If I were to look over the whole world to find out the
country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power,

—

and beauty that nature can bestow in some parts a
very paradise on earth I should point to India.

If I

were asked under what sky the human mind has most
fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply
pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found
solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have
studied Plato and I want
should point to India.

And if I were to ask myself

from what literature we, here in Europe, we who have
been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of
Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective
which is most wanted in
order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in
fact more truly human, a
life, not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal

—

—

life

— again I should point to India.

know you will be surprised to hear me say this. I

know that more particularly those who have spent many
I

Bombay, or Madras,
will be horror-struck at the idea that the humanity they

years of active life in Calcutta, or

meet with there, whether in the bazaars or in the courts of
justice, or in so-called native society,

should be able to

teach us any lessons.

Let me therefore explain at once to my friends who
may have lived in India for years, as civil servants, or

WHAT CAN INDIA TEACH US?

25

and who ought to
know a great deal more of that country than one who
has never set foot on the soil of Aryavarta, that we are
I am thinking
speaking of two very different Indias.
officers, or missionaries, or merchants,

chiefly of India

such as it was a thousand, two thou-

sand, it may be three thousand years ago

the India of to-day.

;

they think of

And again, when thinking of the

India of to-day, they remember chiefly the India of Calcutta,

Bombay, or Madras, the India of the towns.

I

look to the India of the village communities, the true

India of the Indians.

What I wish to show to you, I mean more especially
the candidates for the Indian Civil Service, is that this

India of a thousand, or two thousand, or three thousand
years ago, is the India of to-day also, if only you know

where to look for it, is full of problems the solution of
which concerns all of us, even us in this Europe of the
nineteenth century.

If you have acquired any special tastes here in England,
you will find plenty to satisfy them in India and whoever has learned to take an
interest in any of the great
problems that occupy the best thinkers and workers at
home, need certainly 'not be afraid of India proving to

;

him an intellectual exile.

If you care for geology, there

is

work

for

you from

the Himalayas to Ceylon.

If you are fond of botany, there is a flora rich enough

for many Hookers.

you are a zoologist, think of Haeckel, who is just rushing through Indian forests and dredging in Indian -seas, and to whom his stay in India is like the realization of the brightest dream of his life.

If you are interested in ethnology, why India is like a
If

now

living ethnological museum.

LECTURE

20

If

I.

you are fond of archaeology,

if

you have ever

assisted at the opening of a barrow in England, and know

the delight of finding a fibula, or a knife, or a flint in a

heap of rubbish, read only General Cunningham's "Annual Reports of the Archaeological Survey of India,"

and you will be impatient for the time when you can take your spade and bring to light the ancient villages or colleges built by the Buddhist monarchs of India.

If ever you amused yourselves with collecting coins, why the soil of India teems with coins, Persian, Carian, Thracian, Parthian, Greek, Macedonian, Scythian,

Roman,* and Mohammedan. When Warren Hastings

was Governor-General, an earthen pot was found on the bank of a river in the province of Benares, containing one hundred and seventy-two gold darics.† Warren Hastings considered himself as making the most munificent

present to his masters that he might ever have it in his power to send them, by presenting those ancient coins

The story is that they were

sent to the Court of Directors.

sent to the melting-pot.

At all events they had disappeared

when Warren Hastings returned to England.

rests

with you to prevent the revival of such vandal-

ism.

In one of the last numbers of the Asiatic Journal of

Bengal you may read of the discovery of a treasure as rich in gold almost as some of the tombs opened by Dr. Schliemann at Mykente, nay, I should add, perhaps, not quite unconnected with some of the treasures found at

* Pliny (VI. 26) tells us that in his day the annual drain of bullion

immense

amount of "five hundred and fifty millions of sesterces." See E. Thomas, "The Indian Balhara," p. 13.

Society of Bengal,"

† Cunningham, in the "Journal of the Asiatic

into India, in return for her valuable produce, reached the

1881, p. 184.

WHAT CAN INDIA TEACH US ?

My kerne
England

;

27

yet hardly any one has taken notice of

it

in

!*

The study of Mythology has assumed an entirely new chiefly owing to the light that has been thrown on it by the ancient Yedic Mythology of India. Bnt though the foundation of a true Science of Mythology has been laid, all the detail has still to be worked out, and could be worked out nowhere better than in

character,

India.

Even the study of fables owes its new life to India, from whence the various migrations of fables have been traced at various times and through various channels from Buddhism is now known to have been East to .West. f the principal source of our legends and parables. But

here, too, many problems still wait for their solution. Think, for instance, of the allusion to the fable of the donkey in the lion's skin, which occurs in Plato's Cratylus⁴ Was that borrowed from the East ? Or take the

* General Cunningham describes this treasure in the

"Journal of

the Asiatic Society of Bengal" as having been found on the northern

bank of the Oxus in 1877, and containing coins from Darius down to Antiochus the Great, and Euthydemus, King of Bactria. This would seem to indicate that it had been buried there in 208 b.c., when Bactria was invaded by Antiochus and Euthydemus defeated. The coins, figures, and ornaments, many of them, were manifestly Persian, and doubtless had been brought into that country and kept by the victorious generals of Alexander. Some of the works of art unearthed by Dr. Schliemann at Mykenne are either Persian or Assyrian in character, and are like those found on the Oxus.

Professor Forchhammer very plausibly supposes that they were spoils from the Persian camp which had been awarded to Mykenoe as her share after the overthrow of Mardonius.— A. W.

t See" Selected Essays," vol. i., p. 500, "The Migration of Fables."

" Still, as I have put on the lion's skin, I must

f Cratylus, 411 A.
not be faint-hearted."

Possibly, however, this may refer to Hercules,
and not to the fable of the donkey in the lion's or the
tiger's skin.

LECTURE

28

I.

by Aphrodite into a woman
who, when she saw a mouse, could not refrain from
fable of the weasel changed

making a spring at it.
fable

This, too, is very like a Sanskrit

how then could it have been brought into

but

;

Greece early enough to appear in one of the comedies of
Strattis, about 400 b.c. ?*

Here, too, there is still plenty

of work to do.

We may go back even farther into antiquity, and still
find strange coincidences between the legends of India and

the legends of the

W

est,

without as yet being able to say

how they travelled, whether from East to West, or from
West to East.

That at the time of Solomon there was a

channel of communication open between India and Syria

and Palestine is established beyond doubt, I believe, by
certain Sanskrit words which occur in the Bible as names

from Ophir, articles such as ivory,
and sandalwood, which, taken together,
could not have been exported from any country but
Nor is there any reason to suppose that the
India. f

commercial intercourse between India, the Persian
Gulf, the Red Sea and the Mediterranean was ever completely interrupted, even at
the time when the Book
of Kings is supposed to have been written.
of articles of export

apes, peacocks,

In the Hitopadesa, a donkey, being nearly starved, is sent by his master into a corn-field to feed. In order to shield him he puts a tiger's skin on him. All goes well till a watchman approaches, hiding himself under his gray coat, and trying to shoot the tiger. The donkey thinks it is a gray female donkey, begins to bray, and is

On a similar fable in iEsop, see Benfey, " Pantsehatantra,"

killed.

vol.

i.,

p.

* See

463

;

M. M., " Selected Essays," vol. i., p. 513.
Comic" (Didot), p. 302; Benfey, 1. c. vol.

" Fragmenta

i.,

p. 374.

f

" Lectures on the Science of Language," vol.

i.,

p. 231.

The names employed in the Hebrew text of the Bible are said

A. W.

to be Tamil.

—

—
WHAT CAN INDIA TEACH US ?

29

Now you remember the judgment of Solomon, which
has always been admired as a proof of great legal wis-

dom among the Jews.*

I must confess that,

not having

a legal mind, I never could suppress a certain shudder f

" Divide the
two, and give half to the one, and half

when reading the decision
living child in

Solomon

of

:

, ,

to the other.

Let me now tell you the same story as it is told by the
Buddhists, whose sacred Canon is full of such legends

which

In the Kanjur,

and parables.

translation of the Buddhist Triphaka,

is

the Tibetan

we likewise read

of two women who claimed each to be the mother of the

The king, after listening to their quarrels

same child.

for a long time, gave it up as hopeless to settle who was

Upon this Vi.sakha stepped forward

and said " What is the use of examining and crossexamining these women ? Let them

take the boy and
the real mother.
:

settle it
fell on

among themselves."

Thereupon both women

the child, and when the fight became violent the

child was hurt and
let him go,

began

to cry.

Then one of them

because she could not bear to hear the child

cry.

That

settled the question.

The king gave the child

to the true mother, and had the other beaten with a rod.

This seems to me, if not the more primitive, yet the

more natural form of the story

* 1 Kings 3

:

—showing a deeper knowl-

25.

\ The Bible story is dramatic

;

the other is not.

is a tribute to the dramatic power of

The "shudder"

The child

the Bible narrative.

was in no danger of being cut in twain.

In the Buddhist version the
child is injured.

Why does not Prof. Muller shudder when the child
is hurt and cries ?

The Solomonic child is not hurt and does not
cry.

Is not the Bible story the more humane, the more dignified, the
more dramatic ?

And no canon of criticism requires us to believe
that a poor version of a story is the more primitive.

Am. Pubs,

LECTURE

yo

I.

edge of human nature and more wisdom than even the wisdom of Solomon.*

Many of you may have studied not only languages, but

Language, and is there any country
some of the most important problems of that
science, say only the growth and decay of dialects, or the
also the Science of

in which

possible mixture of languages, with regard not only to

words, but to grammatical elements also, can be studied
to greater advantage than among the Aryan, the Dravidian, and the

Mimda inhabitants of India, when brought in

contact with their various invaders and conquerors, the

Greeks,

the

Yue-tchi,

the Arabs,

the

Persians,

the

Moguls, and lastly the English ?

Again, if you are a student of Jurisprudence, there is
a history of law to be explored in India, very different

from what is known of the history of law in Greece, in
Rome, and in Germany, yet both by its contrasts and by
its

similarities

full

of

suggestions to the student

Comparative Jurisprudence.
discovered

every

of

New materials are being

year, as, for

instance,

the so-called

Dliarma or SamayaMrika Sutras, which have supplied the materials for the later metrical law-books, such as What was once called the famous Laws of Manu.

"The Code of Laws of Manu/" and confidently referred to 1200, or at least 500 n.c., is now hesitatingly referred to perhaps the fourth

century a.d., and called neither a

Code, nor a Code of Laws, least of all, the Code of Laws of Manu.

If you have learned to appreciate the value of recent

* See some excellent remarks on this subject in Khys Davids, "Buddhist Birth-Stories," vol. i., pp. xiii. and xlv. The learned scholar gives another version of the story from a Singhalese translation of the Oataka, dating from the fourteenth century, and he expresses a hope that Dr. Fausboll will soon publish the Pali original.

—
WHAT CAN INDIA TEACH US ?
researches into the antecedents of

all

31

law, namely the

foundation and growth of the simplest political com-

—and nowhere could you have had better opportunities for
than here
opportunities for

munities

at

it

a field of observation opened before
existing

village

estates in

you in the still-ex-

India that will amply repay

careful research.

And take that which, after all, whether we confess or
deny it, we care for more in this life than for anything
else

may, which is often far more cared for by those
who deny than by those who confess take that which
supports, pervades, and directs all our acts and thoughts
and hopes without which there can be neither villagecommunity nor empire, neither
custom nor law, neither

—

—

—

right nor

wrong

—take that which, next to language,

has most firmly fixed the specific and permanent barrier

—

between man and beast which alone has made life posand bearable, and which, as it is the deepest, though often-hidden spring of individual life, is also the sible

foundation of all national life

– the history of

–

all histories,

and yet the mystery of all mysteries take religion, and where can you study its true origin,* its natural growth, and its inevitable decay better than in India, the home of Brahmanism, the birthplace of Buddhism, and the refuge of Zoroastrianism, even now the mother of new and why not, in the future, the regenersuperstitions ate child of the purest faith, if only purified from the

–

dust of nineteen centuries ?

You will find yourselves everywhere in India between an immense past and an immense future, with opportunities such as the old world

could but seldom,

if

ever,

* This is true of what theologians call natural religion, which

is

be a growth out of human consciousness > but the Christian religion is not a natural religion. Am. Hubs.

assumed

to

LECTURE

32

offer you.

day

—

I.

Take any of the burning questions of the
popular education, higher education, parliamentary
representation, codification of laws, finance, emigration,
poor-law

;

to try, or

and whether you have anything to teach and
anything to observe and to learn, India will

supply you with a laboratory such as exists nowhere else.

That very Sanskrit, the study of which may at first
seem so tedious to you and so useless, if only you will
carry it on, as you may carry it on here at Cambridge
better than anywhere else, will open before you large
layers of literature, as yet almost unknown and unexplored, and allow you an
insight into strata of thought
deeper than any you have known before, and rich in
lessons that appeal to the deepest sympathies

of

the

human heart.

Depend upon it, if only you can make leisure, you will
find plenty of work in India for your leisure hours.

India is not, as you

may imagine, a distant,

or, at the very utmost, a curious country.

strange,

India for the

future belongs to Europe, it has its place in the Indo-

European world, it has its place in our own history, and
in what is the very life of history, the history of the

human mind.
You know how some

of

the

best

talent

and the

noblest genius of our age has been devoted to the study
of the development of the outward or material world,

the growth of the earth, the

first

appearance of living

and differentiation, leading up to
the beginning of organic life, and its steady progress
from the lowest to the highest stages. Is there not an
cells, their combination

inward and intellectual world also which has to be studied in its historical
development, from the first appearance of predicative and demonstrative roots,
their combination and differentiation, leading up to the beginning

WHAT CAN INDIA TEACH US ?

33

of rational thought in its steady progress from the lowest to the highest stages ?

And in that study of the history

of the human mind, in that study of ourselves, of our true selves, India occupies a place second

to

no other

country.

Whatever sphere of the human mind you may

select for

your special study, whether it be language, or

religion, or mythology, or philosophy, whether it be laws

or customs,

primitive art or primitive science, every-

where, you have to go to India, whether you like it or not, because

some of the most valuable and most

in-

structive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India,

and in India only.

And while thus trying to explain to those whose lot will soon be cast in India the true position which that wonderful country holds or ought to hold in universal history, I may perhaps be able at the same time to appeal to the sympathies of other members of this University, by showing them how imperfect our knowledge of universal history, our insight into the development of the human intellect, must always remain, if we narrow

our horizon to the history of Greeks and Romans, Saxons and Celts, with a dim background

of

Palestine,

Egypt, and Babylon,* and leave out of sight our nearest intellectual relatives, the Aryans of India, the framers of

the most wonderful language, the Sanskrit, the fellowworkers in the construction of our fundamental concepts,
the fathers of the most natural of natural religions, the

makers of the most transparent of mythologies, the inventors of the most subtle philosophy, and the givers of
the most elaborate laws.
There are

Aryan occupation at Babylon, Rawlinson

This would suggest a possible
interchange of religious ideas between the earlier Aryan and AkkadoChaldean peoples. A. W.

*

traces of

assures us, about twenty centuries b.c.

—

LECTURE

34

I.

There are many things which we think essential in a whole chapters of history which we teach in our schools and universities, that cannot for one moment compare with the chapter relating to India, if only properly understood and freely interpreted. In our time, when the study of history threatens to become almost an impossibility such is the mass of details which historians collect in archives and pour out before us in monographs it seems to me more than ever the duty of the true historian to find out the real proper liberal education,

—

—

tion of things, to arrange his materials according to the strictest rules of artistic perspective,

and to keep com-

pletely out of sight all that may be rightly ignored by us in our own passage across the historical stage of the world.

power of discovering what is really important the true historian from the mere chronicler, in whose eyes everything is important, particularly if he has discovered it himself. Frederick the Great who, when sighing for a true hisIt is this

that

distinguishes

torian of his reign, complained bitterly that those

who

wrote the history of Prussia never forgot to describe the And it is probably of such his buttons on his uniform. torical works that Carlyle was thinking when he said that

he had waded through them all, but that nothing should ever induce him to hand even their names and titles down to posterity. And yet how much is there even in Carlyle's histories that might safely be consigned to oblivion

!

Why do we want to know history

?

Why does history

form a recognized part of our liberal education ? Simply because all of us, and every one of us, ought to know how we have come to be what we are, so that each generation need not start again from the same point and toil over the same ground, but, profiting by the experi-

WHAT CAN INDIA TEACH US ?

ence of those

35

who came before, may advance toward

As a child when growwho had
built the house they lived in, or who had cleared the
held that yielded them their food, we ask the historian
whence we came, and how we came into possession of
higher points and nobler aims.
ing

up might ask

his father or grandfather

what we call our own. History may tell us afterward
many useful and amusing things, gossip, such as a child
might like to hear from his mother or grandmother but
what history has to teach us before all and everything, is
;

our

own antecedents, our own ancestors, our own de-
scent.

How our principal intellectual ancestors are, no doubt,
the Jews , the Greeks , the Romans , and the Saxons and
,

we, here in Europe, should not

call a

man educated or

enlightened who was ignorant of the debt which he owes
to his intellectual ancestors in Palestine, Greece, Pome,

and Germany. The whole past history of the world
would be darkness to him, and not knowing what those
who came before him had done for him, he would probably care little to do anything
for those who are to come
after him.

Life would be to him a chain of sand, while
it ought to be a kind of electric chain that makes our
hearts tremble and vibrate with the most ancient thoughts
of the past, as well as with the most distant hopes of the
future.

Let us begin with our religion. No one can undereven the historical possibility of
the Christian

stand

religion without knowing something of the Jewish race,
which must be studied
Testament.

chiefly in the pages of the Old

And in order to appreciate the true relation of the Jews to the rest of the ancient world, and to understand what ideas were peculiarly their own, and what ideas they shared in common with the other mem-

LECTURE I.

36

bers of the Semitic stock, or what moral and religious

impulses they received from their historical contact with
other nations of antiquity, it is absolutely necessary that

we should pay some attention to the history of Babylon,
Nineveh, Phoenicia, and Persia. These may seem distant countries and forgotten
people, and many might feel
inclined to say,
are those

" Let the dead bury their dead

mummies to his ?"

Still,

;

what

such is the marvel-

lous continuity of history, that I could easily show you

many things which we, even we who are here assembled,
owe to Babylon, to Nineveh, to Egypt, .Phoenicia, and
Persia.

Every one who carries a watch owes to the Babylonians the division of the hour into
sixty minutes.

It

may be a very bad division, yet so close as it is, it has come
and it came to them

The sexagesimal division is peculiarly

to us from the Greeks and Romans,

from Babylon.

Babylonian.

Hipparchos,

150

b.c.,

adopted

it

from

Babylon, Ptolemy, 150 a.d., gave it wider currency', and
when they decimated everything
else,
respected the dial-plates of our watches, and left
them
the
French,
with their sixty Babylonian minutes.

Every one who writes a letter owes his alphabet to the
Romans and Greeks the Greeks owed their alphabet to
;

the Phoenicians, and the Phoenicians learned it in Egypt.
It

may be a very imperfect alphabet – as all the students
of phonetics will

been, we

tell

you

–

yet, such

as

it is

and has

owe it to the old Phoenicians and Egyptians,

and in every

letter

we trace, there lies imbedded the

mummy of an ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic.

What do we owe to the Persians ?

It does not seem

to be much, for they were not a very inventive race, and

what they knew they had

neighbors, the

chiefly learned

Babylonians and Assyrians.

from their

Still,

we

—
WHAT CAN INDIA TEACH US ?
owe them something.

37

we owe them a large

First of all,

debt of gratitude for having allowed themselves to be
for think what the world would
beaten by the Greeks
;

have been if the Persians had beaten the Greeks at
Marathon, and had enslaved that means, annihilated
However, this may be
the genius of ancient Greece.

—
called rather an involuntary contribution to the progress
of humanity, and I mention it only in order to show how
narrowly, not only Greeks and Romans, but Saxons and
Anglo-Saxons too, escaped becoming Parsis or Fire-worshippers.

But I can mention at least one voluntary gift which
came to us from Persia, and that is the relation of silver
That relation was,
no doubt, first determined in Babylonia, but it assumed
its practical and historical importance in the Persian empire, and spread from
there to the Greek colonies in
Asia, and thence to Europe, where it has maintained
to gold in our bi-metallic currency.

itself with slight variation to the present day.

A talent * was divided into sixty mince a mina into
,

Here we have again the Babylonian sexagesimal system, a system which owes its
origin and popularity to sixty shekels.

r

ularity, I believe, to the fact that sixty has the greatest
number of divisors.

Shekel was translated into Greek
by Stater, and an Athenian gold stater, like the Persian
gold stater, down to the times of Croesus, Darius, and
Alexander, was the sixtieth part of a mina of gold, not
very far therefore from our sovereign.
The proportion

of silver to gold was fixed as thirteen or thirteen and a third to one
and if the weight of a silver shekel was
made as thirteen to ten, such a coin would correspond
;

* See Cunningham,
1881

,

pp. 162 - 168

.

"Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal,"

LECTURE

I.

very nearly to our florin.* Half a silver shekel was a drachma, and this was therefore the true ancestor of our shilling.

Again you may say that any attempt at fixing the relation of gold is, and always has been, a great mistake.

Still it shows how closely the world is held together, and how, for good or for evil, we are what we are, not so much by ourselves as by the toil and true value of silver

moil of those who came before us, our true intellectual ancestors, whatever the blood

may have been composed

of that ran through their veins,

or the bones which

formed- the rafters of their skulls.

And if it is true, with regard to religion, that no one could understand it and appreciate its full purport without knowing

its

and growth, that

origin

is,

without

knowing something of what the cuneiform inscriptions of Mesopotamia, the hieroglyphic and hieratic texts of Egypt, and the historical monuments of Phoenicia and Persia can alone reveal to us, it is equally true with regard to all the other elements that constitute the whole of our intellectual life.

If

we are Jewish or Semitic in

our religion, we are Greek in our philosophy, Roman in our politics, and Saxon in our morality

;

and it follows

that a knowledge of the history of the Greeks, Romans,
and Saxons, or of the flow of civilization from Greece to
Italy,

and through Germany to these

isles,

forms an

essential element in what is called a liberal, that is, an
historical and rational education.

us

But then it might be said, Let this be enough. Let
know by all means all that deserves to be known

about our real spiritual ancestors in the great historical

kingdoms of the world

;

let

us be grateful for

all

we

* Stm, the Persian word for silver, has also the meaning of one
thirteenth ; see Cunningham, 1. c. p. 165.

WHAT CAN" INDIA TEACH US ?

39

have inherited from Egyptians, Babylonians, Phoenicians,
But why bring in
Jews, Greeks, Romans, and Saxons.

India ? Why add a new burden to what every man has
to bear already, before he can call himself fairly eduWhat have we inherited from
the dark dwellers
cated ?

on the Indus and the Ganges, that we should have to
add their royal names and dates and deeds to the archives
of our already overburdened memory ?

There is some justice in this complaint.

The ancient

inhabitants of India are not our intellectual ancestors in

the same direct way as Jews, Greeks, Romans, and Sax-

ons are ; but they represent, nevertheless, a collateral

branch of that family to which we belong by language,
that is, by thought, and their historical records extend in

some respects so far beyond all other records and have
been preserved to us in such perfect and such legible
documents, that we can learn from them lessons which
we can learn nowhere else, and supply missing links in
our intellectual ancestry far more important than that
missing link (which we can well afford to miss), the link
between Ape and Man.

I
is,

am not speaking as yet of the literature of India as it

but of something far more ancient, the language of

India, or Sanskrit.

Sanskrit was the

Anglo-Saxon.

No one supposes any longer that

common source of Greek, Latin, and

This used to be said, but it has long been

shown that Sanskrit is only a collateral branch of the
same stem from which spring Greek, Latin, and AngloSaxon and not only these, but
all the Teutonic, all the

;

Celtic, all the Slavonic languages, nay, the languages of Persia and Armenia also.

What, then, is it that gives to Sanskrit its claim on our attention, and its supreme importance in the eyes of the historian ?

LECTURE

40

First of

all, its

antiquity

I.

– for we know Sanskrit at an
But what is far more impor-

earlier period than Greek.

tant than its merely chronological antiquity is the antique

which that Aryan language has
been handed down to us. The world had known Latin
and Greek for centuries, and it was felt, no doubt, that
state of preservation in

there was some kind of similarity between the two.

how was that similarity to be explained ?

But

Sometimes

Latin was supposed to give the key to the formation of a

Greek word, sometimes Greek seemed
secret of the origin of a Latin word.

the ancient

Teutonic languages,

to betray the

Afterward, when

such as Gothic and

Anglo-Saxon, and the ancient Celtic and Slavonic languages too, came to be studied,
no one could help seeing
a certain family likeness among them all.

But how such

a likeness between these languages came to be, and how,

what is far more difficult to explain, such striking differences too between these
languages came to be, remained
a mystery, and gave rise to the most gratuitous theories,
most of them, as you know, devoid of all scientific foun-

As soon, however, as Sanskrit stepped into the midst of these languages, there came light and warmth. They all ceased to be strangers, and each fell of its own accord into its right place. dation.

Sanskrit was the eldest sister of
of many things which the other

had quite forgotten.

Still,

each their own tale to tell
together that a chapter in

them all, and could tell
members of the family

the other languages too had

and it is out of all their tales
the human mind has been put

;

together which, in some respects, is more important to
us than any of the other chapters, the Jewish, the

Greek, the Latin, or the Saxon.

The process by which that ancient chapter of history
was recovered

is

very simple.

Take the words which

WHAT CAN THEY TEACH US ?

41

occur in the same form and with the same meaning in all the seven branches of the Aryan family, and you have in them the most genuine and trustworthy records in which to read the thoughts of our true ancestors, before they

had become Hindus, or Persians, or Greeks, or Romans, or Celts, or Teutons, or Slaves.

Of course, some of these

may have been lost in one or other of

ancient charters

these seven branches of the

Aryan

but even

family,

then, if they are found in six, or five, or four, or three,

or even two only of its original branches, the probability

we can prove a later historical contact between these languages, that these words existed before

remains, unless

the great Aryan Separation.

If we find agni,

meaning

we

may safely conclude that fire was known to the undivided Aryans, even if no trace of the same name of fire occurred anywhere else.

And why ? Because there is no fire,

in Sanskrit,

and

meaning fire, in

ignis,

Latin,

indication that Latin remained longer united with San-

any of the other Aryan languages, or that

skrit than

Latin could have borrowed such a word from Sanskrit,
after these two languages had once become distinct.

We

have, however, the Lithuanian ugñs, and the Scottish
ingle, to show that the Slavonic

tonic

languages

also,

knew

and possibly the Teuword for fire,

the same

W

though they replaced it in time by other words.

ords,

like all other things, will die, and why they should live
on in one soil and wither away and perish in another, is
not always easy to say.

instance, in

all

the

What has become of ignis, for

Romance languages ?

It has with-

ered away and perished, probably because, after losing
final unaccentuated syllable, it became awkward to
pronounce and another word, focus, which in Latin
meant fireplace, hearth, altar, has taken its place.
its

;

Suppose we wanted

to

know whether the

ancient

LECTURE

42

I.

Aryans before their separation knew the mouse
we

should only have to consult the principal Aryan dictionaries, and we should find in
Sanskrit *mush*, in Greek

mys, in Latin *mus*, in Old Slavonic *myš*, in Old High

German *mus*, enabling us to say that, at a time so distant from us that we feel
inclined to measure it by Indian rather than by our own chronology, the mouse was
known, that is, was named, was conceived and recognized as a species of its own,
not to be confounded with
any other vermin.

And if we were to ask whether the enemy of the
mouse, the cat, was known at the same distant time, we
should feel justified in saying decidedly, Ho.

The cat

is called in Sanskrit *maryara* and *virāla*.

In Greek and

Latin the words usually given as names of the cat, *yaXerj*

and *αἰσώπος*, *mustella* and *feles*, did not originally signify
the tame cat, but the weasel or marten.

for the real cat in Greek was *sarTa*, in Latin *catus* and
these words have supplied the names for cat in all the

The animal

Teutonic, Slavonic, and Celtic languages.

itself, so far as we know at present, came to Europe
from Egypt, where it had been worshipped for centuries
and tamed and as this arrival probably dates from the

:

;

and, we can well understand that no
common name for it could have existed when the Aryan

fourth century

nations separated.*

*

The common domestic cat is first mentioned by .Csesarius, the

physician, brother of Gregory of Nazianus, about the middle of the

It came from Egypt, where it was regarded as sacred.

Herodotus denominates it *αἰσώπος*, which was also the designation of
the weasel and marten. Kallimachus employs the same title, which

fourth century.

his commentator explains as narrow.

In later times this name of un-

certain etymology has superseded every other.

The earlier Sanskrit

had no knowledge of the animal but the
maryara is named by Manu, and the vidala by Panini. A. W,

writers appear to have

;

,

,

WHAT CAN INDIA TEACH US ?

In this way a more or

less

43

complete picture of the

state of civilization, previous to the Aryan Separation,

can be and has been reconstructed, like a mosaic put together with the fragments of ancient stones

;

and

I

doubt whether, in tracing the history of the human mind, we shall ever reach to a lower stratum than that which is revealed to us by the converging rays of the different Aryan languages.

Nor is that all
as

it

;

for even that Proto- Aryan language,

has been reconstructed from the ruins scattered

about in India, Greece, Italy, and Germany, is clearly the result of a long,

long process of thought.

One

shrinks from chronological limitations when looking into

such distant periods of

life.

But if we find Sanskrit as
from Greek

a perfect literary language, totally different

and Latin, 1500 u.c., Where can those streams of Sanskrit, and Latin meet, as we

trace them back to

skrit,

their

common source ?

And then, when we have fol-

lowed these mighty national streams back to their common meeting-point, even then that common language

looks like a rock washed down and smoothed for ages by the ebb and flow of thought.

We find in that language

such a compound, for instance, as asmi, I am, Greek

What would other languages give for such a pure concept as I mi f

They may say, / stand, or I live or

I grow, or [turn but it is given to few languages only to be able to say I a/m.

To us nothing seems more natEOfu.

/ am j but, in reality, no

work of art has required greater efforts than this little word I am. And all those efforts lie beneath the level of the common Proto-Aryan speech.

Many different

ways were open, were tried, too, in order to arrive at such a compound as asmi, and such a concept as f am.

But all were given up, and this one alone remained, and ural than the auxiliary verb

,

LECTURE

44

was preserved forever in

I.

the languages and

all

dialects of the Aryan family.

all the

In as-ini, as is the root,

and in the compound as-mi the predicative root as, to be, is predicated of mi, I.

But no language could ever

produce at once so empty, or, if you like, so general a root as as, to be.

As meant originally to breathe, and

from it we have asu breath, spirit, life, also as the mouth, Latin os, oris. By constant wear and tear this root as, to breathe, had first to lose all signs of its original material character, before it could convey that purely abstract meaning of existence, without any qualification, which has rendered to the higher operations of thought the same service which the nought, likewise the inven,

Who

tion of Indian genius, has to render in arithmetic. will say how long the friction lasted which

to breathe,

into as,

to

changed as,

And even a root as, to

be ?

breathe, was an Aryan root, not Semitic, not Turanian. It possessed an historical individuality

— was the work
it

of our forefathers, and represents a thread which unites

our thoughts and words with those

us in

who

first

thought for us, with those who first spoke for us, and
whose thoughts and words men are still thinking and
speaking, though divided from

them by thousands, it

may be by hundreds of thousands of years.

This

is

what

I

call

history in the true sense of the

word, something really worth knowing, far more so than
the scandals of courts, or the butcheries of nations, which
fill

so many pages of our

this work is

Manuals of History.

And all

only beginning, and whoever likes to labor

in these the most ancient of historical archives will find

plenty of discoveries to make
is the

—and yet people ask, What

use of learning Sanskrit ?

We get accustomed to everything, and cease to wonder at what would have startled
our fathers and upset all

WHAT CAN INIMA TEACH US?

45

their stratilied notions, like a sudden earthquake.

child now learns at school that English

is

Every

an Aryan or

Indo-European language, that it belongs to the Teutonic branch, and that this branch, together with the Italic,

Greek, Celtic, Slavonic, Iranic, and Indie branches, all spring from the same stock, and form together the great

Aryan or Indo-European family of speech.

But this, though it is taught now in our elementary schools, was really, but fifty years ago, like the opening of a new horizon of the world of the intellect, and the

extension of a feeling of closest fraternity that made us

home where before we had been strangers, and changed millions of so-called barbarians into our own To speak the same language constitutes a kith and kin.

closer union than to have drunk the same milk and

Sanskrit, the ancient language of India, is substantially the same language as Greek, Latin, and Anglo-Saxon.

This is a lesson which we should never have learned but from a study of Indian language and literature, and if India had taught us nothing else, it would have taught us more than almost any other language ever did.

It is quite amusing, thoxigh instructive also, to read what was written by scholars and philosophers when this new light first dawned on the world. They would not have it, they would not believe that there could be any community of origin between the people of Athens and Rome, and the so-called Niggers of India. The classical scholar scouted the idea, and I myself still remember

the time, when I was a student at Leipzig, and began to study Sanskrit, with what contempt any remarks on

Sanskrit or comparative grammar were treated by my teachers, men such as Gottfried Hermann, Raupt, Westermann, Stallbaum, and others.

No one ever was for a time so completely laughed down as Professor Bopp, feel at

;

LECTURE

46

I,

when lie first published his Comparative Grammar of Sanskrit, Zend, Greek, Latin, and Gothic.

All hands

were against him and if in comparing Greek and Latin with Sanskrit, Gothic, Celtic, Slavonic, or Persian, he happened to have placed one single accent wrong, the shouts of those who knew nothing but Greek and Latin, and probably looked in their Greek dictionaries to be Dugald

quite sure of their accents, would never end.

Stewart, rather than admit a relationship between Hindus and Scots, would rather believe that the whole Sanskrit language and the whole of Sanskrit literature mind, a literature extending over three thousand years and larger than the ancient literature of either Greece or Rome was a forgery of those wily priests, the Brahmans. I remember too how, when I was at school at Leipzig (and a very good school it was, with such masters as Nobbe, Forbiger, Funkhaenel, and Palm an old school too, which could boast of Leibnitz among its former pupils) I remember, I say, one of our masters (Dr. Klee) telling us one afternoon, when it was too hot to do any serious work, that there was a language spoken in India, which

:

—

—

was much the same as Greek and Latin, nay, as German and Russian. At first we thought it was a joke, but when one saw the parallel columns of numerals, pronouns, and verbs in Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin written on the blackboard, one felt in the presence of facts, beAll one's ideas of Adam fore which one had to bow. and Eve, and the Paradise, and the tower of Babel, and Shem, Ham, and Japhet, with Homer and HCneas and Yirgil too, seemed to be whirling round and round, till at last one picked up the fragments and tried to build up a new world, and to live with a new historical consciousness.

Here you will see why I consider a certain knowledge

WHAT CAN INDIA TEACH US?

47

of India an essential portion of a liberal or an historical education.

The concept of the European man has been

changed and widely extended by our acquaintance with India, and we know now that we are something different from what we thought we W'ere. Suppose the Ameri-

owing to some cataclysmal events, had forgotten and after two or three thousand years found themselves in possession of a language and of ideas which they could trace back historically to a cercans,

their English origin,

tain date, but which, at that date,

seemed, as it were,

from the sky, without any explanation of their what would they say if suddenly the existence of an English language and literature were revealed to them, such as they existed in the eighteenth century explaining all that seemed before almost miraculous, and solving almost every question that could be asked ? Well, this is much the same as what the discovery of Sanskrit has done for us.

It has added a new period to our historical consciousness, and revived the recollections of our childhood, which seemed to have fallen

origin and previous growth,

—

vanished forever.

Whatever else we may have been, it is quite clear now' that,

many thousands of years ago, we were something

that 'had not yet developed into an Englishman, or a

Saxon, or a Greek, or a itself

the germs of

ing, you

may say.

all

Hindu either, yet contained in
these characters.

Yes, but for

being, and an ancestor too of
all

A strange be-

that a very real

whom we must learn to be

proud, far more than of any such modern ancestors, as
Normans, Saxons, Celts, and all the rest.

And this is not all yet that a study of Sanskrit and the
other Aryan languages has done for us.

widened our

view's of

It has not only

man, and taught us to embrace

millions of strangers and barbarians as members of one

LECTURE

48

I.

family, but it has imparted to the whole ancient history of man a reality which it never possessed before.

We speak and write a great deal about antiquities, and we can lay hold of a Greek statue or an Egyptian Sphinx or a Babylonian Bull, our heart rejoices, and we build museums grander than any royal palaces to receive the treasures of the past.

This is quite right.

But are

you aware that every one of us possesses what may be called the richest and most wonderful Museum of Antiquities, older than any statues, sphinxes, or bulls ?

And where ? Why, in our own language. When I use such words as father or mother heart or tear, one two, three here and there, I am handling coins or counters that were current before there was one single Greek statue, one single Babylonian Bull, one single Egyptian Sphinx, each of us carries about with him the

Sphinx.

and
richest and most wonderful Museum of Antiquities
if he only knows how to treat those treasures, how to rub and polish them till they become translucent again, how to arrange them and read them, they will tell him marvels more marvellous than all hieroglyphics and
The stories they
cuneiform inscriptions put together.

have told us are beginning to be old stories now. Many

But do not let them

of you have heard them before.

like

many

things

which cease to

cease to be marvels,

so

And do not

be marvels because they happen every day.

There

think that there is nothing left for you to do.

if

,

,

,

;

are more marvels still to be discovered in language than have ever been revealed to us nay, there is no word,

however common, if only you know how to take it to
pieces, like a cunningly contrived work of art, fitted together thousands of years
ago by the most cunning of
artists, the human mind, that will not make you listen and
marvel more than any chapter of the Arabian Nights.
;

WHAT CAN INDIA TEACH US ?

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But I must not allow myself to be carried away from
All I wish to impress on you by way

my proper subject.

of introduction is that the results of the Science of Lan-

guage, which, without the aid of Sanskrit, would never
have been obtained, form an essential element of what

—

we call a liberal, that is an historical education an education which will enable a
man to do what the French
call

s'orienter, that

is,

“ to

find his East,”

“ his true

East,” and thus to determine his real place in the world ;
to know, in fact, the port whence man started, the course

he has followed, and the port toward which he has to
steer.

We all come from the East —all that we value most
T

has come to us from the East, and in going to the East,

not only those

who have received

a special Oriental

training, but everybody who has enjoyed the advantages

of a liberal, that is, of a truly historical education, ought
to feel that he is going to his “ old home,” full of memories, if only he can read
them.

Instead of feeling your

hearts sink within you, when next year you approach the

shores of India, I wish that every one of you could feel

what

Sir

William Jones

years ago, he

felt, when, just one hundred
came to the end of his long voyage from

England, and saw the shores of India rising on the hori-

At that time, young men going to the wonderland
India were not ashamed of dreaming dreams and
seeing visions
and this was the dream dreamed and the
zon.

of

;

seen by

vision

Jones

Sir

William

Jones,

then simple Mr.

:

" When

I was at sea last August (that is in August,
on

my
last voyage to this country (India) I Lid
1783),

long and ardently desired to visit, I found one evening,
on inspecting the observations of the day, that India lay

before us, Persia on our left, while a breeze from Ara-

LECTURE

50

bin blew nearly on our stern.
itself and to

I.

A situation so pleasing in

me so new, could not fail to awaken a train

of reflections in a mind which had early been accustomed to contemplate with
delight the eventful histories

and agreeable

fictions

of this Eastern world.

It

gave

me inexpressible pleasure to find myself in the midst of
so noble an amphitheatre, almost encircled

by the vast

regions of Asia, which has ever been esteemed the nurse
of sciences, the inventress of delightful and useful arts,

the scene of glorious actions, fertile in the productions of

human genius, and infinitely diversified in the forms of
religion and government, in the laws, manners, customs,

and languages, as well as in the features and complexions
of men.

I could not help remarking how important and
extensive a field was yet unexplored, and how many
solid advantages unimproved."

India wants more such dreamers as that young Mr.
Jones, standing alone on the deck of his vessel and
watching the sun diving into the sea with the memories
of England behind and the hopes of India before him,
feeling the presence of Persia and its ancient monarchs,
and breathing the breezes of Arabia and its glowing
Such dreamers know how to make their dreams
poetry.

come true, and how to change their visions into re-

—

alities.

And as it was a hundred years ago, so it is now or at

There are many bright dreams
least, so it may be now.
;

to be dreamed about India,

and many bright deeds to be

done in India, if only you will do them. Though many
great and glorious conquests have been made in the history and literature of the
East, since the days when Sir

William Jones * landed at Calcutta, depend upon it, no
* Sir William Jones was thirty-seven years of age when he sailed
for India.

He received the honor of knighthood in March, 1783, on

WHAT CAN" INDIA TEACH US ?

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young Alexander here need despair because there are no kingdoms left for him to conquer on the ancient shores of the Indus and the Ganges.

liis

appointment as Judge of the Supreme Court of Judicature

Fort William, at Bengal.

— A. W.

at

LECTURE II.

TRUTHFUL CHARACTER OF THE HINDUS.

In my first Lecture I endeavored to remove the prejudice that everything in India is strange, and so different

from the intellectual life which we are accustomed to in England, that the twenty or twenty-five years which a civil servant has to spend in the East seem often to him a kind of exile that he must bear as well as he can, but that severs him completely from all those higher pursuits by which life is made enjoyable at home. This need not be so and ought not to be so, if only it is clearly seen how almost every one of the higher interests that make life worth living here in England, may find as ample scope in India as in England.

To-day I shall have to grapple with another prejudice which is even more mischievous, because it forms a kind of icy barrier between the Hindus and their rulers, and makes anything like a feeling of true fellowship between the two utterly impossible.

That prejudice consists in looking upon our stay in India as a kind of moral exile, and in regarding the Hindus as an inferior race, totally different from ourselves in their moral character, and, more particularly in what forms the very foundation of the English character, respect for truth.

nothing more disheartening to any high-minded young man than the idea that he will have I believe there is

TRUTHFUL CHARACTER OF THE HINDUS.
to spend his life

among human

never respect or love

—natives,

use even more offensive names

as

beings

53

whom he can

they are called, not to

—men whom he

is

taught

to consider as not amenable to the recognized principles

of

self-respect,

uprightness,

and

veracity,

and

with

whom therefore any community of interests and action,
much more any real friendship, is supposed to be out of
the question.

So often has that charge of untruthfulness been repeated, and so generally is it
now accepted, that it seems

almost Quixotic to try to fight against it.

Nor should

I

venture to fight this almost hopeless

battle, if I were not convinced that

all

such a charge, like

charges brought against a whole nation, rests on the

most flimsy induction, and that it has done, is doing,

and will continue to do more mischief than anything

that even the bitterest enemy of English dominion in

If a young man who goes

India could have invented.

to India as a civil servant or as a military officer, goes

whom he is to

there fully convinced that the people

meet with are all liars, liars by nature or by national instinct, never restrained

in their dealings by any regard

for truth, never to be trusted on their word, need

we

wonder at the feelings of disgust with which he thinks

of the Hindus, even before he has seen them

the feelings of distrust with which he approaches them, and the

contemptuous way in which he treats them when brought

into contact with them for the transaction of public or

private business ?

When such tares have once been sown

by the enemy, it will be difficult to gather them up. It

has become almost an article of faith with every Indian

civil servant that all Indians are liars

say, I know T

;

;

shall

never be forgiven for my heresy in venturing to

doubt it.

LECTURE

54

II.

Now, quite apart from India, I feel most strongly that every one of these international condemnations is to be deprecated, not only for the sake of the self-conceited

and uncharitable state of mind from which they spring, and which they serve to strengthen and confirm, but for purely logical reasons

also,

namely for the reckless and

slovenly character of the induction on which such con-

Because a man has travelled in Greece and has been cheated by his dragoman, or been carried off by brigands, does it follow that all Greeks, ancient as well as modern, are cheats and robbers, or that they approve of cheating and robbery? And because in Calcutta, or Bombay, or Madras, Indians who are brought before judges, or who hang about the law-courts and the bazaars, are not distinguished by an unreasoning and uncompromising love of truth, is it not a very vicious conclusion to rest.

induction to say, in these days of careful reasoning, that all

Hindus are liars—particularly

if

you bear in mind

that, according to the latest census, the

number of in-

habitants of that vast country amounts to two hundred

Are all these two hundred and fifty-three millions of human beings to be set down as liars, because some hundreds, say even some thousands of Indians, when they are brought to an English court of law and fifty-three millions.

law, on suspicion of having committed a theft or a murder, do not speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing

but the truth? Would an English sailor, if brought before a dark-skinned judge, who spoke English with a strange accent, bow down before him and confess at once

any misdeed that he may have committed and would

all his mates rush forward and eagerly bear witness
against him, when he had got himself into trouble ?
The rules of induction are general, but they depend on
We may, to
the subjects to which they are applied.
;

follow an Indian proverb, judge of a whole field of rice by tasting one or two grains only, but if we apply this rule to human beings, we are sure to fall into the same mistake as the English chaplain who had once, on board an English vessel, christened a French child, and who remained fully convinced for the rest of his life that all French babies had very long noses.

I can hardly think of anything that you could safely predicate of all the inhabitants of India, and I confess to a little nervous tremor whenever I see a sentence beginning with "The people of India," or even with "All the Brahmans," or "All the Buddhists."

What follows is almost invariably wrong.

difference between an Afghan, a Sikh, a Hindustani, a Bengalese, and a Dravidian than between an Englishman, a Frenchman, a German, and a Russian yet all

are classed as Hindus, and all are supposed to fall under the same sweeping condemnation.

Let me read you what Sir John Malcolm says about the diversity of character to be observed by any one who

—

has eyes to observe, among the different races whom we

promiscuously call Hindus, and whom we promiscuously

condemn

as

Hindus.

After describing the people of

weak in body and timid in mind, and those below Calcutta as the lowest of our Hindu subjects, both

"But from

in character and appearance, he continues the moment you enter the district of Beliar, the Hindu Bengal

as

:

men, generally speaking, not more distinguished by their lofty stature and robust frame than they are for some of the finest qualities of the mind.

They are brave, generous, humane, and their inhabitants are a race of

truth is as remarkable as their courage."

But because I feel bound to protest against the indiscriminating abuse that has been heaped on the people of

LECTURE

50

II.

India from the Himalaya to Ceylon, do not suppose that it

is

my wish or intention to draw an ideal picture of

and giving you

Having never

been in India myself, I can only claim for myself the right and duty of every historian, namely, the right of collecting as much information as possible, and the duty India, leaving out all the dark shades,

nothing but

"sweetness and

light."

to sift it according to the recognized rules of historical

My chief sources of information with regard

criticism.

to the national character of the Indians in ancient times will

be the works of Greek writers and the literature of

For later times we

must depend on the statements of the various conquerors of India, who are not always the most lenient judges of those whom they may find it more difficult to rule than for the last century to the present day, I to conquer.

shall have to appeal, partly to the authority of those who, after spending an active life in India and among the Indians, have given us the benefit of their experience the ancient Indians themselves.

ence in published works, partly to the testimony of a

number

of

gentlemen

distinguished civil servants and of Indian also,

AA'liose

personal acquaintance I

have

enjoyed in England, in France, and in Germany.

As I have chiefly to address myself to those Avho Avill
themselves be the rulers and administrators of India in the
future, alloAv me to begin Avith the opinions which some

of the most eminent, and, I believe, the most judicious

among the Indian civil servants of the past haA e formed
T

and deliberately expressed on the point Avhich Ave are today discussing, namely,
the veracity or want of veracity

among the Hindus.

And here I must begin with a remark which has been
made by others also, namely, that the civil servants Avho
AA-ent

to India in the beginning of this century,

and

TRUTHFUL CHARACTER OF THE HINDUS.

57

under the auspices of the old East India Company, many of whom I had the honor and pleasure of knowing when I first came to England, seemed to have seen a great deal

more of native life, native manners, and native character than those whom I had to examine five-and-twenty years ago, and who are now, after a distinguished career, comIndia is no longer the distant

which it was, where each Crusoe had to make a home for himself as best he could. With the short and easy voyages from England to India and from India to England, with the frequent mails, and the telegrams, and the Anglo-Indian newspapers, official life in India has assumed the character of a temporary exile rather, ing back to England.
island

which even English ladies are now more ready to share This is a difficulty which cannot than fifty years ago. be removed, but must be met, and which, I believe, can best be met by inspiring the new civil servants with new and higher interests during their stay in India.
I

knew the late Professor Wilson, our Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford, for many years, and often listened with deep interest to his Indian reminiscences. Let me read you what he, Professor Wilson, says of

and servants *
" I lived, both from necessity and choice, very much his native friends, associates,

:

among the Hindus, and had opportunities of becoming acquainted with them in a greater variety of situations than those in which they usually come under the observation of Europeans.

In the Calcutta mint, for instance,

was in daily personal communication with a numerous body of artificers, mechanics, and laborers, and always found among them cheerful and unwearied industry, good-humored compliance with the will of their superiI

* Mill's "History of British India," ed. Wilson, vol. i.,p. 375.

LECTURE

58

II.

and a readiness to make whatever exertions were
there was among them no drunkenness, no disorderly conduct, no insubordination.
It
ors,

demanding from them

;

would not be true to say that there was no dishonesty,
but it was comparatively rare, invariably petty, and

much less formidable than, I believe, it is necessary to
guard against in other mints in other countries. There
was considerable skill and ready docility. So far from
there being any servility, there was extreme frankness,
and I should say that where there is confidence without
fear, frankness is one of the most universal features in
Let the people feel sure of the

the Indian character.

temper and good-will of their superiors, and there is an
end of reserve and timidity, without the slightest departure from respect.
Then, speaking of the much-abused Indian Pandits,
" The studies which engaged my leisure
he says

.

.

:

brought me into connection with the men of learning,
and in them I found the similar merits of industry, intelligence, cheerfulness,
frankness, with others peculiar
to their avocation.

A very common characteristic of

and of the Hindus especially, was a simplicity truly childish, and a total un-
acquaintance with
Where that feature
the business and manners of life.
chiefly
those
who
had been long
by
was lost, it was
these' men,

familiar with Europeans.

learned Hindus there

Among the Pandits or the

prevailed great ignorance and

great dread of the European character.

There is, in-

deed, very little intercourse between any class of Euro-

peans and Hindu scholars, and it is not wonderful, therefore, that mutual misapprehension should prevail."

Speaking, lastly, of the higher classes in Calcutta and Professor Wilson says that he witnessed

elsewhere,

among them "polished manners, clearness and compre-

truthful character of the Hindus.

59

hensiveness of understanding, liberality of feeling, and

independence of principle that would have stamped them

" With some

gentlemen in any country in the world."

of this class," he adds, " I formed friendships which I trust to enjoy through life."

I

have often heard Professor Wilson speak in the

same, and in even stronger terms of his old friends in India, and his correspondence with

Ram Comul Sen, the

grandfather of Kesliub Chunder Sen,* a most orthodox, not to say bigoted, Hindu, which has lately been pub-

shows on what intimate terms Englishmen and Hindus may be, if only the advances are made on the lished,

English side.

There is another Professor of Sanskrit, of whom your University may well be proud, and who could speak on this subject

with far greater authority than

I can.

He

too will tell you, and I have no doubt has often told you, that if only you look out for friends among the Hindus, you will find them, and you may trust them.

There is one book which for many years x have been in the habit of recommending, and another against which I have always been warning those of the candidates for the Indian Civil Service whom I happened to see at Oxford and I believe both the advice and the warning

;

have in several cases borne the very best fruit.

The

book which I consider most mischievous, nay, which I hold responsible for some of the greatest misfortunes that

have happened to India, is Mill's u History of British India," even with the antidote against its poison, which is supplied

by Professor Wilson's notes. The book

which I recommend, and which I wish might be pub* Keshub Chunder Sen is the present

spiritual director of the
Brahmo Samar/, the theistic organization founded by the late Itarumohun Roy. —A. W.

:

GO

LECTURE

II.

lished again in a cheaper form, so as to
make it more

generally accessible, is Colonel Sleeman's " Rambles and
Recollections of an Indian Official," published in 1814,
but written originally in 1835-1830.

Mill's " History," no doubt,

you

know, particuwho, I

all

larly the candidates for the Indian Civil Service,

am sorry to say, are recommended to read it, and are examined in it. Still, in
order to substantiate my strong
condemnation of the book, I shall have to give a few
proofs

Mill in his estimate of the Hindu character

is

chiefly

guided by Dubois, a French missionary, and by Orme
and Eucharan, Tennant, and Ward, all of them neither
very competent nor very unprejudiced judges.

however, picks out

all

that

is

Mill,*

most unfavorable from

and omits the qualifications which even
these writers felt bound to give to their wholesale condemnation of the Hindus. He
quotes as serious, for instance, what was said in joke,f namely, that " a Brahman
is an ant's nest of lies and impostures." Next to
the charge of untruthfulness, Mill upbraids the Hindus
for what he calls their litigiousness.

He writes j; "As

often as courage fails them in seeking more daring gratification to their hatred

and revenge, their malignity finds
Without imputing
a vent in the channel of litigation."
as
Mill
does,
the
same fact might
motives,
dishonorable
saying,
"As often as
he stated in a different way, by
their conscience and respect of law keep them from
their works,

:

seeking more daring gratification to their hatred and
revenge, say by murder or poisoning, their trust in English

justice leads

them to appeal to our courts of law."

Dr. Robertson, in his " Historical Disquisitions concern* Mill's "History," ed.
Wilson, vol.
f L. c. p. 325.

i.,

p. 368.
f L. c. p. 329.

TRUTHFUL CHARACTER OF THE HINDUS.

Gl

,

ing India," x seems to have considered the litigious subtlety of the Hindus as a sign of high civilization rather is sharply corrected by Mr.

"nowhere is this subtlety carried further, who tells him that

than of barbarism, but he

ried higher than among the wildest of the Irish."

That

courts of justice, like the English, in which a verdict was not

to be obtained, as formerly in

courts,

by bribes and corruption, should

Mohammedan
at first

have

proved very attractive to the Hindus, need not surprise us.

But is it really true that the Hindus are more fond of litigation

than other nations ?

we

If

consult

Sir

Thomas Munro, the eminent Governor of Madras, and the powerful advocate of the llyot war settlements, he tells us in so many words
f "I have had ample oppor:

tunity of observing the Hindus in every situation, and I can affirm, that they are not litigious." \$

But Mill goes further still, and in one place he actually

assures his readers § that a
to death
when he lists."

"Brahman may put a man
In

fact,

he represents the

Hindus as such a monstrous mass of all vices, that, as
Colonel Vans Kennedy
remarked, society could not
have held together if it had really consisted of such
reprobates only.
Nor docs he seem to see the full bearing of his remarks.
Surely, if a Brahman might, as he
says, put a man to death whenever he lists, it would be
the strongest testimony in their favor that you hardly
||

ever hear of their availing themselves of such a privilege, to say nothing of the
fact

according to

statistics,

the

* P. 21?.

—and

a fact it is

—

that,

number of capital sentences
Mill's "History," vol. i., p. 329.

Mann, VIII. 43, says "Neither a King himself nor his officers
must ever promote litigation nor ever neglect a lawsuit instituted
t

:

;

by others."
§ Mill's "History," vol.

i.,

L.

p. 327.

||

c.

p. 368.

LECTURE

62

It.

was one in every 10,000 in England, but only one in every million in Bengal.*

Colonel Sleeman's

they deserve to be.

"Rambles" are less known than

To give you an idea of the man, I

must read you some extracts from the book.

His sketches

being originally addressed to his sister,

this is how he writes to her

:

" My dear Sister Were any one to ask your countrymen in India, what had been their greatest source of

pleasure while there, perhaps nine in ten would say the

letters which they receive from their sisters at home.

:

And while thus contributing so much to our

happiness, they no doubt tend to make us better citizens

and servants of government than we

for in our struggles through life

in India, we have all, more or less, an eye to the approbation of those circles

which our kind sisters represent,

of the

world

should otherwise be

,

,

;

who may therefore be considered in the exalted light of a valuable species of

unpaid magistracy to the govern-

ment of India."

There is a touch of the old English chivalry even in these few words addressed to a sister whose approbation

he values, and with whom he hoped to spend the winter

Having been, as he confesses, idle in another of his days.
swearing letters, or rather, too busy to find time for long
letters, he made use of his enforced leisure, while on his
way from the Nerbuddah River to the Himmaleh Mountains,

in search of health, to give to his sister a full

account of his impressions and experiences in India.

* See Elphinstone, "History of India," ed. Cowell, p. 219, note.

"Of the 232 sentences of death 94 only were carried out in England,
while the 59 sentences of death in Bengal were all carried out."

TRUTHFUL CHARACTER OF THE HINDUS.

G3

Though what lie wrote was intended at first " to interest and amuse his sister only and the other members of his family at home," he adds, in a more serious tone " Of one thing I must beg you to be assured, that I :

have nowhere indulged in
tive,

the

recollections,

on
and what

fiction,

either in the narra-

or the conversations.

What I

the testimony of others, I believe to be true ;

relate

I

relate

on my own, you may rely upon as

being so."

When placing his volumes before the public at large 1844, he expresses a hope that they may "tend to make the people of India better understood by those of our countrymen whose destinies are cast among them, in

and inspire more kindly feelings toward them."

You may ask why I

consider Colonel

Sleeman so

trustworthy an authority on the Indian character, more trustworthy, for instance,

than even so accurate and

unprejudiced an observer as Professor Wilson.

swer is

My an-

– because Wilson lived chiefly in Calcutta, while Colonel Sleeman saw India, where alone the true India can be seen, namely, in the village-communities.

For

many years he was employed as Commissioner for the suppression of Thuggee.

The Thugs were professional assassins, who committed their murders under a kind of religious sanction.

They were originally "all Mohammedans, but for a long time past Mohammedans and Hindus had been indiscriminately associated in the gangs, the former class, however, still predominating." *

In order to hunt up these gangs, Colonel Sleeman had

* Sir Cli. Trevelyan, Christianity and Hinduism, 1882, p. 42.

This will be news to many. It has been quite common to include the Thugs with the worshippers of Bliavani, the consort of Niva.

The word

signifies a

religious association.

deceiver,

A. W.

which eliminates it from every re-

LECTURE

64
constantly to live

II.

among the people in the country, to
gain their confidence, and to watch the good as well as
the bad features in their character.

How what Colonel Sleeman continually insists on is
that no one knows the Indians who does not know them
in their village-communities

their communes.

has given

its

—what we should now

It is that village-life

call

which in India

peculiar impress to the Indian character,
more so than in any other country we know.

When in

Indian history we hear so much of kings and emperors,
of rajahs and maharajahs, we are apt to think of India as

an Eastern monarchy, ruled by a central power, and
without any trace of that self-government which forms

But those who have most care you the very
the pride of England.

fully studied the political life of India tell
opposite.

The political unit, or the social cell in India has always
been, and, in spite of repeated foreign conquests, is still
the village-community.
will occasionally

Some of these political units

combine or be combined for common

purposes (such a confederacy being called a gramayala), but each is perfect in itself. When we read in the Laws of Mann * of officers appointed to rule over ten, twenty, a hundred, or a thousand of these villages, that

means

no more than that they were responsible for the collection of taxes, and generally for the good behavior of

And when, in later times, we hear of these villages.

circles of eighty-four villages, the so-called Chourasees (Aaturasiti f), and of three

hundred and sixty villages,

this too seems to refer to fiscal arrangements only.

the ordinary Hindu,

I

mean

To

to ninety-nine in every

*

Maim VII. 115.

f

H. M. Elliot, "Supplement to the Glossary of Indian Terms,"

p. 151.

TRUTHFUL CHARACTER OF THE HINDUS.

65

hundred, the village was his world, and the sphere of public opinion, with its beneficial influences on individ-

beyond the horizon of his village.*

uals, seldom extended

Colonel Sleeman was one of the first who called attention to the existence of these village-communities in

India, and their importance in the social fabric of the

whole country both in ancient and in modern times and though they have since become far better known and celebrated through the writings of Sir Henry Maine, it is still both interesting and instructive to read Colonel Sleeman's account.

He writes as a mere observer, and uninfluenced as yet by any theories on the development of early social and political life among the Aryan nations ;

in general.

mean to say that Colonel Sleeman was the who pointed out the palpable fact that the whole of

I do not first

Even so

India is parcelled out into estates of villages.

early an observer as Megasthenes f seems to have been struck by the same fact when he says that " in India the

husbandmen with their wives and children

live in the

country, and entirely avoid going into town."

Colonel Sleeman was the

first

What

to point out was that all

* I see from Dr. Hunter's latest statistical tables that the whole number of towns and villages in British India amounts to 493,429.

Out of this number 448,320 have less than 1000 inhabitants, and may be called villages.

In Bengal, where the growth of towns has been most encouraged through Government establishments, the total number of homesteads is 117,042, and more than half of these contain less than 200 inhabitants. Only 10,077 towns in Bengal have more than 1000 inhabitants, that is, no more than about a seventeenth part of all the settlements are anything but what we should call substantial villages. In the North-Western Provinces the last census gives us 105,124 villages,

against 297

See London Times 14th Aug. 1882.

"Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian," by

towns.

\

McCrindle, p. 42,

,

LECTURE

66

II.

the native virtues of the Hindus are intimately connected
with their village-life.

That

village-life,

however,

is

naturally

the

least

known to English officials, nay, the very presence of an
English official is often said to be sufficient to drive away
those native virtues which distinguish both the private
life and

the public administration of justice and equity

Take a man out of his villagecommunity, and you remove him from all the restraints
of society.
He is out of his element, and, under temptation, is more likely to go wrong than to
remain true to
the traditions of his home-life.
Even between village
and village the usual restraints of public morality are not
always recognized.
What would be called theft or rob-

in an Indian village.*

bery at home

is

called a successful raid or conquest if

and what would be
falsehood or trickery in private life is honored by the

directed against distant villages

;

name of policy and diplomacy if successful against strangers.

On the other hand, the rules of hospitality ap-

plied oidy to people of other villages, and a man of the same village could never claim the right of an Atithi

,

or

guest, f

now what Colonel Sleeman tells us about

moral

character

of the members of these village the

communities, and let us not forget that the CommisLet us hear

j;

* " Perjury seems to be committed by the meanest and encouraged

by some of the

better sort

among the Hindus and Mussulmans,

with as little remorse as if it were a proof of ingenuity, or even a merit." Sir W. Jones, Address to Grand Jury at Calcutta, in

—

"The longer we possess a common and grave does perjury become." — Sir

Mill's "History of India," vol. i., p. 324.

province, the more

G. Campbell, quoted by Rev. Samuel Johnson, " Oriental Religions, India," p. 288.

f Vasishtta,

+ Mr. J.

translated by Biihler, VIII. 8.

D. Baldwin, author of "Prehistoric Nations," declares

TRUTHFUL CHARACTER OF THE HINDUS.

G7

sioner for the suppression of Thuggee
tunities of seeing the

had ample oppordark as well as the bright side of
the Indian character.

He assures us that falsehood or lying between members of the same village is almost
of

some of the most savage
unknown.

tribes,

instance, he maintains that nothing
to tell a lie,

Speaking

the Gonds,

for

would induce them

though they would think nothing of lifting

a herd of cattle from a neighboring plain.

Of these men it might perhaps be said that they have
not yet learned the value of a lie

;

yet even such blissful

But I

ignorance ought to count in a nation's character.

am not pleading here for Gonds, or Bhils, or Santhals,
and other non-Aryan tribes. I am speaking of the
Aryan and more or less civilized inhabitants of India.
Now among them, where rights, duties, and interests
begin to clash in one and lie same village, public opinI

that this system of village-communities existed in India long before

the Aryan conquest.
fluence.

He attributes it to Cushite or iEthiopic in-

and with great plausibility.

flourished in prehistoric Greece,

Nevertheless, the same system

even

till

Mr. Palgrave observed it existing in Arabia.

dom than an aggregation of

the Roman conquests.

" Oman is less a king-

municipalities," he remarks

;

" each

town, each village has its separate existence and coloration, while

towns and villages, in their turn, are subjected to one or other of the ancestral chiefs."

The Ionian and Phoenician cities existed by

a similar tenure, as did also the Free Cities of Europe.

indeed, to have been the earlier form of rule.

it

in India.

It appears,

Megasthenes noticed

" The village-communities," says Sir Charles Metcalf,

want within them and almost independent of any foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts."

These villages usually consist of

the holders of the land, those who farm and cultivate it, the estab'

,

are little republics, having everything they

selves,

lished

village-servants, priest, blacksmith,

carpenter,

accountant,

washerman, potter, barber, watchman, shoemaker, etc. The tenure and law of inheritance varies with the different native races, but tenantry for a specific period seems to be the most common. A. W.

—

LECTURE

68

II.

seems strong enough to deter
even an evil-disposed person from telling a falsehood.
The fear of the gods also has not yet lost its power.*
ion, in its limited sphere,

In most villages there is a sacred tree, a pipal -tree (Ficus

and the gods are supposed to delight to sit
leaves, and listen to the music of their rustamong
ling.

The deponent takes one of these leaves in his
hand, and invokes the god, who sits above him, to crush
him, or those dear to him, as he crushes the leaf in his
hand, if he speaks anything but the truth.

lie then
plucks and crushes the leaf, and states what he has to
Indica),

its

say.

The pipal-tree is generally supposed to be occupied by
one of the Hindu

deities,

while the large cotton-tree,

particularly among the wilder tribes,

the abode of local

gods,

all

supposed to be

is

the more terrible because

entrusted with the police of a small settlement only.

In

Sleeman tells us, men adhere habitu" I have had before
"

me hundreds of cases," he says, in which a man's proptheir punchayets,

ally and religiously to the truth, and

and life has depended upon his telling a
and he has refused to tell it."
Could many an English judge say the same ?
In their own tribunals under the pipal-tree or cottontree, imagination commonly did
what the deities, who
were supposed to preside, had the credit of doing. If
the deponent told a lie, he believed that the god who sat
on his sylvan throne above him, and searched the heart
and from that moment he knew
of man, must know it

erty, liberty,
lie,

;

no rest, he was always in dread of his vengeance. If
any accident happened to him, or to those dear to him,
and if no acciit was attributed to this otfended deity
;

* " Sleeman," vol. ii., p. Ill,

TRUTHFUL CHARACTER OF THE HINDOOS.

G9

dent happened, some evil was brought about by his own disordered imagination.*

It

was an excellent supersti-

tion, inculcated in the ancient law-books, that the ances-

tors watched the answer of a witness, because, according

they themselves would go to

it was true or false,

heaven or to hell.

Allow me to read you the abstract of a conversation

between an English official and a native law-officer as

The native lawyer was

reported by Colonel Sleeman.

asked what he thought would be the effect of an act to

dispense with oaths on the Koran and Ganges-water, and

as

to substitute a solemn declaration

made in the name of

God, and under the same penal liabilities as if the Koran or Ganges-water had been in the deponent's hand.

" I have practiced in the courts," the native said,

" for thirty years, and during that time I have found

only three kinds of witnesses two of whom would, by

such an act, be left precisely where they were, while the

third would be released by it from a very salutary

—

check."

" And,

pray, what are the three classes into which

you divide the witnesses in our courts ?"

" First, Sir, are those who will always tell the truth,

whether they are required to state what they know in the form of an oath or not."

" Do you think this a large class ?"

" Yes, I think it is and I have found among them

many whom nothing on earth could make to swerve

from the truth. Do what you please, you could never

;

frighten or bribe them into a deliberate falsehood.

" The second are those who will not hesitate to tell a

lie when they have a motive for it, and are not restrained
* Sleeman, " Rambles," vol.

ii.

,

p. 110.

f

Vasishtta XVI. 32.

LECTURE

70

IT.

In taking an oath, they are afraid of two
by an oath.

things, the anger of God and the odium of men.

" Only three days ago," he continued, " I required a
power of attorney from a lady of rank, to enable me to
pending before the court in this
me by her brother, and two witnesses came to declare that she had given it.

'Now,'

said I,

this lady is known to live under the curtain, and
you will be asked by the judge whether you saw her
give this paper

what will you say ?

They both

replied

If the judge asks us the question without an
oath, we will say " Yes /" it will save much trouble, and
act for her in a case

It was given to

town.

£

,

:

£

:

we know that she did give the paper, though we did not
really see her give it ; but if he puts the

hands, we must say "

pointed

by

at

all

Koran into our

for we should otherwise be

the town as perjured wretches
enemies would soon
tell

— our

everybody that we had taken a
false oath.'

" Now," the native lawyer went on, " the form of an
oath is a great check on this sort of persons.

" The third class consists of men who will tell lies
whenever they have a sufficient motive, whether they
have the Koran or Ganges-water in their hand or not.
Nothing will ever prevent their doing so and the declaration which you propose
would be just as well as any
other for them."

" Which class do you consider the most numerous of
;

the three ?"

" I consider the second the most numerous, and wish
the oath to be retained for them."

" That

is,

of all the

men you see examined in our

you think the most come under the class of those
who will, under the influence of strong motives, tell lies, if
they have not the Koran or Ganges-water in their hands ?"
courts,

TRUTHFUL CHARACTER OF THE HINDUS.

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" Yes."

" But do not a great many of those whom you consider to be included among the second class come from the village-communities

—the peasantry of the country ?"

" Yes."

" And do you not think that the greatest part of those

men who will tell lies in the court, under the influence of strong motives,

unless

they

have the Koran or

Ganges- water in their hands, would refuse to tell lies, if questioned before the people of their villages, among the circle in which they live ?"

" Of course I do three-fourths of those who do not ;

scruple to

lie

in the courts,

would be ashamed to

lie

before their neighbors, or the elders of their village."

" You think that the people of the village-communities are more ashamed to tell lies

before their neighbors

than the people of towns ?"

—

" IVluch more there is no comparison."

" And the people of towns and cities bear in India but a small proportion to the people of the village-communities ?'

,

" I should think a very small proportion indeed."

" Then you think that in the mass of the population

of India, out of our courts the
,
first class,
or those who
speak truth, whether they have the Koran or Ganges-
water in their hands or not, would be found more
numerous than the other two ?”
“ Certainly I do if they were always to be ques-
tioned before their neighbors or elders, so that they could
feel that their neighbors
they say.
and elders could know what
, ,

It was from a simple sense of justice that I felt bound
to quote this testimony of Colonel
Sleeman
as to the
truthful character of the natives of India, when left to

LECTURE

72

My interest lies altogether with the people
themselves.

of

when left

India,

II.

to

themselves

,

and historically I

should like to draw a line after the year one thousand

"When you read the atrocities committed
by the Mohammedan conquerors of India from that time
to the time when England stepped in and, whatever may
be said by her envious critics, made, at all events, the
broad principles of our common humanity respected once
more in India, the wonder, to my mind, is how any
nation could have survived such an Inferno without
after Christ.

being turned into devils themselves.

How, it

is

quite true that during the

years which, precede the time

of

two thousand

Mahmud

of

Gazni,

India has had but few foreign visitors, and few foreign
critics ;

still it is

surely extremely strange that whenever,
either in Greek,
or in Chinese,
or in Persian, or in

Arab writings, we meet with any attempts at describing
the distinguishing features in the national character of
the Indians, regard for truth and justice should always

be mentioned first.
Ktesias

,

the famous Greek physician of Artaxerxes

Mnemon (present at the battle of Cunaxa, 404 b.c.), the
first

Greek writer who tells us anything about the char-
acter of the Indians, such as he heard it described at the

Persian court, has a special chapter " On the Justice of
the Indians."*

Megasthenes, f the ambassador of Seleucus Nicator at
the court of Sandrocottus in Palibothra (Patfaliputra, the
modern Patna),

states that thefts

were extremely rare,

and that they honored truth and virtue. \

* Ktesire Fragmenta (ed. Didot), p. 81.

f See

t

vol.

" Indian Antiquary," 1876, p. 333.

Megasthenis Fragmenta (ed. Didot) in " Fragm. Histor. Graec."
li.

,

p.

426 b

:

'AhijQeiai re oftoiu f nai aper/jv arrodixovrai.

TRUTHFUL CHARACTER OF THE HINDUS.

73

A rrian (in the second century, the pupil of Epictetus),
when speaking of the public overseers or superintend" They oversee what goes on in
the
ents in India, says *

:
country or towns, and report everything to the king,

where the people have a king, and to the magistrates,
where the people are self-governed, and it is against use
and wont for these to give in a false report but indeed
no Indian is accused of lying, f
;

The Chinese, who come next in order of time, bear
the same,

I

believe,

unanimous testimony in favor of
[The earliest

the honesty and veracity of the Hindus.

witness is Su-we, a relative of Fan-chen,

King of Siam,

wdio between 222 and 227 a.d. sailed round the whole
of India,

till

he reached the mouth of the Indus, and

then explored the country.

After his return to Sinto,
he received four Yueh-chi horses, sent by a king of

King of Siam and his ambassaAt the time when these horses arrived in Siam (it
took them four years to travel there), there was staying
at the court of Siam an ambassador of the Emperor of
India as a present to the

dor.

China, Khang-thai, and this

is the -account which he

" It is a kingdom

kingdom of India

in which the religion of Buddha flourishes.

The inhabi-
received of the

:

tants are straightforward

very fertile.

and honest, and the

tal is surrounded by walls," etc.

a.d.

In

605

soil

is

The king is called Meu-lun, and his capi-

we

This was in about 231

hear again of the Emperor Yang-ti

sending an ambassador, Fei-tu, to India, and this is what

among other things he points out as peculiar to the
Hindus: " They believe in solemn oaths."]:): Let me
quote Iliouen-thsang, the most famous of the Chinese
* Indica, cap. xii.

6.

" Indian Antiquary," 1876, p. 92.

f See McCrindle in

\ See

Stanislas Julien, Journal Asiatique, 1847, Aout, pp. 98, 105.

LECTURE H.

74

Buddhist pilgrims, who visited India in the seventh cen" Though the Indians," he writes, " are of a light

tury.*

temperament, they are distinguished by the straightforwardness and honesty of their character.

With regard

to riches, they never take anything unjustly ;

to justice, they

with regard

make even excessive concessions.

.

.

.

Straightforwardness is the distinguishing feature of their administration."

If we turn to the accounts given by the Mohammedan

conquerors of India, we

(written in

find Idrisi, in his

the eleventh century),

Geography

summing up

opinion of the Indians in the following words

:

their

f

" The Indians are naturally inclined to justice, and never depart from it in their actions.

Their good faith,

and fidelity to their engagements are well

known, and they are so famous for these qualities that

people flock to their country from every side."

honesty,

Again, in the thirteenth century, Shems-ed-din

Abu

Abdallah quotes the following judgment of Bedi ezr
Zemin " The Indians are innumerable, like grains of
:

sand,

free

from _all

deceit and

violence.

They

fear

neither death nor life. "j;

In the thirteenth century we have the testimony of
Marco Polo,§ who thus speaks of the Abraiama, a name
by w'hich he seems to mean the Brahmans who, though
not traders by profession, might well have been employed for great commercial
transactions by the king.

This was particularly the case during times which the

* Vol. ii.

,

p. 83.

"History of India," vol. i., p. 88.

See Mehren " Manuel de la Cosmographie du moyen age, tra\
duction de l'ouvrage de Shems-ed-din Abou Abdallah de Damas.
Leroux, 1874, p. 371.

Paris

" Marco Polo," ed. H. Yule, vol. ii., p. 350.

§

f Elliot,

:

:

f

TRUTHFUL CHARACTER OF THE HINDUS.
Brahmans would

call

times

of

distress,

75

when many

things were allowed which at other times were forbidden

by the laws. " You must know," Marco Polo says,
" that these Abraiama are the best merchants in the
world, and the most truthful, for they would not
lie

tell

a

for anything on earth."

In the fourteenth century we have Friar Jordanus,
who goes out of his way to tell us that the people of
Lesser India (South and

Western India) are true in

speech and eminent in justice.*
In the fifteenth

century, Ivamal-eddin Abd-errazak

Samarkandi (1-113-1482), who went as ambassador of the
prince of Kalikut and to the King of
Vidyanagara (about 1110-1115), bears testimony to the
perfect security which merchants enjoy in that country.

Khakan to the

In the sixteenth century,

Abu Fazl,

the minister of

the Emperor Akbar, says in his Ayin Akbari

:

" The

Hindus are religious, affable, cheerful, lovers of justice,
given to retirement, able in business, admirers of truth,
grateful and

of

unbounded fidelity

;

and their soldiers

know not what it is to fly from the held of battle,
And even in cpiite modern times the Mohammedans
j;

seem willing to admit that the Hindus, at all events in
their dealings with Hindus, are more straightforward
than

Mohammedans in their dealings with Mohamme-
dans.

Thus Meer Sulamut Ali, a venerable old Mussulman,
and, as Colonel Sleeman says, a most valuable public servant, was obliged to admit
that " a Hindu may feel him* " Marco Polo," vol. ii.

,

p. 354.

" Notices des Manuscrits," tom. xiv., p. 436.

He seems to have
been one of the first to state that the Persian text of the Ivalilah and
Dimna was derived from the wise people of India.
Samuel Johnson, " India," p. 294.
j

t

LECTURE

re

self

authorized to take in a Mussulman, and might even

think it meritorious to do so
it

II.

meritorious

to

take in

;

but he would never think

one

of

his

own

religion.

There are no less than seventy-two sects of Mohammedans and every one of these sects would not only take in the followers of every other religion on earth, but every member of every one of the other seventy-one and the nearer that sect is to his own, the greater sects the merit of taking in its members.*

So I could go on quoting from book after book, and again and again we should see how it was love of truth

;

;

that struck

all

the people

who came in contact with

India, as the prominent feature in the national character

of

its

inhabitants.

No one ever accused them of false-

There must surely be some ground for this, for
it is not a remark that is frequently made by travellers
in foreign countries, even in our time, that their inhabihood.

tants invariably speak the truth.

Read the accounts of

English travellers in France, and you will find very little

French honesty and veracity, while French
accounts of England are seldom without a fling at Perjide Albion !
But if all this is true, how is it, you may well ask,
that public opinion in England is so decidedly unfriendly
at the utmost tolerates and
to the people of India
said about

;

patronizes them, but will never trust them, never treat

them on terms of equality ?
I have already liiuted at some of the reasons.

opinion with regard to India
chiefly by those who

is

Public

made up in England

have spent their lives in Calcutta,

Bombay, Madras, or some other of the principal towns
in India.

The native element in such towns
* Sleeman, " Rambles," vol. i., p. 63.

contains

TRUTHFUL CHARACTER OF THE HINDUS.

mostly the most unfavorable specimens of the Indian
An insight into the domestic life of the
population.

more respectable classes, even in towns, is difficult to
and, when it is obtained, it is extremely difficult
obtain
to judge of their manners according to our standard of
The
what is proper, respectable, or gentlemanlike.
;

frequent and often

misunderstandings are

tesque ; and such, we must confess, is

most gro-

human

nature,

that when we hear the different and often most conflict-

ing accounts of the character of the Hindus, we are naturally

skeptical

with

regard

to

unsuspected

virtues

among them, while we are quite disposed to accept unfavorable accounts of their
character.

Lest I should seem to be pleading too much on the
native side of the question, and to exaggerate the difficulty of forming a correct
estimate of the character of

the Hindus,

let

me appeal to one of the most distin-

guished, learned, and judicious members of the Indian
Civil Service, the author of

Mountstuart Elphinstone.

the "History of India,"
" Englishmen in India,"*

he says, " have less opportunity than might be expected
of forming opinions of the native character.

Even in

England, few know much of the people beyond their
own class, and what they do know, they learn from
newspapers and publications of a description which does
not exist in India.

In that country also, religion and

manners put bars to our intimacy with the natives, and
limit the number of transactions as well as the free communication of opinions.
rior

of

families but

by

We know nothing of the intereport,

and have no share in

those numerous occurrences of life in which the amiable
parts of character are most exhibited. "

" Missionaries of

* Elphinstone' s "History of India," ed. Cowell, p. 213.

LECTURE

a different religion,*

judges, police-magistrates, officers

II.

of revenue or customs, and even diplomatists, do not see

the most virtuous portion of a nation, nor any portion,
unless when influenced

by passion, or occupied by some

What we do see we judge by our own

We conclude that a man who cries like a

personal interest.
standard.

child on slight occasions

acting

or

suffering

must always be incapable of

with dignity

;

and that one who

allows himself to be called a liar would not be ashamed
of any baseness.

Our writers also confound the distinc-

tions of time and place ; they combine in one character
the

Maratta and the

Bengalese, and tax the present

generation with the crimes of the heroes of the Mahabharata.

It might be argued, in opposition to many un-

favorable testimonies, that those

who have known the

Indians longest have always the best opinion of them ;
but this is rather a compliment to human nature than to
It is more
them, since it is true of every other people.
in point, that all persons who have retired from India
think better of the people they have

left,

after compar-

ing them with others, even of the most justly-admired
nations."

But what

is

still

more extraordinary than the ready

acceptance of judgments unfavorable to the character of
the Hindus, is the determined way in which public opin-

swayed by the statements of certain unfavorable
critics, has
persistently ignored the evidence which
members of the Civil Service, officers and statesmen
men of the highest authority have given again and
ion,

—

again, in direct opposition to these unfavorable opinions.
* This statement

may well be doubted.

The missionary staff in

India is very large and has been for years past.

There is no reason to
doubt that many of its members are well informed respecting Hindoo
character in all grades of society. Am. Pubs.

—

TRUTHFUL CHARACTER OF THE HINDUS.

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Here, too, I must ask to be allowed to quote at least a few of these witnesses on the other side.

"Warren Hastings thus speaks of the Hindus in general
" They are gentle and benevolent, more susceptible of gratitude for kindness shown them, and less prompted to vengeance for wrongs inflicted than any people on the
:

face of the earth

;

faithful, affectionate,

submissive to

legal authority."

Bishop Heber said

:

"The Hindus are brave, court-

eous, intelligent, most eager for knowledge and improvement
ment

;

sober,

industrious, dutiful to parents, affection-

uniformly gentle and patient, and

ate to their children,

more easily affected by kindness and attention to their wants and feelings than any people I ever met with."*

" No set of people among the
Elphinstone states

:

dregs of our own great

everywhere amiable, affectionate to their families, kind to their neighbors, and toward all but the government honest and sincere.

Including the Thugs and Dacoits, the mass of crime is less in India than in England.

The Thugs are almost a separate nation, and the Dacoits are desperate ruffians in gangs.

The Hindus are mild and gentle people, more merciful to prisoners than any other Asiatics.

Their

freedom from gross debauchery is the point in which
they appear to most advantage
and their superiority in
purity of manners is not flattering to our self-esteem. "f
Yet Elphinstone can be most severe on the real faults
of the people of India.
He states that, at present, want
of veracity is one of their prominent vices, but he adds %
" that such deceit is most common in people connected

Hindus are so depraved

towns.

The

villagers

as the

are

;

* Samuel Johnson, " India," p. 293.

f See

" History of India," pp. 375-381.

f L. c., p.

215.

LECTURE

80

IT.

with government, a class which spreads far in India, as,

from the nature of the land-revenue, the lowest villager is often obliged to resist force by fraud."*

Sir John Malcolm writes f " I have hardly ever known where a person did understand the language, or where a calm communication was made to a native of India, through a well-informed and trustworthy medium, that the result did not prove, that what had at first been stated as falsehood had either proceeded from fear or from misapprehension.

I by no means wish to state that our Indian subjects are more free from this vice than other nations that occupy a nearly equal position in society, but I am positive that they are not more :

addicted to untruth."

Sir

Thomas Munro bears even stronger testimony.

\ " If a good system of agriculture, unrival-

He writes

:

led manufacturing skill, a capacity to

produce whatever

can contribute to either convenience or luxury, schools established in every village for teaching reading, writing,

and arithmetic, § the general practice of hospitality

and charity among each other, and, above all, a treatment of the female sex full of confidence, respect, and deli* " History of India," p. 218.

"

f Mill's

History of India," ed. Wilson, vol. i., p. 370.

t L. c., p. 371.

£ Sir Thomas Munro estimated the children educated at public schools in the Madras presidency as less than one in three. But low as it was, it was, as he justly remarked, a higher rate than existed till

very lately in most countries of Europe.

– Elphinstone, " Hist, of
India," p. 205.

In Bengal there existed no less than 80,000 native schools, though,
doubtless, for the most part,
of a poor quality.

According
to a

Government Report of 1835, there was a village-school for every 400
persons.

– Missionary Intelligencer," IX. 183-193.

Ludlow (" British India," I. 62) writes

:

" In every Hindu village

which has retained its old form I am assured that the children gen-

TRUTHFUL CHARACTER OF THE HINDUS.

81

cacy, are among the signs which denote a civilized people

—then the Hindus are not inferior to the nations of

Europe—and if civilization is to become an article of trade between England and India, I am convinced that

England will gain by the import cargo.”

My own experience with regard to the native character has

Those Hindus

been, of course, very limited.

whom I have had the pleasure to know personally in Europe may be looked upon specimens, it

as exceptional, as the best

may be, that India could produce.

Also,

my intercourse with them has naturally been such that it could hardly have brought out the darker sides of human

During the last twenty years, however, I have had some excellent opportunities of watching a number nature.

of native scholars under circumstances where it difficult to detect

erary

a man's true character

work and, more

versy.

particularly,

in

— mean

I

is

not

in lit-

literary contro-

I have watched them carrying on such controver-

sies both among

themselves and with certain European
and I feel bound to say that, with hardly one
exception, they have displayed a far greater respect for
truth and a far more manly and generous spirit than we
are accustomed to even in Europe and America.

They
have shown strength, but no rudeness nay, I know that
nothing has surprised them so much as the coarse invective to which certain
Sanskrit scholars have condescended,

;

scended, rudeness of speech being, according to their

view of human nature, a safe sign not only of bad breedbut of want of knowledge.

When they were
wrong, they have readily admitted their mistakes when

ing,

;

they were right, they have never sneered
erally are able to read, write, and cijih

at their Euro-

but where we have swept
away the village-system, as in Bengal, there the village-school has
also disappeared.

"

;

,

LECTURE

82

II.

There has been, with few exceptions,
pean adversaries.
no quibbling, no special pleading, no untruthfulness on
their part, and certainly none of that low cunning of the

down and publishes what he knows

scholar who writes

perfectly well to be false, and snaps his fingers at those

who still value truth and self-respect more highly than
victory or applause at any price.

Here, too, we might
possibly gain by the import cargo.

Let me add that I have been repeatedly told by English merchants that

commercial honor stands higher

in

India than in any other country, and that a dishonored
bill is hardly

known there.

have left to the last the witnesses who might otherwise have been suspected— I mean
the Hindus themselves.

selves.

The whole of their literature from one end to

the other is pervaded by expressions of love and rever-

ence for truth.

meaning.

Their very word for truth

It is sat or satya, sat

full of

is

being the participle

of the verb as, to be.

True, therefore, was with them

simply that which

The English sooth is connected

is.

with sat, also the Greek ov for soov, and the Latin sens
in pi'cesens.

We are all very apt to consider truth to be what is
trowed by others, or believed in by large majorities.
That kind of truth is easy to accept. But whoever has
once stood alone, surrounded by noisy assertions, and
overwhelmed by the clamor of those who ought to

know better, or perhaps who did know better – call him
Darwin, Colenso or Stanley, or any other
name he knows what a real delight it is to feel in his
heart of hearts, this is true this is this is s a t whatever daily, weekly, or
quarterly papers, whatever bishGalileo or

–

–

–

–

ops, archbishops, or popes, may say to the contrary.

Another name

for truth is the Sanskrit r i t a,

which

TRUTHFUL CHARACTER OF THE HINDUS.

originally seems to
and it a

is

have meant straight

direct

,

83

while

,

untrue, false.

Now one of the highest praises bestowed upon the
gods in the Yeda is that they are satya, true, truthful,
trustworthy

;

* and it is well known that both in modern

men always ascribe to God or to their

and ancient times,
gods those

qualities

which they value

most in them-

selves.

Other words applied to the gods as truthful
are, a d r o g h a,

lit.

means, he whose word

is

beings

Adroglia- va/j

not deceiving. f

Thus Indra,

never broken.

the Yedic Jupiter, is said to have been praised by the fathers £ " as

reaching the

standing on the summit, true

enemy, overcoming him,
of speech, most powerful

in thought."

DroghavaA,§ on the contrary, is used for deceitful
Thus YasislVAa, one of the great Vedic poets,
" If I had worshipped false gods, or if I believed

men.
says

:

in the gods

friitavedas ?

vainly

—but why art thou angry with

us,

0

May liars go to destruction !"

Satyam, as a neuter, is often used as an abstract,
and

is

several

truth

,

But

then rightly translated by truth.

means that which is, the
passages in
I think

the

true, the real

Rig- Veda

;

it

also

and there are

where,

instead

of

we ought simply to translate satyam

It sounds,

by the true, that is, the real, to overrule
no doubt, very well to translate Satyena uttabhita.
and I bebhinnīA by " the earth is founded on truth

||

lieve every translator has taken

* Rig-Veda I. 87, 4

;

145, 5

;

174, 1

;

satya in

that sense

V. 23, 2.

f Rig-Veda III. 32, 9 ; VI. 5, 1.

t Rig-Veda VI. 22, 2.

§ Rig-Veda III. 14, 6.

This is the favorite expression of Plato for the Divine, which
Cary, Davis, and others render " Real Being." A. W.

|

—

,

LECTURE

84

II.

Ludwig translates, " Von der Wahrheit ist die Erde gestützt." But such an idea, if it conveys any tangible meaning at all, is far too abstract for those early poets and philosophers.

They meant to say " the earth, such as we see it, is held up, that is, rests on something real, though we may not see it, on something which they here.

called the Real,* and to which, in course of time, they gave many more names, such as It it a, the right,

B r a liman," etc.
Of course where

there

that strong reverence for

is

truth, there must also

be the sense of guilt arising from
thus we hear one poet pray that the

And
waters may wash him clean, and carry off all his sins
untruth.

and all untruth

:

" Carry away, ye waters, f whatever evil there is in
me, wherever I may have deceived, or may have cursed,
and also all untruth (anritam). " J
Or again, in the Atharva-Veda IY. 16
" May all thy fatal snares, which stand spread out
seven by seven and threefold, catch the man who tells a
:

may they pass by him who tells the truth !"
From the Brahnmnas, or theological treatises of the

lie,

Brahmans, I shall cite a few passages only
" Whosoever speaks the truth, makes the fire on his
:

§

* Sometimes they trace even

this

Satya or Rita.

the Real or

Right, to a still higher cause, and say (Rig- Veda X. 190, 1)

:

Right and Real was born from the Lighted Heat from
thence was born Night, and thence the billowy sea. From the sea
was born Samvatsara, the year, he who ordereth day and night, the
Lord of all that moves (winks). The Maker (dha.tr i) shaped Sun and
Moon in order he shaped the sky, the earth, the welkin, and the
" The

;

;

highest heaven."
f Rig-Veda I. 23, 22.
\

Or

false."

it

may mean, " Wherever

I

may have

deceived, or sworn

§ iS'atapatha Brahmana II. 2, 3, 19.

Truthful character of the Hindus.

own

85

np, as if he poured butter into the
His own light grows larger, and from tomorrow to to-morrow he becomes better. But
whosoever speaks untruth, he quenches the fire on his altar,
his own light
as if he poured water into the lighted fire
altar

blaze

lighted fire.

;

grows smaller and smaller, and from to-morrow to tomorrow he becomes more wicked.
Let man therefore
speak truth only." *

And again

:

" A man becomes impure by uttering

f

falsehood."

And again £ " As a man who steps on the edge of a
sword placed over a pit cries out, I shall slip, I shall slip
into the pit, so let a man guard himself from falsehood
:

(or sin)."

In later times we see the respect for truth carried to

such an extreme, that even a promise, unwittingly made,
is

considered to be binding.

In the Ka^Aa-Upanishad, for instance, a father

troduced offering what

is

called an ALW-sacrifice,

everything is supposed to be given up.

is in-

where

His son, who is

standing by, taunts his father with not having altogether
fulfilled

his

vow, because he has not sacrificed

his son.

Upon this, the father, though angry and against his will,
is

Again, when the son

obliged to sacrifice his son.

arrives in the lower world, he

is

allowed by the Judge

of the Dead to ask for three favors,

lie then asks to be

restored to life, to be taught some sacrificial mysteries,

and, as the third boon, he asks to know what becomes of

man after he is dead.

tries in

tion.

Yama, the lord of the Departed,

from answering this last quesBut he, too, is bound by his promise, and then
vain to be

let off

* Cf. Muir, " Metrical Translations," p. 268.
(Sat.

Br. III.

1, 2,

10.

t

Taitt. Aranyaka X. 9.

LECTURE

86

II.

follows a discourse on life after death, or immortal life, which forms one of the most beautiful chapters in the

ancient literature of India.

The whole plot of one of the great epic poems, the Ramayana, rests on a rash promise given by Dasaratha, king of Ayodhya, to his second wife, Kaikeyi, that he would grant her two boons. In order to secure the succession to her own son, she asks that Rama, the eldest son by the king's other wife, should be banished for fourteen years.

Much as the king repents his promise,

Rama, his eldest son, would on no account let his father break his word, and he leaves his kingdom to wander in the forest with his wife Sita and his brother Lakshmana.

After the father's death, the son of the second wife declines the throne,

and comes to Rama to persuade him

to accept the kingdom of

his father.

But all in vain.

Rama will keep his exile for fourteen years, and never disown his father's promise. Here follows a curious dialogue between a Brahman A'abali and Prince Rama, of which I shall give some extracts *

" The Brahman, who is a priest and courtier, says,
:

,

Well, descendant of Raghu, do not thou, so noble in

and austere in character, entertain, like a common man, this useless thought. What man is a kinsman of any other ? What relationship has any one with another ? A man is born alone and dies alone. Hence he who is attached to any one as his father or his mother, is to be regarded as if he were insane, for no sentiments,

Thou oughtest not to abandon kingdom and stay here in a sad and one belongs to another.

don't thy

father's

miserable abode, attended with
self

be

inaugurated king

in

many trials.

Let thy-

the wealthy

Ayodhya.

* Muir, "Metrical Translations," p. 218.

TRUTHFUL CHARACTER OF THE HINDUS.

S7

Dasaratha, thy father is nothing to thee, or thou to him

;

the king is one, and thou another, do therefore what is said.

.

.

Then offer oblations

to the departed spirits (of

but see what a

For what can a dead man eat ? If

what is eaten by one here enters into the body of another (viz., of the departed), let ~~£~~raddhas be offered to those who are travelling they need not then get food to eat on their journey. These books (the Vedas), (which

thy forefathers) on prescribed days
waste of food

;

!

;

enjoin

men to) sacrifice,

give,

consecrate themselves,

and forsake the world, are composed

by clever men to induce others to bestow gifts. Authoritative words do not fall from heaven.

Let me,

and others like yourselves, embrace whatever assertion is supported by reason.

Adhere to what is apparent to the senses, and reject what is invisible.

This world is
the next world

do thou therefore enjoy pleasure, for every virtuous man does not gain it.

Virtuous men are

greatly distressed, while the unrighteous are seen to be practise austerities,

.
.
.
•

happy.'

"

These positivist sentiments sound strange, particularly from the mouth of a Brahman. But the poet evidently wishes to represent a

Brahman living at court, who has

an argument ready for anything and everything that is likely to please his king.

But what does Rama answer?

"The words," he

" which you have addressed to me, though they recommend what seems to be right and salutary, advise, in fact, the contrary.

The sinful transgressor, who lives according to the rules of heretical systems, obtains no esteem from good men.

It is good conduct that marks

says,

a man to be noble or ignoble, heroic or a pretender to manliness, pure or impure.

Truth and mercy are immemorial characteristics of a king's conduct.

Hence

LECTURE

8S

II.

is in its essence truth.

On truth the word

Both sages and gods have esteemed truth.

The man who speaks truth in this world attains the
highest imperishable state.

Men shrink with fear and

horror from a liar as from a serpent.

In this world the

royal rule

is

based.

chief element in virtue

everything.

Truth

rests on truth.

truth

;

it is

called the basis of

in the world ; virtue always

All things are founded on truth

ing is higher than it.

to

is

is lord

;

noth-

Why, then, should I not be true

my promise, and faithfully observe the truthful in-

junction given by my father ?

Neither through covet-

ousness, nor delusion, nor ignorance, will I, overpowered

by darkness, break through the barrier of truth, but
remain true to my promise to my father.

How shall I,
having promised to him that I would thus reside in the
forests, transgress his injunction, and do what Bharata

recommends ?"

The other epic poem too, the Mahabharata, is full of
episodes showing a profound regard for truth and an almost slavish submission to a
pledge once given. The
death of Bhishma, one of the most important events in
the story of the Mahabharata, is due to his vow never to

hurt a woman.

He is thus killed by Aikhandin, whom

he takes to be a woman.*

Were I to quote from all the law-books, and from still
later works, everywhere you would hear the same keynote of truthfulness vibrating
through them all.

We must not, however, suppress the fact that, under
certain circumstances, a lie was allowed, or, at all events,

Thus Gautama says j*

excused by Indian lawgivers.

" An untruth spoken by people under the influence of
:

* Holtzmanu, " Das alte indisclie Epos," p. 21, note 83.
f V.

TRUTHFUL CHARACTER OF THE HINDUS.

80

anger, excessive joy, fear, pain, or grief, by infants, by
very old men,

by persons laboring under a delusion,

being under the influence of drink, or by madmen, does
not cause the speaker to fall, or, as we should say, is a

*

venial, not a mortal sin."

This is a large admission, yet even in that open admission there

a certain amount of honesty.

is

Again and
Nay,

again in the Mahabharata is this excuse pleaded, f

there is in the Mahabharata % the well-known story of

Kausika,

called

Satyavadin,

the

Truth-speaker,

who

He once saw

goes to hell for having spoken the truth.

The

up soon after them, and asked Kausika,
which way the fugitives had taken. lie told them the
truth, and the men were caught by the robbers and

men flying into the forest before robbers (dasyu).
robbers came

The

by various writers as not

* This permission to prevaricate was still further extended.

following five untruths

are enumerated

constituting mortal sins

– namely, at the time of marriage, during

dalliance,

when

life

is

and

for

the sake of

threatened,

in

when the

danger,

loss of

Brahmana.

a

property

Again,

is

another

cites the declaration that an untruth is venial if it is spoken at the time of marriage, during dalliance, in jest, or while suffering great pain.

It is evident that Venus laughed at lovers'

oaths in India as well as elsewhere and that false testimony exMann declared that in some cases

tracted by torture was excused.

the giver of false evidence from a pious motive would not lose his

indeed, that whenever the death of a man of any of

seat in heaven

the four castes would be occasioned by true evidence, falsehood was even better than truth. He gives as the primeval rule, to say what is

(rue and what is pleasant, but not what is true and unpleasant, or

what is pleasant and not true. 'The Vishnn-purana gives like counsel,

adding the following aphorism: "A considerate man will always

cultivate, in act, thought, and speech, that which is good for living

beings, both in this world and in the next." About the same license

appears to be used in this country and winked at. A. W.

writer

;

;

—

f I.

3412

;

III.

13844

t Mahabharata VIII.

;

VII. 8712

3448.

;

VIII. 3436, 3464.

LECTURE

00

killed.
Rut Kausika, we are
having spoken the truth.

II.

told,

went

to

hell for

The Hindus may seem to have been a priest-ridden
race,

and their devotion to sacrifice and ceremonial is
Yet this is what the poet of the Maha-

well known.

bharata dares to say

" Let a thousand

:

sacrifices (of a horse)

weighed in the balance

and truth be

– truth will exceed the thousand

sacrifices."*

These are words addressed by Aakuntala, the deserted
King Dushyanta, when he declined to recogAnd when he refuses to listen to
nize her and his son.
her appeal, what does she appeal to as the highest auwife, to

–

The voice of conscience.

" If you think I am alone," she says to the king,
" you do not know that wise man within your heart,
lie knows of your evil deed
in his sight you commit
sin.

A man who has committed sin may think that no
one knows it.

The gods know it and the old man
thority ?

—

within." f
This must suffice.
to represent

I say once more that I do not wish
the people of India as two hundred and
fifty-three millions of angels, but

I

do wish

it

to be

understood and to be accepted as a fact, that the damaging charge of untruthfulness
brought against that people
is

utterly unfounded with regard to ancient times.

It is

not only not true, but the very opposite of the truth.

As to modern times, and I date them from about 1000
after Christ, I can only say that,

after reading the ac-

counts of the terrors and horrors of

Mohammedan rule,

my wonder is that so much of native virtue and truth* Muir, 1. c. p. 268

;

Mahabhaiata I. 3095.

f Mahabharata I. 3015-16.

TRUTHFUL CHARACTER OF THE HINDUS.

You might as well expect
fulness should have survived.

pect

a

mouse

to

91

speak the truth before a

Hindu before a Mohammedan judge.*

cat, as

a

If you frighten a

child, that child will tell a lie
if you terrorize millions,
you must not be surprised if they try to escape from
;

your fangs. Truthfulness is a luxury, perhaps the
greatest, and let me assure you, the most expensive
luxury in our life and happy the man who has been
able to enjoy it from his very childhood.
It may be easy

—

enough in our days and in a free country, like England,

—

tell a lie
but the older we grow, the harder
we find it to be always true, to speak the truth, the
whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The Hindus
They too knew how hard,
too had made that discovery.
nay how impossible it is, always to speak the truth, the
never to

r

and nothing but the truth.
There is a
Brahmawa, to my mind full
of deep meaning, and pervaded by the real sense of

His kinstruth, the real sense of the difficulty of truth.
man said to Anma Aupavesi, "Thou art advanced in
whole truth,

short story in the datapath a

years, establish thou the sacrificial fires."

He replied

:

"Thereby you tell me henceforth to keep silence.

For

he who has established the fires must not speak an untruth, and only by not
speaking at all, one speaks no
untruth.

To

that

extent the service of the sacrificial

fires consists in truth."

I

f

doubt whether in any other of the ancient literatures

of the world you will find traces of that extreme sensitiveness of conscience which
despairs of our ever speak-

ing the truth,

and which declares silence gold, and

* This explains satisfactorily

how the Hindoos became liars, and

of course admits that they did become so.- Am. Pubs.

f Satapatha Brahmana, translated

the East," vol. xii., p. 313, § 20.

by Eggeling, "Sacred Books of

LECTURE

92

speech

silver,

II.

though in a much higher sense than our
proverb.

What I should wish to impress on those who will soon
find themselves the rulers of millions of human beings in
India,

is the

duty to shake off national prejudices, which
are apt to degenerate into a kind of madness.

I have

known people with a brown skin whom I could look up
my betters.

Look for them in India, and you will
and if you meet with disappointments, as no
doubt you will, think of the people with white skins
whom you have trusted, and whom you can trust no
to as

find them,

more.

We are all apt to be Pharisees in international
I read only a few days ago in a pamphlet

judgments.

written by an enlightened politician, the following words

:

" Experience only can teach that nothing is so truly
astonishing to a morally depraved people as the phenomenon of a race of men in
whose word perfect confiThe natives are conscious
dence may be placed *.

of their inferiority in nothing so much as in this.

They

require to be taught rectitude of conduct much more
than literature and science."

If you approach the Hindus with such feelings, you
will teach them neither rectitude, nor science, nor literIsay, they might appeal to

their own literature,
ature.
even to their law-books, to teach us at least one lesson of
.

.

.

truthfulness, truthfulness to ourselves, or, in other words,
humility.

What does Yay/Iavalkya say

?

f

—

" It is not our hermitage," he says our religion we
might say " still less the color of our skin, that proTherefore let
virtue must be practiced.
duces virtue

—

;

* Sir Charles Trevelyan, " Christianity and Hinduism," p. 81.
f IV. 65.

TRUTHFUL CHARACTER OF THE HINDUS.

no one do

to

others what

lie

93

would not have done to

himself."

And the laws of the Manavas, which were so much abused by Mill, what do they teach ? *

" Evil-doers think indeed that no one sees them

;

but

the gods see them, and the old man within."

" Self is the witness of Self, Self is the refuge of Self.

Do not despise thy own Self, the highest

witness of

men." f

" If, friend, thou

thinkest

thou

art self-alone, re-

member there is the silent thinker (the Highest Self)

always within thy heart, and he sees what

is

good and

what is evil." \

"O

friend,

from thy very

whatever good thou mayest have done

birth, all will go to the dogs, if thou

Speak an untruth."

Or in VasislpAa, XXX. 1

:

" Practice righteousness, not unrighteousness
truth, not untruth ; look far, not near ; look

;

Speak

up toward

the highest, not toward anything low."

No doubt there is moral depravity in India, and
where is there no moral depravity in this world ? But
to appeal to international statistics would be, I believe, a
dangerous game. Nor must we forget that our standards of morality differ, and, on
some points, differ considerably from those recognized in India
not wonder if sons do not at once condemn as criminal
what their fathers and grandfathers considered right.
Let us hold by all means to our sense of what is right
and what is wrong but in judging others, whether in
public or in private life, whether as historians or politicians, let us not forget
that a kindly spirit will never do

;

;

* Yin. 85.

t

\ in. 90.

t

YIII. 92.

any harm.

LECTURE

II.

Certainly I can imagine nothing more mis-
chievous, more dangerous, more fatal to the permanence
young civil ser-
of English rule in India, than for the
vants to go to that country with the idea that it is a sink
for no one is so
wrong,
whether
in
public
or
in
sure to go
private life, as
of moral depravity, an ants' nest of lies
he who says in his haste
:
;
" All men are bars."

LECTURE

III.

HUMAN INTEREST OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE.

My first lecture was intended to remove the prejudice that India

is

and always must be a strange country

to

and that those who have to live there will find themselves stranded, and far away from that living stream of thoughts and interests which carries us along in England us,

and in other countries of Europe.

My second lecture was directed against another prejudice, namely, that the people of India with whom the

young civil servants will have to pass the best years of their life are a race so depraved morally, and more parany regard for truth, that they

to us, and that any real fellowship or friendship with them is quite out of the

ticularly so devoid of

must always remain strangers question.

To-day I shall have to grapple with a third prejudice, namely, that the literature of India, and more especially the classical Sanskrit literature, whatever may be its interest to the scholar

teach us which

and the antiquarian, has

we cannot

learn

better

little

to

from other

sources, and that at all events it is of little practical use to young civilians.

If only they learn

to express them-

selves in Hindustani or Tamil, that is considered quite
enough

;

may, as they have to deal with

the ordinary affairs of
else,

life,

and

as,

men and with

before everything

they are to be men of the world and

men of busi-

ness, it is even supposed to be dangerous, if they allowed

LECTURE

96

III.

themselves to become absorbed in questions of abstruse scholarship or in researches on ancient religion, mythology, and philosophy.

I

take the very opposite opinion, and I should advise

every young man

who wishes to enjoy his life in India,
and to spend his years there with profit to himself and
to others, to learn Sanskrit,

I

and to learn it well.

know it will be said, That can be the use of San-

skrit at the present day ?

Is not

Sanskrit a dead lan-

And are not the Hindus themselves ashamed
of their ancient literature
Do they not learn English,

guage ?

?

and do they not prefer Locke, and Hume, and Mill to
their ancient poets and philosophers ?

No doubt Sanskrit, in one sense, is a dead language.
more than two thousand years ago, about 500 b.c. commanded his
disciples to preach in the dialects of the people
and

King Asoka, in the third century b.c., when he put up
his Edicts, which were intended to be read, or at least
to be understood by the people, had them engraved on
rocks and pillars in the various local dialects from Cabul *
in the north to Ballabhi in the south, from the sources
of the Ganges and the Jumna to Allahabad and Patna,
nay even down to Orissa. These various dialects are as
different from Sanskrit as Italian is from Latin, and we
have therefore good reason to suppose that, in the third
century b.c., if not earlier, Sanskrit had ceased to be the
spoken language of the people at large.

There is an interesting passage in the Jullavagga,
where we are told that, even during Buddha's lifetime,
some of his pupils, who were Brahmins by birth, could not speak Sanskrit, I

believe, a dead language

sand years ago.

,

;

* See
1877.

Cunningham, " Corpus Inscriptionum Indicaram," vol.

i.,

HUMAN INTEREST OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE.

plained that people spoiled the

97

words of Buddha by

every one repeating them in his own dialect

(nirutti).

They proposed to translate his words into Sanskrit but he declined, and commanded that each man should learn ;

his doctrine in his own language.*

And there is another passage, quoted by Hardy in his Manual of Buddhism, p. 186, where we read that at the time of Buddha's first preaching each of the countless listeners thought that the sage was looking toward him, and was speaking to him in his own tongue, though the language used was Magadhi. Sanskrit, therefore, as a language spoken by the people at large, had ceased to exist in the third century B.C.

Yet such is the marvellous continuity between the past and the present in India, that in spite of repeated social convulsions, religious

reforms, and

foreign

invasions,

Sanskrit may be said to be still the only language that is spoken over the whole extent of that vast country.

Though

Buddhist

the

sovereigns

published

their

edicts in the vernaculars, public inscriptions and private official documents continued to be composed

during the

last

two thousand years.

in Sanskrit

And though the

language of the sacred writings of Buddhists and Jainas was borrowed from the vulgar dialects, the literature of India never ceased to be written in Paninian Sanskrit, while the few exceptions, as, for instance, the use of Prakrit by women and inferior characters in the plays of Kalidasa and others, are themselves not without an

important historical significance.

* JTullavagga Y. 33, 1.

The expression used is Kh andaso arope-

xna'ti.

f See Rhys Davids,
vol. xi., p. 142.

Buddhist Suttas, " Sacred Books of the East,"

LECTURE

98

III.

Even at the present moment,

after a century of Engand English teaching, I believe that Sanskrit is more widely understood in India than Latin was in lish rule

Europe at the time of Dante.

Whenever I receive a letter from a learned man in it is written in Sanskrit. Whenever there is a

India,

controversy on cpiestions of law and religion, the pamphlets published in India are written in Sanskrit. are

journals

There

written in Sanskrit which must entirely

depend for their support on readers who prefer that classical language to the vulgar dialects.

There is The

Pandit, published at Benares, containing not only editions of ancient texts, but treatises on modern subjects, reviews of books published in England, and controversial articles, all in Sanskrit.

Another paper of the same kind is the Pratna-Kamra-nandini, " the Delight of lovers of old things," published likewise at Benares, and full of valuable materials.

There is also the Vidyodaya, " the Rise of Knowledge," a Sanskrit journal published at Calcutta, which sometimes contains important articles. There are probably others, which I do not know.

There is a monthly serial published at Bombay, by M. Moreshwar Kunte, called the Shad-dai'shana-Chintanika or " Studies in Indian Philosophy," giving the

,

text of the ancient systems of philosophy, with commen-

and treatises, written in Sanskrit, though in this accompanied by a Marathi and an English transla-

taries

case
tion.

Of the Rig-Yeda, the most ancient of Sanskrit books,
two editions are now coming out in monthly numbers,
the one published at Bombay, by what may be called the
liberal party, the other at Prayaga (Allahabad) by Dayananda Sarasvati, the
representative of Indian orthodoxy.

f

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HUMAN INTEREST OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE.

The former

gives

a

paraphrase in

Sanskrit,

99

and a

the latter a full exMarathi and an English translation
planation in Sanskrit, followed by a vernacular commen;
tary.

These books are published by subscription, and

the list of subscribers among the natives of India is very
considerable.

There are other journals, which are chiefly written in
the spoken dialects, such as Bengali, Marathi, or Hindi
;

but they contain occasional articles in Sanskrit, as, for
instance, the II ar i s&an dra&an d ri ka, published at Benares,

the Tattvabodhini, published at Calcutta, and several

more.

It was

only the other day that

I saw in the

Liberal

.

the journal of Keshub Chunder Sen's party,* an account,
of a meeting between Brahmavrata Samadhyayi, a Vedic

Nuddea, and Kashinath Trimbak Telang, a
University of Bombay.

The one came
from the east, the other from the west, yet both could
scholar of

M.A.

of the

converse fluently in Sanskrit.

more extraordinary is the number of Sanskrit texts, issuing from native presses, for which there seems to be a large demand, for if we write for copies to be Still

sent to England, we often find that, after a year or two,

the copies have been bought up in India itself.

That would not be the case with Anglo-Saxon texts in England, or with Latin texts in Italy

But more than this, we are told that the ancient epic poems of the Mahabharata and Kamayawa are still all

!

T

recited in the temples for the benefit of visitors, and that

the villages large crowds assemble around the Kathaka, the reader of these ancient Sanskrit poems,

in

* The Brahmo-Samaj, a theistic school.

f The Liberal,

March 12, 1882.

— A. W.

LECTURE

100

often interrupting

when

in's

III.

recitations with tears and sighs,

poem is sent into banishment,
while when he returns to his kingdom, the houses of the
the hero of the

village are

adorned with lamps and garlands.

Such a

whole of the Mahabharata is said to

recitation of the

occupy ninety days, or sometimes half a year.*
people at large require, no

doubt, that

The

the Brahman

narrator (Kathaka) should interpret the old poem, but
there must be some few people present
or imagine they understand,

who understand,

the old poetry of Vyasa

and Valmiki.

There are thousands of Brahmins even now, when so
little inducement exists for Vedic studies, who know the
and

Avhole of the Big- Veda by heart and can repeat it
what applies to the Big- Veda applies to many other
;

books.

But even if Sanskrit were more of a dead language
than it really is, all the living languages of India, both

Aryan and Dravidian, draw their very life and soul from

On this point, and on the great help that
Sanskrit.):

even a limited knowledge of Sanskrit would render in

* See R. G.

Bhandarkar, Consideration of the date of the Maha-

bharata, Journal of the It. A. S. of Bombay, 1872

Talboys Wheeler,

" History of India," ii. 365, 572 Holtzmann, " Tiber das alte in;

;

Phear, " The Aryan Village in India and

That the Mahabharata was publicly read in the
seventh century a.d., we learn from Bana see Journal of the Royal
Asiatic Society, Bombay, vol. x., p. 87, note.

A. W.

" Hibbert Lectures," p. 157.

f

" Every person acquainted with the spoken speech of India

t

knows perfectly well that its elevation to the dignity and usefulness
of written speech has depended, and must still depend, upon its
borrowing largely from its parent or kindred source that no man
who is ignorant of Arabic or Sanskrit can write Hindustani or
Bengali with elegance, or purity, or precision, and that the condemnation of the
classical languages to oblivion would consign the
dische Epos," 1881, p. 1

;

Ceylon, ' ' p. 19.

;

—

;

HUMAN INTEREST OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE.

101

the acquisition of the vernaculars, I, and others better qualified than I am,

out any practical

have spoken so often, though with-

effect, that

need not speak again.

I

Any candidate who knows but the elements of Sanskrit grammar will well understand what I mean, whether his special vernacular may be

Tamil.

To

a

classical

Bengali, Hindustani, or even

scholar

I

can only say

that

between a civil servant who knows Sanskrit and Hindustani, and another who knows Hindustani only, there is about the same difference in their power of forming an intelligent appreciation of India and its inhabitants, as there is between a traveller who visits Italy with a knowledge of Latin, and a party personally conducted to Rome by Messrs. Cook & Co.

Let us examine, however, the objection that Sanskrit literature is a dead or an artificial literature, a little more

carefully, in order to see whether there is not some kind

Some people hold that the literary works which we possess in Sanskrit never had any real life at all, that they were altogether scholastic productions, and of truth in it.

what we

growth of the

that therefore they can teach us nothing of
really care for,

namely, the historical

Hindu mind. Others maintain that at the present
moment, at all events, and after a century of English
rule, Sanskrit literature has ceased to be a motive power
in India, and that it can teach us nothing of what is
passing now through the Hindu mind and influencing it
for good or for evil.

Let us look at the facts.

Sanskrit literature is a wide
and a vague term.

If the Yedas, such as we now have
them, were composed about 1500 b.c., and if it is a fact
that considerable

works continue to be written in San-

dialects to utter helplessness

and irretrievable barbarism."

Wilson, Asiatic, Journal, Jan., 1836

;

vol

xix., p. 15.

H. H,

LECTURE

102

skrit

II I.

even now, we have before us a stream of literary
extending over three thousand four hundred

activity
years.

With the exception of China there is nothing

like this in the whole world.
It is difficult to give an idea of the

and variety of that

literature.

enormous extent

We are only gradually

becoming acquainted with the untold treasures which still
in manuscripts, and with the titles of that still
larger number of works which must have existed
formerly, some of them being still quoted by writers of
exist

the last three or four centuries.*

The Indian Government has of late years ordered a
kind of bibliographical survey of India to be made, and
has sent some learned Sanskrit scholars, both European
and native, to places where collections of Sanskrit mss.
are known to exist, in order to examine and catalogue
them.

Some of these catalogues have been published,
and we learn from them that the number of separate
works in Sanskrit, of which mss. are still in existence,
amounts to about 10,000. This is more, I believe,
than the whole classical literature of Greece and Italy
Much of it, no doubt, will be called mere
put together.

rubbish

but then you know that even in our days the
writings of a very eminent philosopher have been called
>£

mere rubbish." What I wish you to see is this, that
there runs through the whole history of India, through
its three or four thousand years, a high road, or, it is
perhaps more accurate to say, a high mountain-path of
literature.

It may be remote from the turmoil of the
;

plain, hardly visible perhaps to the millions of
human

* It would be a most useful work for any young scholar to draw
up a list of Sanskrit books which are quoted by later writers, but
have not yet been met with in Indian libraries.

" Hibbert Lectures," p. 133.

f

HUMAN INTEREST OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE.
beings in their daily struggle of

life.

103

It may have been

trodden by a few solitary wanderers only.

But to the

human race, to the student of the development of the human mind, those few solitary
wanhistorian of the

derers are after all the true representatives of India from

Do not let us be deceived.

age to age.

The true his-

tory of the world must always be the history of the few

;

and as we measure the Himalaya by the height of Mount
Everest, we must take the true measure of India from
the poets of the Veda, the sages of the Upanishads, the

founders of the Vedanta and Sankhya philosophies, and
the authors of the oldest law-books, and not from the
millions who are born and die in their villages, and who

have never for one moment been roused out of their
drowsy dream of life.

To large multitudes in India, no doubt, Sanskrit literature was not merely a dead
literature, it was simply
non-existent

but the same might be said of almost
every literature, and more particularly of the literatures

;

of the ancient world.

Still,

even beyond

this,

I

am quite prepared to ac-

knowledge to a certain extent the truth of the statement,
that a great portion of Sanskrit literature has never been
living and national, in the same sense in which the Greek

and Roman literatures reflected at times the life of a whole nation and it is quite true besides, that the Sanskrit books which are best known to the public at large, belong to what might correctly be called the Renaissance ;

period of Indian literature, when those who wrote Sanskrit had themselves to learn the language, as we learn Latin, and were conscious that they learned

were writing for a and cultivated public only, and not for the people at large.

This will require a fuller explanation.

—
LECTURE

104:

III.

We may divide the whole of Sanskrit

literature,

beginning with the Rig-Yeda and ending with Dayananda's Introduction to his edition of the Rig-Yeda, his

by no means uninteresting Rig-Yeda-bhūmika, into two that preceding the great Turanian invasion, and that following it. The former comprises the Yedic literature and the Buddhism, the latter all the ancient literature of great periods

:

rest.

If I call the invasion which is generally called the in-

vasion of the Sakas, or the Scythians, or Indo-Scythians, or Turushkas. the Turanian * invasion, it is simply because I do not as yet wish to commit myself more than I

can help as to the nationality of the tribes who took possession of India, or, at least, of the government of India,

from about the

first

century b.c. to the third century

A.D.

They are best known by the name of Yueh-chi

,

this

being the name by which they are called in Chinese

These Chinese chronicles form the principal we derive our knowledge of these tribes, both before and after their invasion of India. Many theories have been started as to their relationship They are described as of pink and white complexion and as shooting from horseback and as there was some similarity between their Chinese name Yueh-chi and the Gotlii or Goths they were identified

by Remusat f with those German tribes, and by others
Tod went
with the Getae the neighbors of the Goths.
even a step farther, and traced the Grats in India and the
chronicles.

source from which

;

,

,

* This vague term, Turanian, so much used in the Parsi Scriptures,
is used here in

the sense of unclassified ethnically.

" Eecherches sur les langues Tartares,"
"Lassen," I. A., vol. ii., p. 359,
|

A. W.

1820, vol.

i.,

p. 327 ;

HUMAN INTEREST OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE.

105

Rajputs back to the Yueh-chi and Getaz* Some light may come in time out of all this darkness, but for the present we must be satisfied with the fact that, between the

first

century before and the third century after our

era, the greatest political revolution

took place in India

owing to the repeated inroads of Turanian, or, to use a still less objectionable term, of Northern tribes.

Their

presence in India, recorded by Chinese historians, is fully confirmed by coins, by inscriptions, and by the traditional history of the country, such as

it is

;

but to my

mind nothing attests the presence of these foreign invaders more clearly than the break, or, I could almost say, the

blank in the Bralimanical literature of India

from the first century before to the third century after our era.f

If

we consider the political and social state of that

country, we can easily understand what would happen in a case of invasion and conquest by a warlike race.

The

invaders would take possession of the strongholds or castles,

and either remove the old Rajahs, or make them

* Lassen, who at first rejected the identification of Gats and Yueli-

was afterward inclined to accept it.

The Yueh-chi appear to have begun their invasion about 130 b.c.

At this period the Grecian kingdom of Baetria, after a brilliant existence of a century, had fallen before the Tochari, a Scythian people.

The new invaders, called 'E <f>fJa\lrai by the Greeks, had been driven out of their old abodes and now occupied the country lying between

Parthia at the west, the Oxus and Surkliab, and extending into Little Thibet. They were herdsmen and nomads. At this time India was governed by the descendants of Asoka, the great propagandist of Buddhism. About twenty years before the Christian era, or probably earlier, the Yueh-chi, under Karranos, crossed the Indus and conquered the country, which remained subject to them for three centuries.

The Chinese historians Sze-ma Tsien and Han-yo, give these accounts, which are however confirmed by numismatic and other evidence. A. W.

chi,
j-

—

e

LECTURE

106

their vassals and agents.

on exactly

as before.

III.

Everything else would then go

The

rents

would be paid, the

taxes collected, and the life of the villagers, that

is,

of

the great majority of the people of India, would go on

almost undisturbed by the change of government.

The

only people who might suffer would be, or, at all events,

might be the priestly caste, unless they should come to terms with the new conquerors.

The

priestly caste,

however, was also to a great extent the literary caste,

and the absence of their old patrons, the native Rajahs, might well produce for a time a complete cessation of literary activity.

The rise of Buddhism and its formal

adoption by King Asoka had already considerably shaken the power and influence of the old Brahmanic hierarchy.

The Northern conquerors, whatever their religion may have been, were certainly not believers in the Veda.

They seem to have made a kind of compromise with

Buddhism, and it is probably due to that compromise, or

to an amalgamation of Aaka legends with Buddhist doctrines, that we owe the so-called Mahayana form of

Buddhism and more particularly the Amitabha worship

—which was finally settled at the Council under KanT

—

islika,

one of the Turanian rulers of India in the first

century a.i>.

If then we divide the whole of Sanskrit literature into

these two periods, the one anterior to the great Turanian invasion, the other posterior to

it,

we may call the liter-

ature of the former period ancient and natural , that of

the latter modern and artificial.

Of the former period we possess, first what has been

,

Knowledge, in the widest sense of

the word a considerable mass of literature, yet evidently a wreck only, saved out of a general deluge

secondly the works collected in the Buddhist Triphaka, called the Veda, i.

—

.

,

;

,

HUMAN INTEREST OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE.

107

now known to us chiefly in what is called the Pali dialect,

the Gatha dialects* and

and probably

Sanskrit,

much added to in later times.

The second period of Sanskrit literature comprehends

Both periods may be subdivided again,
everything else.

but this does not concern us at present.

Now I am quite willing to admit that the literature of
the second period, the modern Sanskrit literature, never

was

a living or national literature.

It

here and there

contains remnants of earlier times, adapted to the literary, religious, and moral
tastes of a later period

and

whenever we are able to disentangle those ancient elements, they may serve to throw
light on the past, and,

to a certain extent, supplement what has been lost in the
literature of the Yedic times.

The metrical Law-books,

for instance, contain old materials which existed during
the Yedic period, partly in prose, as Sutras, partly in
more ancient metres, as Gathas. The Epic poems, the
Mahabharata and Ramayana, have taken the place of the

The Puranas, even, may
old Itihasas and Akhyanas.

contain materials, though much altered, of what was
called in Yedic literature the Puranas.*

But the great mass of that later literature is artificial
or scholastic, full of interesting compositions, and by no
means devoid of originality and occasional beauty yet
with all that, curious only, and appealing to the interests
of the Oriental scholar far more than the broad human
sympathies of the historian and the philosopher.

;

;

It is different with the ancient literature of India, the

literature

religions.

dominated by the Yedic and the Buddhistic
That literature opens to us a chapter in what

has been called the Education of the

Human Race, to

* " Hibbert Lectures," p. 154, note.

—
LECTURE

108

III.

which we can find no parallel anywhere else. Whoever
cares for the historical growth of our language, that is,
of our thoughts
whoever cares for the first intelligible
development of religion and mythology whoever cares
for the first foundation of what in later times we call the
sciences of astronomy, metronomy, grammar, and etymology whoever cares for the
first intimations of phil;

;

;

osophical thought, for the

family

life,

village life,

first

and

attempts at regulating

founded on
and contract (samaya)

state life, as

religion, ceremonial, tradition

must in future pay the same attention to the literature
of the Vedic period as to the literatures of Greece and

Rome and Germany.

As to the lessons which the early literature of Buddhism may teach us, I need not
dwell on them at present.

If

1

may judge from the numerous questions that are
me with regard to that religion and its

addressed to

Buddhism has
become a subject of general interest, and will
and ought to become so more and more.* On that

striking coincidences with Christianity,
already

* In June, 1882, a Conference on Buddhism was held at Sion College,
to
discuss the real or
religions of
apparent
Buddha and Christ.

coincidences between the
Professor Muller addressed two

which were afterward published, declaring
such a discussion in general terms almost an impossibility. " The
name of Buddhism," he says, " is applied to religious opinions, not
letters to the secretary,

only of the most varying, but of a decidedly opposite character, held
by people on the highest and lowest stages of civilization, divided
into endless sects, nay, founded on two distinct codes of canonical
writings." Two Buddhist priests who were reading Sanskrit with
him would hardly recognize the Buddhism now practiced in Ceylon
as their own religion.

He also acknowledged the startling coincidences between Buddhism and Christianity,
and that Buddhism existed at least 400 years
before Christianity.
He would go farther, and feel extremely grateful
if anybody would point out to him the historical channels through

HUMAN INTEREST OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE.

109

whole class of literature, however, it is not my intention to dwell in this short course of Lectures, which can hardly suffice even for a general survey of A^edic litera-

and for an elucidation of the principal lessons which, I think, we may learn from the Hymns, the Brahmas, the Upanishads, and the Sutras.
ture,

Sanskrit literature

It was a real misfortune that became first known to the learned public in Europe through specimens belonging to the second, or, what I

which Buddhism had influenced early Christianity.

" I

have been

looking for such channels all my life," says he, " but hitherto I have found none.

What I have found is that for some of the most startand become far less

ling coincidences there are historical antecedents on both sides if

we knew

startling.
tically the

these antecedents, the coincidences

;

do find in certain Buddhist works doctrines idensame as in Christianity, so far from being frightened, I

If I

feel delighted, for surely truth

is

not the less true because

it

is

believed by the majority of the human race.

" I believe we have

made some progress during the last thirty
time when all heathen religions were
looked upon as the work of the devil.* We know now that they are
years.

I still remember the

stages in a growth, and in a growth not determined by an accidental
environment only, but by an original purpose, a purpose

to

be

realized in the history of the human race as a whole.

Even missionaries have begun to approach the heathen in a new and better spirit.
They look for what may safely be preserved in the religion of their
and on that common ground they try to erect a purer faith
and a better worship, instead of attempting to destroy the sacred
pupils,

foundations of religion, which, I believe, exist, or at least, existed,
in every human heart."

He also states that the publishing of the " Rig-Veda and Commentary," his life-
work, had produced a complete revolution both
in our views of ancient religions and in the religious life of the
Hindus themselves and this not so much on the surface as in its
;

deepest foundations. - A. W.

We

*

have no knowledge of such a belief. The common Chris' ian theory is that
Christianity is as old as the garden of Eden, and that truth in other religions is
the

result of contact, somewhere, at some

i

ime, with Christianity.- Am. Pubs.

LECTURE

110

III.

called, the Renaissance period.

The Bhagavadgita, the
few

plays of Kalidasa, such as Yakuntala or Urvasi, a

episodes from the Mahabharata and Rāmāyana, such as
those of Nala and the Yaśodattabaddha, the fables of

the Hitopadesa, and the sentences of Bhartrihari are, no

and as, at the time when they
became known in Europe, they were represented to
be of extreme antiquity, and the work of a people for-

doubt, extremely curious

;

first

merly supposed to be quite incapable of high literary
efforts, they naturally attracted the attention of men
such as Sir William Jones in England, Herder and

Goethe in Germany, who were pleased to speak of them

It was the fashion at

that time to speak of Kalidasa, as, for instance, Alexander von Humboldt did even
in so recent a work as his

Kosmos, as " the great contemporary of Virgil and Horace in terms of highest
admiration.

age,

who lived at the splendid court of Vikramaditya,'

this Vikramaditya

,

being supposed to be the founder of

Samvat era, 56 b.c.

But all this is now changed.

Whoever the Vikramaditya was who is supposed to have

the

defeated the Yakas, and to have founded another era,
the Samvat era, 56 b.c., he certainly did not live in the
first

century b.c.

Nor are the Indians looked upon any

and their poetry as popular
and artless. On the contrary, they are judged now by
the same standards as Persians and Arabs, Italians or
French and, measured by that standard, such works as
Kalidasa's plays are not superior to many plays that have
long been allowed to rest in dust and peace on the
Their antiquity is no longer
shelves of our libraries.
longer as an

illiterate race,

;

believed in by any critical Sanskrit scholar.

Kalidasa is

mentioned with Bharavi as a famous poet in an inscription * dated a.d. 5S5-6 (507
Yaka era), and for the

* Published

by Fleet in the "Indian Antiquary," 1876, pp. 68-73,

HUMAN INTEREST OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE.

Ill

him much earlier. As
Laws of Manu, which used to be assigned to a
fabulous antiquity,* and are so still sometimes by those
who write at random or at second-hand, I doubt whether,
present I see no reason to place
to the

in their present form,

they can be older than the fourth

am quite prepared to see an
I know this will seem
even later date assigned to them.
heresy to many Sanskrit scholars, but we must try to be
century of our era, nay

honest to ourselves.

I

Is there

any evidence to constrain

us to assign the Manava-dharma-sastra, such as we now
possess

it,

written in continuous Alokas,

anterior to 300 a.d. ?

any date

to

And if there is not, why should

we not openly state it,

challenge opposition, and feel

grateful if our doubts can be removed ?

That Manu was a name of high legal authority before
and that Manu and the Manavam are fre-

that time,

quently quoted in the ancient legal Sutras, is quite true

;

but this serves only to confirm the conviction that the literature which succeeded the Turanian invasion is full of wrecks saved from the intervening deluge.

If

what

we call the Laws of Manu had really existed as a code Code of

of laws, like

the

centuries, is

likely that

it

it

Justinian, during previous

should nowhere have been

quoted and appealed to ?

Varahamihira (who died 587 a.d.) refers to Manu sevbut not to a Manava-dharma-sastra and the only time where he seems actually to quote a number of verses from Manu, these verses are not to be met with in eral times,

;

our text.f

and first mentioned by Dr. Bhao Daji, Journal Asiatic Society, Bombay Branch, vol. ix.

* Sir William Jones fixed their date at 1280 b.c.

Elphinstone as

900 b.c. It has recently been stated that they could not reasonably be placed later than the fifth century b.c.

;

f

A very useful indication of the age of the Dharma-sutras, as com-

LECTURE

112

III.

I believe it will be found that the century in which
Yarahamihara lived and wrote was the age of the literary Renaissance in India.*
That Kalidasa and Bharavi

pared with the metrical Dharma-sastras or Samhitas, is to be found
in the presence or absence in them of any reference to written
documents. Such written documents, if they existed, could hardly
be passed over in silence in law-books, particularly when the nature
of witnesses is discussed in support of loans, pledges, etc.

Now,

we see that in treating of the law of debt and debtors,* the DharmaGautama,
Baudhayana, and Apastamba never mention
Vasislif/ia only refers to written evidence, but

sutras of

evidence in writing.
in a passage -which

may be interpolated,! considering that in other

his treatment of the law of debt is very crude.

respects

metrical code shows here again

its

usual character.

based on ancient originals, and when

It is

Manu's
evidently

simply reproduces them,
But it freely admits

it

gives us the impression of great antiquity.

more modern ingredients, and does
witnesses, fixes (heir

so in our case.

It

speaks of

minimum number at three, and discusses very

minutely their qualifications and disqualifications, without saying a word about written documents. But in one place (VIII. 168) it speaks of the valuelessness of written agreements obtained by force, thus recognizing the practical employment of writing for commercial Professor Jolly, \ it is true, suggests that this verse may

transactions.

be a later addition, particularly as it occurs totuleni verbis in Narada (IV. 55)

but the final composition of Manu's Samhita, such as we possess it, can hardly be referred to a period when writing was not ;

Manu's " Lawall events for commercial purposes. book" is older than Yagrfla-valkya's, in which writing has become a familiar subject. Vishnu often agrees literally with Yagfia-valkya, while Narada, as showing the fullest development of the law of debt, is most likely the latest. § yet used, at

See Bn'hatsanihita, ed. Kern, pref., p. 43

;

Journal of the R. A. S.,

1875, p. 106.

*

Professor Muller rejects the theory of the

Sam vat era and the

ltenaissance of Sanskrit literature in the first century.

Instead, he

* "Tiber das Indische Scliulldreht von J. Jolly,' ']). 291.

t Jolly, 1. c

§ Jolly, 1

c

,

p. 322

,

p. 322.

Vyasa aud Tlurita also.

t L. c., p. 290.

lie places Katyayana and Bnhaspati after Narada, possibly

See also Stenzler, Z d

1).

M. G. ix

664.

HUMAK INTEREST OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE.

113

were famous at that time, we know from the evidence

We also know that during that century

of inscriptions.

the fame of Indian literature had reached Persia, and

acknowledges the existence of a Naka era, bearing date with the coronation of Kanishka, 78 a.d. Although this monarch was a patron of the Buddhists, and the third collection of their sacred books was made under his auspices, our author considers the period of .S'aka or Yuen-chi domination from 24 b.c. till 178 a.d. as a literary interregnum. He is not willing to suggest any date for the Mahabharata He exoneror Ramayana, which appear to have been then extant. ates Indian epic poetry, however, from any imputation of Greek influence.

Not so with astronomy.

Aryabhata, the elder, who described the motion of the earth very accurately, he considers to have had no predecessors and also cites other Indian authors who described the twelve signs of the zodiac with Greek names or their ;

equivalents, and assigned each to a region in the tor, as we now see

it

body of the Creamarked out in our almanacs. In this matter

he is certainly plausible.

The period of the Renaissance and the reign and proper era of Vikramaditya are set down at about 550 a.d. He follows Dr. Bhao Daji, and is sustained by Mr. Fergusson, author of " Tree and Serpent Worship," and other works on religious architecture.

It was

the period of learned and literary men, as well as of active religious " Believers in Buddha and believers in the Veda lived controversy.

together at this time," he remarks, " very much as Protestants and

Roman Catholics do at the present day – fighting when there is an

opportunity or necessity for it, but otherwise sharing the same air as fellow-creatures."

Among a crowd of others we may instance

Dignaga, a Buddhist, Kalidasa, a Siva worshipper, and Manatunga,

Vasubandhu, to whom the

was largely due, was the son of a

Brahman and a student of the Nyaya philosophy as, indeed,

Hiouen-thsang, the Chinese traveller, also studied logic under a Brahmana teacher.

Vikramaditya oscillated between all parties.

Having quarrelled

with the King of Kasmira and Manorhita, the great Buddhist teacher at the convent near Peshawer, he called an assembly of Sastrikas and Sramanas, at which the latter were denounced. He also placed a Gaina, as frequenting the royal court.

revival of Buddhist literature

;

Matrigupta (Kalidasa?) over that country. At his death, however, the regal authority was surrendered to the legitimate king, who in

LECTURE

114

III.

King of Persia, Khosru Xushirvan,

that the

physician,

Barzoi, to India, in order

to

sent his

the

translate

fables of the Pan&atantra, or rather their original, from

successor of Yikrama, on the

This king also called an assembly of divines, and the Buddhists were restored to their former position.

As they seem to have

Iris

turn reinstated Siladitya, the

throne.

constituted the principal men of learning, I

am disposed to believe

that they were the actual restorers of the golden period to India.

The "Nine Gems," Professor Muller is very confident, belong to this period.

He declares that the philosophical Sutras have no ascer-

tained date prior to 300 a.d.

According to him, we need not refer period anterior to the fifth century.

many famous authors to a

Kalidasa, from being the con-

temporary of Augustus, becomes the contemporary of Justinian, and the very books which were most admired by Sanskrit students as specimens of ancient Indian poetry and wisdom find their rightful place in the period of literary renaissance, coinciding with an age of renewed literary activity in Persia, soon to be followed there, as

later in India, by the great Mohammedan conquests.

It appears to

me that he is altogether too iconoclastic. It is more than probable that the apparent lateness of date is due to the destruction of books when the Buddhists were driven out of India. It would be as logical, it seems to me, to assign a post-Christian date to the Vendidad and Yasna because they had been lost and were collected anew under the auspices of a Sassanid king. AVe are told in the second book of the Maccabees that Antiochus Epiphanes burned the Hebrew Scriptures, and that Judas Makkabarus made a new collection yet nobody pretends that they ought to be assigned to the second century b.c.

In fact, we must in due sincerity give some room to faith.

Astronomy was also studied. Aryabhatta the elder had described the earth as making a revolution which produced the daily rising and setting of the sun. Professor Muller thinks he had no predecessors.

Yarhamihira wrote during the reign of Yikramaditya, and employs the Yuga in opposition to the Saka era. It is apparent, however, that the Greek zodiac was employed. Badarayaaa describes the pictorial representations of the Twelve Signs and their relation

;

to the body of Brahman or the Creator :

" The Ram is the head

;

the face of the Creator is the Bull

breast would be the Man-pair

stomach

;

the Maid, the hip

;

;

the heart, the Crab

;

;

the

the Lion, the

the Balance-bearer, the belly

;

the

HUMAN INTEREST OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE.

The famous " Nine Gems," or
Sanskrit into Palilavi.

" the nine

as

classics, ''

115

we should say, have been re-

ferred, at least in part, to the

same age,* and I doubt

whether we shall be able to assign a much earlier date to
anything we possess of Sanskrit literature, excepting
always the Yedic and Buddhistic writings.

Although the specimens of this modern Sanskrit literature, when they first became
known, served to arouse
a general interest, and serve even now to keep alive a
certain superficial

sympathy for Indian literature, more

serious students had soon disposed of these compositions,

and while gladly admitting their claim to be called pretty
and attractive, could not think of allowing to Sanskrit
literature a place among the world -literatures, a place by

the side of Greek and Latin, Italian, French, English, or

German.

There was indeed a time when people began to imagine that all that was worth
knowing about Indian literature was known, and that the only ground on which
Sanskrit

could

claim

a

place

among

the

branches of learning in a university was

its

recognized
usefulness

for the study of the Science of Language.

At that very time, however, now about forty years
ago, a new start was made, which has given to Sanskrit

scholarship an entirely new character.
of that

movement was Burnouf, then

The chief author
professor at the

College do France in Paris, an excellent scholar, but at
eighth (Scorpion), the membrum

;

the Archer, his pair of thighs

;

the

Makara, his pair of knees the Pot, his pair of legs the Fish-pair, his
two feet." Another writer gives them in like series as the members
of Kala or Time.

Other evidence seems even more conclusive
Varahamihira giving the actual Greek names in a Sanskrit dress.

;

;

;

—

A. W.

* Kern, Preface to " Brihatsa?nahita, p. 20.

LECTURE

1X6

the same time a

man of wide views and true historical
man to waste his life on mere

and the last
IS alas and /Sakuntalas.
instincts,

III.

Being brought up in the old tra-

ditions of the classical school in France (his father was

the author of the well-known Greek Grammar), then for
a time a promising

young

barrister,

friends such as Guizot, Thiers,

with

influential

Mignet, Yillemain, at

and with a brilliant future before him, he was
life on pretty Sanskrit ditties.

What he wanted when he threw himself on Sanskrit was
history, human history, world-history, and with an unerring grasp he laid hold of
Vedic literature and Buddhist literature, as the two stepping-stones in the slough
of Indian literature.

He died young, and has left a few

But his

arches only of the building he wished to rear.

spirit lived on in his pupils and his friends, and few
would deny that the first impulse, directly or indirectly,
to all that has been accomplished since by the students
of Vedic and Buddhist literature, was given by Burnouf
and his lectures at the College de France.

What then, you may ask, do we find in that ancient
Sanskrit literature and cannot find anywhere else ? My
answer is

We find there the Aryan man, whom we
know in his various characters, as Greek, Roman, German side,

not likely to spend his

:

man, Celt, and Slave, in an entirely new character.

Whereas in his migrations northward his active and political energies are called out and brought to their highest perfection, we find the other side of the human charac-

the passive and meditative, carried to its fullest growth in India. In some of the hymns of the Rig- Y eda we can still watch an earlier phase. We see the Aryan tribes taking possession of the land, and under the guidance of such warlike gods as Indra and the Maruts, deter,

fending their

new homes against

the assaults

of

the

11

UMAX INTEREST OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE.

11?

black-skinned aborigines as well as against the inroads of

But that period of war soon came

later Aryan colonists.

and when the great mass of the people had
once settled down in their homesteads, the military and

to an end,

have been monopolized by what
by a small aristocracy, while the
great majority of the people were satisfied with spending their days within the
narrow spheres of their villages, little concerned about the outside world, and
conpolitical duties seem

to

we call a caste

is

that

tent with the gifts that nature bestowed on them, with-
out much labor.

22)

We read in the Mahabharata (XIII.

:

" There

is

fruit on the trees in every forest,

every one who likes may pluck without trouble.

which

There

cool and sweet water in the pure rivers here and there.
There is a soft bed made of the twigs of beautiful creepers.
And yet wretched people suffer pain at the door of

is

the rich !"

At first sight we may feel inclined
enjoyment of

to

call

this quiet

mere looking on, a degeneracy
rather than a growth.

It seems so different from what
we think life ought to be. Yet, from a higher point of
life, this

* During times of conquest and migration, such as are represented
to us in the

hymns of the Rig-Veda, the system of castes, as it is
Laws of Manu, would have been a

described, for instance, in the

It is doubtful whether such a system was ever
more than a social ideal, but even for such an ideal the materials
would have been wanting during the period when the Aryas were
first taking possession of the land of the Seven Rivers.

On the

other hand, even during that early period, there must have been a
division of labor, and likewise we expect to find and do find in the
gramas of the Five Nations, warriors, sometimes called nobles,
kings

called priests,

prophets,

leaders,

counsellors, sometimes

judges and working men, whether ploughers, or builders, or roadmakers. These three
divisions we can clearly perceive even in the

simple impossibility.

;

;

early hymns of the Rig-Veda.

I/ECT'TK'E

III.

view it may appear that those Southern Aryans have
chosen the good part, or at least the part good for them,
while we,

Northern

Aryans, have

been careful and

troubled about many things.

It is at all events a

problem worth considering

whether, as there is in nature a South and a North, there

human nature, both

worth developing the active, combative, and political

on one side, the passive, meditative, and philosophical

on the other and for the solution of that problem no

literature furnishes such ample materials as that of the

Yeda, beginning with the Hymns and ending with the

"We enter into a new world not always

Upanishads.

an attractive one, least of all to us

but it possesses one

charm, it is real, it is of natural growth, and like everything of natural growth,

I believe it had a hidden purpose, and was intended to teach us some kind of lesson

that is worth learning, and that certainly we could learn

nowhere else. AVE are not called upon either to admire

we have

or to despise that ancient Yedic literature

simply to study and to try to understand it.

There have been silly persons who have represented

the development of the Indian mind as superior to any

other, nay, who would make us go back to the Yeda or

are not

two hemispheres

also

in

—

;

—

;

;

to the sacred writings of the

Buddhists in order to find

there a truer religion, a purer morality, and a more sub1 shall not even menwriters
names

of

these

or the titles of their

tion the

works.

But I feel equally impatient when I see other

lime philosophy than our own.

scholars criticising the ancient literature of India as if it

were the work of the nineteenth century, as if it repreenemy that must be defeated,
and that can

claim no mercy at our hands.

That the AYda is full of

childish, silly, even to our minds monstrous concep-

sented an

HUMAN INTEREST OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE.

tions,

who would deny ?

But even these monstrosi-

nay, many of them,

we can but make allowance for different ways of

ties are interesting and instructive

if

110

;

thought and language, contain germs of truth and rays
of light, all the more striking because breaking upon us

through the veil of the darkest night.

Here lies

the general, the truly human interest which

the ancient literature of India possesses, and which gives
it

a claim on the attention, not only of Oriental scholars

or of students of ancient history, but of every educated

man and woman.

There are problems which we may put aside for a
we must put aside while engaged each
in our own hard struggle for life, but which will recur
for all that, and which, whenever they do recur, will
stir us more deeply than we like to confess to others, or
even to ourselves.

It is true that with us one day only
out of seven is set apart for rest and meditation, and for
the consideration of what the Greeks called *rd fiey iora*
" the greatest things." It is true that that seventh day
also is passed by many of us either in mere churchgoing routine or in thoughtless
rest.

But whether on
week-days or on Sundays, whether in youth or in old
age, there are moments, rare though they be, yet for
all that the most critical moments of our life, when the
old simple cpiestions of humanity return to us in all
their intensity, and we ask ourselves, What are we ?
What is this life on earth meant for ? Are we to have
no rest here, but to be always toiling and building up
time, ay, which

—

our own happiness out of the ruins of the happiness of

our neighbors ?

And when we have made our home on

made with steam and
electricity, are we really so much happier than
the Hindu in his primitive homestead ?

earth as comfortable as

gas and

it

can be

LECTURE

120

With

III.

as I said just now, in these Northern
where life is and always must be a struggle,
and a hard struggle too, and where accumulation of
wealth has become almost a necessity to guard against
us,

climates,

the uncertainties of old age or the accidents inevitable in
our complicated social life

—with

us, I say,

and in our

society, hours of rest and meditation are but few and far
between.

Romans and Greeks.
long cold winters, in
cultivating

as long as we know the his-

It was the same

tory of the Teutonic races

the

;

it

was the same even with

The European climate, with its
many places also the difficulty of
the conflict of interests between

soil,

small communities, has developed the instinct of selfpreservation (not to say self-indulgence) to such an extent that most of the virtues and most of the vices of

European society can be traced back to that source.
Our own character was formed under these influences,

by inheritance, by education, by necessity. We all lead
a fighting-life ; our highest ideal of life

is a fighting-

We work till we can work no longer, and are
We point with
proud, like old horses, to die in harness.
life.

inward satisfaction to what we and our ancestors have
achieved by hard work, in founding a family or a business, a town or a state.
We point to the marvels of

—

what we call civilization our splendid cities, our highroads and bridges, our
ships, our railways, our telegraphs, our electric light, our pictures, our statues,
our

We imagine we have made life on

music, our theatres.
earth quite perfect

—

in some cases so perfect that we are

almost sorry to leave

it

again.

But the lesson which

both Brahmans and Buddhists are never tired of teaching is that this life is but a
journey from one village to
another, and not a resting-place.

Thus we read

* Boehtlingk, Sprüche, 5101.

*

:

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" As a man journeying to another village may enjoy
a night's rest in the open air, but, after leaving his rest-

ing-place, proceeds again

on his journey the next day,

thus father, mother, wife, and wealth are all hut like a
night's rest to us
ever.

-wise people do not cling

to them for-

, ,

Instead of simply despising this Indian view of life,
might we not pause for a moment and consider whether
their philosophy of life is entirely wrong, and ours entirely right
whether this earth was really meant for
work only (for with us pleasure also has been changed
into work), for constant hurry and flurry
or whether

we, sturdy Northern Aryans, might not have been satisfied with a little less of
work, and a little less of so-called pleasure, but with a little more of thought and
a
r

;

;

little

more of rest.

For, short as our life is, we are not

mere may-flies, that are born
night.

in the

morning

to die at

We have a past to look back to and a future to

look forward to, and

it

may be that some of the riddles

of the future find their solution in the wisdom of the past.

Then why should we always fix our eyes on the present? Why should we always be racing, whether for wealth or for power or for fame? Why should we

rest only?

never rest and be thankful?

deny that the manly vigor, the silent endurance, the public spirit, and the private virtues too, of the citizens of European states represent one side, it may be a very important side, of the destiny which man has to fulfill

on earth.

But there

is

surely another side of our nature, and

to man in his journey which should not be entirely ignored.

If we turn our eyes to the East, and particularly to In-

possibly another destiny open

across this

life,

LECTURE

122

III.

where life is, or at all events was, no very severe
where the climate was mild, the soil fertile,
where vegetable food in small quantities sufficed to keep
the body in health and strength, where the simplest hut
or cave in a forest was all the shelter required, and
where social life never assumed the gigantic, ay monstrous proportions of a London
or Paris, but fulfilled itself within the narrow boundaries of villao-e-communi©
ties
was it not, I say, natural there, or, if you like,
was it not intended there, that another side of human
dia,

struggle,

—

nature should be developed
ive,

— not the active, the combat-

and acquisitive, but the passive, the meditative, and
reflective ?

Can we wonder that the Aryans, who step-

as strangers into some of the happy fields

and valhave looked
upon life as a perpetual Sunday or holiday, or a kind
of long vacation, delightful so long as it lasts, but

ped

leys along the Indus or the Ganges, should

which must come to an end sooner or later ? Why
should they have accumulated wealth ? why should they
have built palaces ? why should they have toiled day
and night ? After having provided from day to day
for the small necessities of the body, they thought they

had the right, it may be the duty, to look round upon
this strange exile, to look inward upon themselves, upward to something not
themselves, and to see whether
they could not understand a little of the true purport of
that mystery which we call life on earth.

Of course we should call such notions of life dreamy,
unpractical, but may not they look upon our

unreal,

notions of

life

as

short-sighted, fussy, and, in the end,

most unpractical, because involving a sacrifice of life for
the sake of life ?

No doubt these are both extreme views, and they have
hardly ever been held or realized in that extreme form

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by any nation, whether in the East or in the West. We
we sometimes allow ourselves
are not always plodding
an hour of rest and peace and thought nor were the
ancient people of India always dreaming and meditating
on rd neyiara, on the great problems of life, but, when

—

called

upon,

heroes,

and

—

we know that they
that,

without

too could tight like

machinery, they could by

patient toil raise even the meanest handiwork into a
work of art, a real joy to the maker and to the buyer.
All then that I wish to put clearly before you is this,
that the Aryan man, who had to fulfil his mission in
India, might naturally be deficient in many of the practical and fighting virtues,
which were developed in the
Northern Aryans by the very struggle without which
they could not have survived, but that his life on earth

had not therefore been entirely wasted. His very view
of life, though we cannot adopt it in this Northern
climate, may yet act as a lesson and a warning to us,
not, for the sake of life, to sacrifice the highest objects

of life.

The greatest conqueror of

antiquity stood in silent

wonderment before the Indian Gynmosophists, regretting that he could not
communicate with them in their
own language, and that their wisdom could not reach
him except through the contaminating channels of sundry interpreters.

That need not be so at present.

Sanskrit is no longer

a difficult language, and I can assure every young Indian
civil servant that if

he will but go to the fountain-head

of Indian wisdom, he will find there,
is

strange and useless,

among much that

some lessons of life which

are

worth learning, and which we in our haste are too apt to
forget or to despise.

Let me read you a few sayings only, which you

may

LECTURE

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still

III.

hear repeated in India when, after the heat of the
*

young assemble together under the
sayings which to them
to us, I fear, mere truism

day, the old and the

shadow of
seem truth

their village tree
;

—

!

" As all have to sleep together laid low in the earth,

why do foolish people wish to injure one another

" A man seeking for eternal happiness (moksha)
?

might obtain it by a hundredth part of the sufferings
which a foolish man endures in the pursuit of riches, f

" Poor men eat more excellent bread than the rich

for hunger gives it sweetness.:}

" Our body is like the foam of the sea, our life like a
:

bird, our

those whom we love does not
why then sleepest thou, my son ? §

company with

last forever ;

" As two logs of wood meet upon the ocean and then
separate again, thus do living creatures meet.

||

" Our meeting with wives, relations, and friends ocLet a man therefore see clearly
ours on our journey.

where he is, whither he will go, what he is, why tarrying here, and why grieving
for anything. *[

" Family, wife, children, our very body and our

They do not belong to us.
wealth, they all pass away.
What then is ours ? Our good and our evil deeds.**
" When thou goest away from here, no one will follow thee. Only thy good and thy
evil deeds, they will
follow thee wherever thou goest. ff
" Whatever act, good or bad, a man performs, of that
by necessity he receives the recompense.^
" According to the Veda §§ the soul (life) is eternal,
* Mahabh. XI. 121.

1 L. c. XU. 872.

f Paflfcac.

n. 127 (117).

** L. c. XH. 12453.

j Mahabh.

V. 1144.

ff L. c.

§ L. c. XU. 12050.
J

L. c. XII. 869.

it L.

XU. 12456.

c. III.

13846 (239).

§§ L. c. HI. 13864.

HUMAN INTEREST OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE.

but the body of

all

creatures is perishable.

125

When the

body is destroyed, the soul departs elsewhere, fettered
by the bonds of our works.

"If I know that my own body is not mine, and yet
that the whole earth is mine, and again that it is both
mine and thine, no harm can happen then.*

"As a man puts on new garments in this world,
throwing aside those which he formerly wore, even so
the Self of man puts on new bodies which are in accordance with his acts. \

"No weapons will hurt the Self of man, no fire will
burn it, no water moisten it, no wind will dry it up.

" It is not to be hurt, not to be burnt, not to be moistened, not to be dried up.
ing,

It is imperishable,

unchang-

immovable, without beginning.

" It is said to be immaterial, passing all understanding,

and unchangeable.

If

you know the Self of man

to be all this, grieve not.

There is nothing higher than the attainment of the
knowledge of the Self. §

" All living creatures are the dwelling of the Self who
enveloped in matter, who is immortal, and spotless.
Those who worship the Self, the immovable, living in a
movable dwelling, become immortal.

" Despising everything else, a wise man should strive
lies

after the knowledge of the Self."

We shall have to return to this subject again, for this
knowledge of the Self is really the Vedanta, that is, the
end, the highest goal of the Yeda.

The highest wisdom

of Greece was " to know ourselves

the highest wisdom of India is "to know our Self."

* Kam. Nitis, 1, 23 (Boehtlingk, 918).
f

Atman, see Lecture VII.

– A. W.

§ Apastaniba Dliarma-sutras I. 8, 22.

t Vishnu-sutras XX.

50-53.

LECTURE

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III.

If I were asked to indicate by one word the distinguishing feature of the Indian character, as I have here

tried to sketch it, I should say it was transcendent

that word, not in

strict technical

,

using

sense, as fixed

by

more general

acceptation, as denoting

mind bent on transcending

the limits of empirical

Kant, but

a

its

in its

knowledge.

There are minds perfectly satisfied with empirical knowledge, a knowledge of facts, well ascertained,

well classified, and well labelled.

assume

power,

very

it

proportions,

vast

Such knowledge may

if knowledge is

and,

may impart great power, real intellectual
man who can wield and utilize it. Our

poAver to the

own age is proud of that kind of knoAvledge, and to be
content with it, and never to attempt to look beyond it,
I believe, one of the happiest states of mind to be in.*

is,

But, for all that, there is a Beyond, and he who has

once caught a glance of it, is like a man who has gazed
at the sun

—wherever he looks, everywhere he sees the

image of the sun. Speak to him of finite things, and he
Avill tell you that the Finite is impossible and meaningSpeak to him of death, and
less without the Infinite.
he will call it birth speak to him of time, and he AA ill
To us the senses
call it the mere shadoAV of eternity.
seem to be the organs, the tools, the most poAverful ento him they are, if not
actually degines of knowledge
ceivers, at all events heavy fetters, checking the flight of
7

;

;

the

spirit.

To us this

earth, this life, all that

we see,

and hear, and touch is certain. Here, Ave feel, is our
home, here lie our duties, here our pleasures. To him
*

Can a state be justly regarded as one of happiness, in which the
essential being is overlooked and not regarded

;

whereas that subtler

essence is the reality which gives life, energy, and purity to all our

motives? Is to be " of the earth, earthy," a greater felicity than to
acknowledge that which is from heaven ? I trow not. A. W,

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this earth

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a thing that once was not, and that again

is

is a short dream from which
Of nothing he professes greater

will cease to be ; this life

we shall

soon awake.

ignorance than of what to others seems to be most certain,

namely what we see, and hear, and touch and as
home, wherever that may be, he knows that cer;

to our

tainly it is not here.

Do not suppose that such men are mere dreamers.
And if we can only bring ourselves to be
Far from it
!

quite honest to ourselves,

we shall have to confess that

at times we all have been visited by these transcendental

aspirations,

and

have been

understand what

able to

Wordsworth meant when he spoke of those
" Obstinate questionings

Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realized. "
;

The transcendent temperament acquired no doubt a
more complete supremacy in the Indian character than

anywhere else but no nation, and no individual, is entirely without that "yearning beyond;" indeed we all know it under a more familiar name namely, Religion.

;

—

It is

necessary, however, to distinguish between religion and

a religion, quite as much as in another branch

of philosophy we have to distinguish between language

A

and a language or many languages.

man may accept

a religion, he may be converted to the Christian religion,

and he may change his own particular religion from time to time, just as he may speak different languages.

But

in order to have a religion, a man must have religion, he must once at least in his life have looked beyond the horizon of this world, and carried away in his mind an impression of the Infinite, which will never leave him

I

lecture

128

again.

III.

A being satisfied with the world of sense, unconscious of

its finite nature,

undisturbed by the limited perceptions of the senses,

or negative character of all concepts.
would be incapable of any religious

Only
knowledge has
when the finite character of all human
human mind to conbeen received is it possible for the
which is beyond the Finite, call it what you
ceive that

Infinite, the Superthe Beyond, the Unseen, the
have been taken
must
step
That
natural, or the Divine.

like,

What
possible.
before religion of any kind becomes
of
character
the
on
it will be, depends
kind of religion

the race which elaborates it, its
and its experience in history.

surroundings in nature,

Now we may seem to know a great many religions—
religions only, of what

speak here, of course, of ancient
or

are sometimes called national

autochthonous

re-

times by individual religions— not of those founded in later
universal prophets or reformers.

seldom know,

Yet, among those ancient religions we

their origin

point,

important

what after all is the most

is re-procreation

Jewish

and their gradual growth. The

first,

very

the

from

presented to us as perfect and complete

real

its

discover

and it is with great difficulty that we can

beginnings

and

its

historical growth.

And take the

religions of the

Greek and the Roman religions, take the

and you

Teutonic, Slavonic, or Celtic tribes,

will find

growth has always passed, long before the time we know

before we know them, and that from

changes

metamorphic

them, all their changes are purely

look to

us

let

Row

hand.

in form of substances ready at

that their period of

—

of

With them,
the ancient inhabitants of India.
one interest by the side of
all, religion was not only
first

embraced
was the all-absorbing interest it
we call philosophy,
not only worship and prayer, but what

many.

It

;

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morality, law, and government— all was pervaded

by re-

ligion.

Their whole life was to them a religion

— every-

thing else was, as it were, a mere concession made to the

ephemeral requirements of this life.

What then

can we learn from the ancient religious

literature of India, or from the

Veda?

Greek reGreek language to discover in the Greek deities the original outlines of certain physical phenomena.

Every schoolboy knows that in Zeus there is something of the sky, in Poseidon of the sea, in Hades of the lower world, in Apollo of the sun, in Artemis of the moon, in Ilephcestos of the fire. But for all that, there is, from a Greek point of view, a very considerable

difference between Zeus and the sky, between Poseidon and the sea, between Apollo and the sun, between Artemis and the moon.

Now what do we find in the Veda ? No doubt here and there a few philosophical hymns which have been quoted so often that people have begun to imagine that We

the Veda is a kind of collection of Orphic hymns. also find some purely mythological hymns, in which the Devas or gods have assumed nearly as much dramatic personality as in the Homeric hymns.

But the great majority of Vedic hymns consists in simIt requires no very profound knowledge of

ligion and

ple invocations of the

fire,

the water, the sky, the sun,

and the storms, often under the same names which afterward became the proper names of Hindu deities, but as yet nearly free from all that can be called irrational or mythological.

There is nothing irrational, nothing I
mean we cannot enter into or sympathize with, in people
imploring the storms to cease, or the sky to rain, or the
sun to shine.

I

though perhaps

it

say there

is

nothing irrational in

might be more accurate

it,

to say that

LECTURE

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III.

surprise anybody who is
there is nothing in it that would
reason, or at all
human
of
growth
acquainted with the
matter how we
not
does
It
events, of childish reason.
confound the
to
mind
childish
call the tendency of the
itself, effect
manifests
manifestation with that which
PersonifiAnimism,
Call it
with cause, act with agent.

we all know what is meant
we
all these names
by it, in the most general sense of
beats
the youngest child who
all know that it exists, and
has fallen, or who scolds his
he
which
the chair against

cation, Metaphor, or Poetry,

;

can
who sings: " Rain, rain, go to Spain,"
to us,
seem
may
this
all
irrational
us that, however

dog, or

teach

inevitable in the first
perfectly rational, natural, ay
mind.
human
the
periods, or the childish age of
of ancient
growth
Now it is exactly this period in the
postulated,
or
presupposed

it is

religion,

which was always

that
but was absent everywhere else,
eda.
Pig-V
the
of
hymns
fore us in the

is

clearly put be-

It is this ancient

human mind which has
chapter in the history of the
literature, while we look
been preserved to us in Indian
Rome or elsewhere.
for it in vain in Greece or
idea of those who call themIt has been a favorite
selves

that
"students of man," or anthropologists,,

order to

m

phases
know the earliest or so-called prehistoric

in the growth of man, we
nations, as we may watch
Africa, Polynesia,

should study the life of savage

it still

in some parts of Asia,

and America.

nothing can be more

There is much truth in this, and

m

which we find collected

useful than the observations

as Waite, Tylor, Lubbock,

the works of such students

confess,

But let us be honest, and

and

many others.

here to

on which we have

of all, that the materials

untrustworthy.

depend are often extremely

What do we know of savage tribes

all.

first

Nor

is

this

HUMAN INTEREST OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE.

beyond the last chapter of

their history ?

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Do we ever

Can we understand after all is everywhere the most important and the most instructive lesson to learn, how they have come to be what they are ? There is indeed their language, and in it we see traces of growth that point to distant ages, quite as much as the Greek of Homer or set an insight into their antecedents ?

stand,

Their language proves

the Sanskrit of the Vedas.

in-

deed that these so-called heathens, with their complicated systems of mythology, their artificial customs, their unintelligible whims and savageries, are not the creatures of to-day or yesterday.

Unless we admit a special creation for these savages, they must be as old as

the Hindus, the Greeks and Romans, as old as we ourselves.

We may assume, of course, if we like, that

their life has

been stationary, and that they are to-day

what the Hindus were no longer 3000 years ago. But that is a mere guess, and is contradicted by the facts of

They may have passed through ever so many vicissitudes, and what we consider as primitive may be, for all we know, a relapse into savagery, or a their language.

more rational and inThink only of the rules that

corruption of something that was telligible in former stages.

determine marriage

among the lowest of savage tribes.

Their complication passes

all

understanding, all seems a

chaos of prejudice, superstition, pride, vanity, and stupidity.

And yet we catch a glimpse here and there that

we see

how sense dwindled away into nonsense, custom into ceremony, there was some reason in most of that unreason ;

ceremony, ceremony into farce.

Why then should this sur-

face of savage life represent to us the lowest stratum of

human life, the very beginnings of civilization, simply because we cannot dig beyond that surface ?

Now, I do not wish to be misunderstood. I do not

LECTURE

III.

claim for the ancient Indian literature any more than I

should willingly concede to the fables and traditions and songs of savage nations, such as we can study at present

we call a state of nature. Both are important documents to the student of the Science of Man. I simply say that in the Yeda we have a nearer approach to a beginning, and an intelligible beginning, than in the wild invocations of Hottentots or Bushmen.

But when

I speak of a beginning, I do not mean an absolute beginning, a beginning of all things.

Again and again the

question has been asked whether we could bring ourselves to believe that man, as soon as he could stand on his legs, instead of crawling on all fours, as he is supposed to have done, burst forth into singing Yedic

hymns ? But who has ever maintained this ? Surely whoever has eyes to see can see in every Yedic hymn, ay, in every Yedic word, as many rings within rings as are in the oldest tree that was ever hewn down in the forest.

I shall say even more, and I have said it before, namely, that supposing that the Yedic hymns were composed between 1500 and 1000 b.c., we can hardly understand how, at so early a date, the Indians had developed ideas which to us sound decidedly modern.

I should

give anything if I could escape from the conclusion that the collection of the Yedic Hymns, a collection in ten books, existed at least 1000 b.c., that is, about 500 years

I do not mean to say that before the rise of Buddhism.

something may not be discovered hereafter to enable us in what

to refer that collection to a later date.

All I say is that,

we know at present, so far as all honest Sanskrit scholars know at present, we cannot well bring our

so far as

pre-Buddhistic literature into narrower limits than five hundred years.

What then is to be done ?

We must simply keep our

notions of what people call primitive humanity in abeyance for a time, and if we find that people three thousand years ago were familiar with ideas that seem novel and nineteenth-century -like to us, well, we must somewhat modify our conceptions of the primitive savage, and remember that things hid from the wise and prudent have sometimes been revealed to babes. I maintain then that for a study of man, or, if you like, for a study of Aryan humanity, there is nothing in the world equal in importance with the Yeda. I maintain that to everybody who cares for himself, for his an-

preconceived

cestors, for his history, or for his intellectual develop-

ment, a study of Vedic literature is indispensable and that, as an element of liberal education, it is far more ;

important and far more improving than the reigns of

Babylonian and Persian kings.

It is curious

to observe the reluctance

with which

these facts are accepted, particularly by those to

they ought to be most welcome, I anthropology.

whom

mean the students of

Instead of devoting

all

their energy to

the study of these documents, which have come upon us like a miracle, they seem only bent on inventing excuses

why they need not be studied. that,

Let

it

not be supposed

because there are several translations of the Iiig-

Yeda in English, French and German, therefore all that the Yeda can teach us has been learned.

Far from it.

Every one of these translations has been put forward as I myself, though during the last thirty years I have given translations of a number of the more important hymns, have only ventured to publish a specimen of what I think a translation of the Yeda ought to be

and that translation, that traduction raisonnee as I ventured to call it, of twelve hymns only, fills a whole volume.

We are still on the mere surface of Yedic littentative only.

;

LECTURE

134

III.

and yet our critics are ready with ever so many arguments why the Veda can teach us nothing as to a
If they mean by primitive that primitive state of man.
which came absolutely first, then they ask for something which they will never get, not even if they discovered the private correspondence of Adam and Eve, or erature,

of the first Homo

and Femina sapiens.

primitive the earliest state of

We mean by

man of which, from the

nature of the case, we can hope to gain any knowledge

;

and here, next to the archives hidden away in the secret drawers of language, in the treasury of words common to all the Aryan tribes, and in the radical elements of which each word is compounded, there is no literary relic

more full of lessons to the tme anthropologist, to

the true student of mankind, than the Rig- Veda.

LECTURE IV.

OBJECTIONS.

It may be quite true that controversy often does more harm than good, that it encourages the worst of all tal-

and generally leaves the world at large worse confounded than it was before. It has been said that no clever lawyer would shrink from taking a brief to prove that the earth forms the centre of the world, and, with all respect for English juries, it is not impossible that even in our days he might gain a verdict against Galileo. Nor do I deny that there is a power and vitality in truth which in the end overcomes and survives all opposition, as shown by the very doctrine of Galileo which at present is held by hundreds and thousands who would find it extremely difficult to advance one single argument in its support. I am ready to admit also that those who have done the best work, and have contributed most largely toward the advancement of knowledge and the progress of truth, have seldom wasted their time in controversy, but have marched on straight, little concerned either about applause on the right or abuse on the left.

All this is
ents, that of plausibility, not to say dishonesty,

and yet I feel that I cannot escape from devoting the whole of a lecture to the answering of certain objections which have been raised against the views which I have put forward with regard to the character and the historical importance of Vedic literature.

We must not forget that the whole subject is new, the true, perfectly true,

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IV.

number of competent judges small, and mistakes not only possible, but almost inevitable.

Besides, there are

mistakes and mistakes, and the errors of able

men are

often instructive, nay one might say sometimes almost indispensable for the discovery of truth.

cisms which

There are criti-

may be safely ignored, criticisms for the

if not inspired by meaner motives.

But there are doubts and difficulties which suggest themselves naturally, objections which have a right to be heard, and the very removal of which forms the best

sake of criticism,

approach to the stronghold of truth.

Nowhere has this

and been acted on as

Whatever subject is started, the

rule is that the argument should begin with the purvapinciple been so fully recognized

in Indian literature.

paksha, with all that can be said against a certain opinion.

Every possible objection is welcome, if only it is

not altogether frivolous and absurd, and then only fol-

lows the uttarapaksha, with

all

that can be said against

these objections and in support of the original opinion.

Only when this process has been fully gone through is it allowed to represent an opinion as siddhanta, or established.

Therefore, before opening the pages of the Yeda, and
giving you a description of the poetry, the religion, and
philosophy of the ancient inhabitants of India, I thought
it

right and necessary to establish,

first

of

all,

certain

would be impossible to form a
right appreciation of the historical value of the Yedic
hymns, and of their importance even to us who live at so
great a distance from those early poets.

The first point was purely preliminary, namely that
the Hindus in ancient, and in modern times also, are a
nation deserving of our interest and sympathy, worthy
also of our confidence, and by no means guilty of the
points without which

it

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charge so recklessly brought against them

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– the charge

of an habitual disregard of truth.

Secondly, that the ancient literature of India is not to

be considered simply as a curiosity and to be handed
over to the good pleasure of Oriental scholars, but that,

by

both

its

language, the Sanskrit, and by

its

most

ancient literary documents, the Yedas, it can teach us
lessons which nothing else can teach, as to the origin of

our

own language, the first formation of our own con-

and the true natural germs of all that is comprehended under the name of
civilization, at least the civilization of the Aryan race, that race to which we
and all

the greatest nations of the world the Hindus, the Persians, the Greeks and Romans,
the Slaves, the Celts,
and last, not least, the Teutons, belong. A man may be
a good and useful ploughman without being a geologist,
without knowing the stratum on which he takes his
cepts,

–

stand, or the strata beneath that give support to the soil

on which he lives and works, and from which he draws
And a man may be a good and useful
citizen, without being an historian, without knowing
his nourishment.

how the world in which he lives came about, and how
many phases mankind had to pass through in language,
and philosophy, before it could supply him
soil on which he lives and works,
and from which he draws his best nourishment.
But there must always be an aristocracy of those who

know, and who can trace back the best which we possess, not merely to a Norman
count, or a Scandinavian
viking, or a Saxon earl, but to far older ancestors and
religion,

with that intellectual

who thousands of years ago were toiling

we

should never be what we are the ancestors of the whole
benefactors,

for us in the sweat of their face, and without whom

—

Aryan race, the first framers of our words, the first poets

LECTURE

of our thoughts, the

first

IV.

givers of our laws, the

prophets of our gods, and of Him who

is

first

God above all

gods.

—

That aristocracy of those who know di color che
or try to know, is open to all who are willing to
enter, to all who have a feeling for the past, an interest
in the genealogy of our thoughts, and a reverence for
som.no

—

the ancestry of our intellect, who are in fact historians in

the true sense of the word, i.e. inquirers into that which
is

past,

but not lost.

Thirdly, having explained to you why the ancient literature of India, the really
ancient literature of that

country, I

mean that of the Vedic period, deserves the

careful attention, not of Oriental scholars only, but of

every educated man and woman who wishes to know
how we, even we here in England and in this nineteenth
century of ours, came to be what we are, I tried to explain to you the difference,
and the natural and inevita-

development of the human
character in such different climates as those of India and
And while admitting that the Hindus were deEurope.
ficient in many of those manly virtues and practical

achievements which we value most, I wished to point out
ble difference, between the

that there was another sphere of intellectual activity in

—

which the Hindus excelled the meditative and transand that here we might learn from
them some

cendent

—

lessons of life which we ourselves are but too apt to ig-

nore or to despise.

might have raised too high

the religion and

philosophy of the Vedic Indians, I felt it my duty to

state that, though primitive in one sense, we must not

expect the Vedic religion to be primitive in the anthroFourthly fearing that

,

I

expectations of the ancient wisdom,

pological sense of the word, as containing the utterances

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of beings who had just broken their shells, and were wonderingly looking out for the first time upon this The Veda may be called primitive, bestrange world.

cause there is no other literary document more primitive

but the language, the mythology, the religion and philosophy that meet us in the Veda open vistas of the past which no one would venture to measure in years.

Nay, they contain, by the side of simple, natural, childish thoughts, many ideas which to us sound modern, or secondary and tertiary, as I called them, but which nevertheless are older than any other literary document, and give us trustworthy information of a period in the history of human thought of which we knew absolutely nothing before the discovery of the Vedas.*

But even thus our path is not yet clear. Other objections have been raised against the Veda as an historical document.

Some of them are important and I have than it

;

;

at times

shared them myself.

Others are at least in-

structive, and will give us an opportunity of testing the foundation on which we stand.

The first objection then against our treating the Veda as an

historical

in its character,

document is that it is not truly national and does not represent the thoughts of

the whole of the population of India, but only of a small minority, namely of the Brahmans, and not even of the whole class of Brahmans, but only of a small minority of them, namely of the professional priests.

Objections should not be based on demands which,

from the nature of the

case, are unreasonable.

Have

those who maintain that the Vedic hymns do not repre* If we applied the name of literature to the cylinders of Babylon and the papyri of Egypt, we should have to admit that some of these documents are more ancient than any date we dare as yet assign to

the hymns collected in the ten books of the Big-Veda.

e

LECTURE

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sent the whole of India, that
population, in the same
IT.

is the
manner

Bible represents the Jews or
whole of- its ancient
as

they say that the

Homer the Greeks, consid-

ered what they are asking for ?

So far from denying

that the Yedic hymns represent only a small and, it may
be, a priestly minority of the ancient population of India,

the true historian would probably feel inclined to urge
the same cautions against the Old Testament and the

Homeric poems also.

No doubt, after the books which compose the Old Testament had been collected as a
Sacred Canon, they were
known to the majority of the Jews. But when we
speak of the primitive state of the Jews, of their moral,
intellectual,

and religious status while in Mesopotamia

or Canaan or Egypt, we should find that the different

books of the Old Testament teach us as little of the
whole Jewish race, with all its local characteristics and
social distinctions, as the Homeric poems do of all the

Greek tribes, or the Yedic hymns of

all

the inhabitants

Surely, even when we speak of the history of

of India.
the Greeks or the Romans, we know that we shall not
find there a complete picture of the social, intellectual,
and religious
life
of a
whole nation.

We know very
little of the intellectual life of a whole nation,
even dur-

W

ing the Middle Ages, ay, even at the present day.
may know something of the generals, of the command-

but of the privates, of the millions, we
know next to nothing. And what we do know of kings
ers-in-chief,

or generals or ministers is mostly no more than what was
thought of them by a few Greek poets or Jewish

prophets, men

who were one in a million among their

contemporaries.

But it might be said that though the writers were few,
I believe you
Is that so ?
readers were many.

the

OBJECTIONS.

would be- surprised to bear how small the number of readers is even in modern times, while in ancient times reading was restricted to the very smallest class of privileged persons.

and private festivals, at sacrifices, and later on in theatres,

but readers, in our sense of the word, are a very

modern invention.

There never has been so much reading, reading spread

But if you asked

publishers as to the number of copies sold of books

over so large an area, as in our times.

which are supposed to have been read by everybody, say Macaulay's History of England, the Life of the Prince Consort, or Darwin's Origin of Species, you would find that out of a population of thirty-two millions not one

million has possessed

itself

of a copy of these works.

The book which of late has probably had the largest sale is the

Revised Version of the

New Testament

;

and yet

the whole number of copies sold among the eighty millions of English-speaking people is probably not more than

four millions.

Of ordinary books which are called books

of the season, and which are supposed to have had a

great success, an edition of three or four thousand copies is

not considered unsatisfactory by publishers or authors

in England.

But if you look to other countries, such, would be very difficult indeed

for instance, as Russia, it
to name books that could be considered as representative
of the whole nation, or as even
known by more than a
very small minority.

And if we turn our thoughts back to the
ancient

nations of Greece and Italy, or of Persia and Babylonia,

what book is there, with the exception perhaps of the
Homeric poems, of which -we could say that it had been
read or even heard of by more than a few thousand people ?
We think of Greeks and Romans as literary peo-

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pie,

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and so no doubt they were, but in a very different

from what we mean by this. What we call
Greeks and Romans are chiefly the citizens of Athens
and Rome, and here again those who could produce or
who could read such works as the Dialogues of Plato or
the Epistles of Horace constituted a very small intellectsense

What we
history—the mem— has always been the work of minorities.

ual aristocracy indeed.

ory of the past

call

Millions and millions pass away unheeded, and the few

only to whom has been given the gift of fusing speech
and thought into forms of beauty remain as witnesses of
the past.
If then

we speak of times so distant as those repre-

sented by the Rig-Veda, and of a country so disintegrated, or rather as yet so
little integrated as India was

three thousand years ago, surely it requires but little reflection to

know that what we see in the Yedic poems

are but a few snow-clad peaks, representing to us, from
a far distance, the

whole mountain-range of a nation,

completely lost beyond the horizon of history.

When

we speak of the Vedic hymns as representing the religion, the

thoughts and customs of India three thousand

years ago, we cannot mean by India more than some un-

known quantity of which the poets of the Yeda are the
only spokesmen left.

When we now speak of India, we

think of 250 millions, a sixth part of the whole human race, peopling the vast peninsula

from the Himalayan

mountains between the arms of the Indus and the Ganges, down to Cape Comorin and Ceylon, an extent of

In the Yeda the

country nearly as large as Europe.

stage on which the life of the ancient kings and poets is acted,

is

the valley of the Indus and the Punjab, as it is

now called, the Sapta Sindhasa/≤, the Seven Rivers of the Yedic poets. The land watered by the Ganges is hardly

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known, and the whole of the Dekkan seems not yet to have been discovered. Then again, when these Yedic hymns are called the lucubrations of a few priests, not the outpourings of the genius of a whole nation, what does that

mean ?

We

may no doubt call these ancient Yedic poets priests, if we like, and no one would deny that their poetry is pervaded not only by religious, mythological, and philosophical, but likewise by sacrificial and ceremonial conceits.

Still a priest, if we trace him back far enough, is only a presbyteros or an elder, and, as such, those Yedic poets had a perfect right to speak in the name of a whole class, or of the village community to which they belonged. Call Yasish^Aa a priest by all means, only do not let us imagine that he was therefore very like Cardinal Manning.

After we have made every possible concession to arguments, most of which are purely hypothetical, there re-

mains this great fact that here, in the Rig-Yeda, we have poems, composed in perfect language, in elaborate metre, telling us about gods and men, about sacrifices and battles, about the varying aspects of nature and the changing conditions of society, about duty and pleasure, philosophy and morality

— articulate voices reaching us from

a distance from which we never heard before the faintest whisper

;

and instead of thrilling with delight

at

this

almost miraculous discovery, some critics stand aloof and

can do nothing but find fault, because these songs do not represent to us primitive men exactly as they think they

ought to have been

;

not like Papuas or Bushmen, with
arboraceous habits and half -animal clicks, not as worship-
ping stocks or stones, or believing in fetiches, as according to Comte's inner
consciousness they ought to have
done, but rather, I must confess, as beings whom we can

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IT.

understand, with whom to a certain extent we can sym-

and to whom, in the historical progress of the
we may assign a place not very far behind the ancient Jews and Greeks.
pathize,

human

intellect,

Once more then, if we mean by primitive, people who
inhabited this earth as soon

as

the vanishing of the

made this earth inhabitable, the Yedic
were certainly not primitive. If we mean by

glacial period

poets

primitive, people who were without a knowledge of lire,
who used unpolished Hints, and ate raw flesh, the Yedic
poets were not primitive.

If we mean by primitive,
people who did not cultivate the soil, had no fixed

abodes, no kings, no sacrifices, no laws, again, I say, the

Yedic poets were not primitive. But if we mean by
who have been the first of the
Aryan race to leave behind literary relics of their existence on earth, then I say
the Yedic poets are primitive,
the Y edic language is primitive, the Yedic religion is
primitive the people

primitive, and, taken as a whole, more primitive than

anything else that

we are ever likely to recover in the

whole history of our race.

When all these objections had failed, a last trump was
played.

The ancient Yedic poetry was said to be, if not

of foreign origin, at least very much infected by foreign,

and more particularly by Semitic influences. It had always been urged by Sanskrit scholars as one of the chief attractions of Yedic literature that it not only allowed us an insight into a very early phase of religious thought, but that the Yedic religion was the only one the development of which took place without any extraneous influences, and could be watched through a longer series of centuries than any other religion.

Now with regard to the first point, we know how perplexing it is in the religion of ancient

is in

the re-

Rome to distinguish between Italian

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and Greek ingredients, to say nothing of Etruscan and Phoenician influences.

We know the difficulty of find-

ing out in the religion of the Greeks what

is

purely

home-grown, and what is taken over from Egypt, Phoeor at all events, slightly nicia, it may be from Scythia

Even in the

colored by those foreign rays of thought.

religion of the Hebrews, Babylonian, Phoenician, and at

a later time Persian influences have been discovered,

and the more we advance toward modern times, the more

extensive becomes the mixture of thought, and the more

;

difficult

the task of assigning to each nation the share

which it contributed to the common intellectual currency

In India alone, and more particularly in

of the world.

Yedic India, we see a plant entirely grown on native

soil, and entirely nurtured by native air.

For this reason, because the religion of the Yeda was so completely

guarded from all strange infections, it is full of lessons

which the student of religion could learn nowhere else.

Now what have the critics of the Yeda to say against

this ?

They say that the Yedic poems show clear traces

of ^Babylonian influences.

I must enter into some details, because, small as they

seem, you can see that they involve very wide consequences.

There is one verse in the Rig- Yeda, YIII. 78, 2, *

which has been translated as follows " Oh Indra, bring

:

to us a brilliant jewel, a cow, a horse, an ornament, to-

gether with a golden Mana." f

*

A na h bhara vyiiinyanam gitm asvam abhya%anam Saba, mana

hirajiyaya.

Grassman

"Zugleich mit goldenem Geriitli
Ludmit goldenem Zierrath
Zimmer, " Und eine
Mana gold." The Petersburg Dictionary explains mani, by " ein
bestimmtes Gerath oder Gewicht" (Gold).
f

wig,

translates,

" Zusammt

f

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IT.

Now what is a golden Mana
occur again by

?

The word does not

either in the Yeda or

anywhere

and it has been identified by Yedic scholars with
the Latin mina, the Greek i-iva, the Phoenician manah
the well-known weight which we actually possess now among the treasures brought
from Babylon and
itself,

else,

Nineveh to the British Museum.

If this were so, it would be irrefragable evidence of at
all events a commercial intercourse between Babylon
and India at a very early time, though it would in no

way prove a real influence of Semitic on Indian thought.
But is it so ? If we translate sa&a mana hiranyaya by
" with a mina of gold," we must take mana hiranyaya
as instrumental cases.

strumental case.

But sa&a never governs an in-

This translation therefore is impossi-

and although the passage is difficult, because mana
does not occur again in the Rig- Yeda, I should think we
might take mana hiranyaya for a dual, and translate,
"Give us also two golden armlets." To suppose that
the Yedic poets should have borrowed this one word and
this one measure from the Babylonians, would be against
ble,

all

the rules of historical criticism.

The word mand

never occurs again in the whole of Sanskrit literature,

no other Babylonian weight occurs again in the whole of

Sanskrit literature, and

it

is

not likely that a poet who

asks for a cow and a horse, would ask in the same breath

* According to Dr. Haupt,
p. 272,

»

Die Sumerisch-akkadische Sprache,

mana is an Akkadian word.

According to the weights of the lions and ducks preserved in the
Museum, an Assyrian mina was = 7747 grains. The same
difference is still preserved to the present day, as the man of Shiraz
and Bagdad is just double that of Tabraz and Bushir, the average of
the former being 14.0 and that of the latter only 6.985. See Cunningham, " Journal
of the Asiatic Society," Calcutta, 1881, p. 163.

|

British

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for a foreign weight of gold, that is, for about sixty sovereigns.

But this is not the only loan that India has been sup-

The twenty-seven
posed to have negotiated in Babylon.
Nakshatras, or the twenty-seven constellations, which
were chosen in India as a kind of lunar Zodiac, were
supposed to have come from Babylon. Now the Babylonian Zodiac was solar, and, in
spite of repeated researches, no trace of a lunar Zodiac has been found,
where so many things have been found, in the cuneiform
inscriptions.

But supposing even that a lunar Zodiac
had been discovered in Babylon, no one acquainted with
Yedic literature and with the ancient Yedic ceremonial
would easily allow himself to be persuaded that the Hindus had borrowed that simple
division of the sky from

It is well known that most of the
the Babylonians.

Yedic sacrifices depend on the moon, far more than on
the sun.* As the Psalmist says, " lie appointed the

moon for seasons; the sun knoweth his going down,"
we read in the Rig-Yeda X. 85, 18, in a verse addressed
to sun and moon, " They walk by their own power, one
after the other (or from east to west), as playing children

they go round the

sacrifice.

The one looks upon

all

the worlds, the other is born again and again, determin-
ing the seasons.

" lie becomes new and new, when he is born
herald of the days, he goes before the dawns.

;

as the

By his

approach he determines their share for the gods, the
moon increases a long life."

The moon,

then, determines the seasons,

the moon fixes the share, that
* Preface to

tlie

is,

the Wtus,

the sacrificial oblation

fourth volume of my edition of the Rig-Veda,

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The seasons and the sacrifices were in

for all the gods.

fact so intimately connected together in the thoughts of

the ancient Hindus, that one of the commonest names for priest was ritv-ig, literally, the season-sacrificer.

Besides the rites which have to be performed every day, such as the five Mahayajnas, and the Agnihotra in

the morning and the evening, the important sacrifices in

Vedic times were the Full and New-moon sacrifices

(darsapurnamasa)

the Season-sacrifices (Matsya),

each season consisting of four months ;* and the Halfyearly sacrifices, at the two solstices.

There are other

sacrifices (agranyas, etc.) to be performed in autumn and summer, others in winter and spring, whenever rice and barley are ripening, f

;

The regulation

of the seasons, as one of the funda-

mental conditions of an incipient society, seems in fact to have been so intimately connected with the worship

of the gods, as the guardians of the seasons and the pro-

law and order, that it is sometimes difficult to say whether in their stated sacrifices the maintenance of the calendar or the maintenance of the worship of the gods was more prominent in the minds of the old Vedic tectors of

priests.

The twenty-seven Nakshatras then were clearly suggested by the moon's passage.

gested

natural for the sake of counting days, months, or seasons

than to observe the twenty-seven places which the moon occupied in her passage from any point of the sky back to the same point.

*

It was far easier than to
determine

Vaisvadevam on the full-moon of Phalguna, Varu?iapraghasaA on
the full-moon of Ashactaa, Sakamedha/t on the tull-moon of Krittika,
see Boehtlingk, Dictionary, s. v.
f

See Vishnu-smriti, ed. Jolly LLX. 4

\

See Preface to vol. iv. of Kig-Veda, p. li. (1862).

;

Aryabhata, Introduction.

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the sun's position either from day to day, or from month to

month

;

for the

stars,

being hardly visible

at the

actual rising and setting of the sun, the idea of the sun's

conjunction with certain stars could not suggest itself to a

listless

observer.

The moon, on the

contrary,

pro-

gressing from night to night, and coming successively in contact with certain stars, was like the finger of a clock, moving round a circle, and coming in contact with one figure after another on the dial-plate of the sky.

Nor

would the portion of about one third of a lunation in addition to the twenty-seven stars from new moon to new moon, create much confusion in the minds of the rough-and-ready reckoners of those

early times.

All

they were concerned with were the twenty-seven celestrial

stations which, after being once traced out by the moon, were fixed, like so many milestones, for determining the course of all the celestial travellers that could

be of any interest for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years. A circle divided into twenty-seven sections, or any twenty-seven poles planted in a circle at equal distances round a house, would answer the purpose

All that was wanted
of a primitive Vedic observatory.
to be known was between which pair of poles the moon,

or afterward the sun also, was visible at their rising or
setting, the observer occupying the same central position

on every day.

Our notions of astronomy cannot in fact be too crude
and too imperfect if we wish to understand the first beginnings in the reckoning of
days and seasons and years.

We cannot expect in those days more than what any
shepherd would know at present of the sun and moon,

Nor can we expect any observation of the stars and seasons.

Observations of heavenly phenomena unless they had some bearing on the practical wants of
primitive society.

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If then we can watch in India the natural, nay inevitable, growth of the division of the heaven into

seven equal divisions, each division

twenty-

marked by stars,

which may have been observed and named long before they were used for this new purpose if, on the other

—

hand, we could hardly understand the growth and development of the Indian ceremonial except as determined

by

a

knowledge of

the

lunar

asterisms,

the

lunar

months, and the lunar seasons, surely it would be a senseless hypothesis to

imagine that the Yedic shepherds or

priests went to Babylonia in search of a knowledge which

every shepherd might have acquired on the banks of the Indus, and that, after their return from that country only,

where a language was spoken which no Hindu

could understand, they set to work to compose their sacred hymns and arrange their simple ceremonial.

We

must never forget that what is natural in one place is natural in other places also, and we may sum up without fear of serious contradiction, that no case has been made

out in favor of a foreign origin of the elementary astronomical notions of the Hindus as found or presupposed in the Yedic hymns.*

The Arabs, as is well known, have twenty-eight lunar stations, the Mamil,

stations, the Mamil,

hammed and his Bedouins in the desert should not have made the same observation as the Yedic poets in India, though I must admit at the same time that Colebrooke has brought forward very cogent arguments to prove that, in their scientific employment at least, the Arabic Manzil were really borrowed from an Indian source, f The Chinese, too, have their famous lunar stations, the Sieu, originally twenty-four in number, and after* See Zimmer, Altindisches Leben, pp. 352-357.
t L. c. i>. lxx.

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ward raised to twenty-eight.* But here again there is no necessity whatever for admitting, with Biot, Lassen, and others, that the Hindus went to China to gain their simplest elementary notions of lunar chrononomy. First of all, the Chinese began with twenty-four, and raised them to twenty-eight the Hindus began with twentyseven, and raised them to twenty-eight.

Secondly, out

;

of these twenty-eight asterisms, there are seventeen only

which can really be

with the Hindu

identified

stars

How if a scientific system is borrowed, it is bor-

(taras).

rowed complete.

But, in our case, I see really no pos-

sible channel through which Chinese astronomical knowl-

edge could have been conducted to India so early as 1000 before our era. In Chinese literature India is never mentioned before the middle of the second ceninas in the later Santury before Christ

and if the

skrit literature are meant for Chinese, which is doubtful, it is important to observe that that name never occurs in

K

;

Vedic literature.!

* Sec Zimmer, Altindisches Leben, p. xlvii.

f In

the Mahabhiirata and elsewhere the Ainas are mentioned

among the Dasyus or non-Aryan races in the north and in the east King Bhagadatta is said to have had an army of Ainas and

of India.

Kiratas, * and the Pandavas are said to reach the town of the King of

the Kulindas, after having passed through the countries of Ainas,
Tukharas, and Daradas.

All this is as

vague as ethnological indi-

cations generally are in the late epic poetry of India.

The only pos-

sibly real element is that Kirata and Aina soldiers are called kunfcana,

and compared to a forest of Ifareikaras,

In Mahabh. VI. 9, v. 373,

the Ainas occur in company with Kambo^as and

gold or yellow colored,

)•

•which were trees with yellow flowers.!

vol.

ii.,

p.

344,

Yavanas, which again conveys nothing definite.

Chinese scholars tell us that the name of China

* Lassen, i. p. 1029

;

is

of

Mahabh. III. 117, v. 12,350; vol. i. p. 619.

t Mahabh. V. 18, v. 584

;

vol. ii. p. 106.

t See Vaiaspatya s. v. ; KaaA'it KarnikaragauraA.

modem

LECTURE

IV.

"When therefore the impossibility of so

early a

munication between China and India had at

last

combeen

recognized, a new theory was formed, namely, " that the knowledge of Chinese astronomy was not imported straight from China to India, but was carried, together

with the Chinese system of division of the heavens into twenty-eight mansions, into Western Asia, at a period not much later than 1100 b.c., and was then adopted by some Western people, either Semitic or Iranian. In their hands it was supposed to have received a new

form, such as adapted

it

to

a ruder and less scientific

method of observation, the limiting stars of the mansions being converted into zodiacal groups or constellations, and in some instances altered in position, so as to be brought nearer to the general planetary path of the ecliptic.

In this changed form, having become a means of roughly determining and describing the places and movements of the planets, it was believed to have passed into the keeping of the Hindus, very probably along with the first knowledge of the planets themselves, and entered upon an independent career of history in India. It still maintained itself in its old seat, leaving its traces later in the Bundaliash

and made its way so far westward as finally to become known and adopted by the Arabs." With due respect for the astronomical knowledge of those who hold this view, all I can say is that

;

origin, and only dates from the Thsin dynasty or from the famous Emperor Shi hoang-ti, 247 b.c. But the name itself, though in a more restricted sense, occurs in earlier documents, and may, as Lassen thinks,* have become known to the Western neighbors of China. It is certainly strange that 'the Sinim. too,

mentioned in Isaiah xlix. 12,

have been taken by the old commentators for people of China, visiting Babylon as merchants and travellers.

* Lassen, vol. i. p. 1029, n. 2,

,

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this

is

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a novel, and nothing but a novel, without any

and that the few

which are

known to us do not enable a careful reasoner to go beyond the conclusions stated many years ago by Colebrooke, that the "Hindus had undoubtedly made some progress at an early period in the astronomy cultivated by them for the regulation of time. Their calendar, both civil and religious, was governed chiefly, not exclusively, by the moon and the sun

and the motions of

these luminaries were carefully observed by them, and

with such success that their determination of the moon's

synodical revolution, which was what they were principally concerned with, is a much more correct one than

the Greeks ever achieved.

They had a division of the

ecliptic into twenty-seven and twenty-eight parts, suggested evidently by the moon's period in days, and

seemingly their own it was certainly borrowed by the facts to support

it,

facts

;

;

Arabians."

There is one more argument which has been adduced in support of a Babylonian, or, at all events, a Semitic

influence to be discovered in Yedic literature which we

must shortly examine.

refers

It

to the story of

the

Deluge.

That story, as you know, has been traced in the many races, which could not well have borrowed it from one another and it was rather a surprise that no allusion even to a local deluge should occur in any of the Vedic hymns, particularly as very elaborate accounts of different kinds of deluges are found in the later Epic poems, and in the still later Puranas, and conditions of

;

form in fact a very familiar subject in the religious traditions of the people of India.

Three of the Avatars or incarnations of Vishnu are connected with a deluge, that of the Fish that of the

LECTURE

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IV.

Tortoise , and that of the Boar , Vishnu in each case rescuing mankind from destruction by water, by assuming the form of a fish, or a tortoise, or a boar.

This being so, it seemed a very natural conclusion to make that, as there was no mention of a deluge in the most ancient

had pene-

literature of India, that legend

trated into India from without at a later time.

When, however, the Vedic

literature

became more

generally known, stories of a deluge were discovered, if

not in the hymns, at least in the prose writings, belonging to the second period, commonly called the Brahmana period.

Not only the story of Manu and the Fish, but

the stories of the Tortoise and of the

met with there in

Boar also, were

more or less complete form, and

a

with this discovery the idea of a foreign importation lost much of its plausibility. I shall read you at least one of these accounts of a Deluge which is found in the /Satapatlia Brahmana, and you can then judge for yourselves

whether the similarities between it and the account in Genesis are really such as to require, nay as to admit, the hypothesis that the Hindus borrowed their account of the Deluge from their nearest Semitic neighbors.

We read in the Natapatha Brahmana I. 8, 1

:

" In the morning they brought water to Manu for washing, as they bring it even now for washing our hands.

" While he was thus washing, a

fish

came into his

hands.

" 2. The fish spoke this word to Manu
and I shall save thee.

,

:

Keep me,

,

" Mann said

From what wilt thou save me ?

" The fish said

A flood will carry away all these

,

,

:

:

,

and I shall save thee from it.'

" Manu said

How canst thou be kept ?

creatures,

,

:

,

OBJECTIONS.

" 3. The fish said

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So long as we are small, there is
much destruction for us, for fish swallows fish. Keep
,

:

me therefore first in a jar. When I outgrow that, dig
When I outgrow that, take
a hole and keep me in it.
me to the sea, and I shall then be beyond the reach of
destruction.

,

" 4. lie became soon a large fish (yAasha), for such a
In such and such a
fish grows largest.
The fish said
,

:

Therefore when

year the flood will come.
built a ship,

thou shalt meditate on me.

thou hast

And when the

flood has risen, thou shalt enter into the ship, and I will
save thee from the flood.'

" 5. Having thus kept the fish, M/mu took him to the
Then in the same year which the fish had pointed
sea.
out, Manu, having built the ship, meditated on the fish.

And when the flood had risen, Manu entered into the
Then the fish swam toward him, and Manu fast-

ship.

ened the rope of the ship to the fish's horn, and he thus
hastened toward * the Northern Mountain.

" 6. The fish said
to a tree.

,
:

I have saved thee ;

bind the ship

May the water not cut thee off, while thou

As the water subsides, do thou
gradually slide down with it.'
Manu then slid down
art on the

mountain.

gradually with the water, and therefore this
,

is

called

the Slope of Manu' on the Northern Mountain.

Now

the flood had carried away all these creatures, and thus

Manu was left there alone.

" 7. Then Manu went about singing praises and toiling, wishing for offspring.

And he sacrificed there also
with a Paka-sacrifice.

He poured clarified butter,
thickened milk, whey, and curds in the water as a liba* I prefer

instead

of

now

the reading

atidudrava or

of

the Kanva-sSkha, abhidudrava,

adhidudrava

Weber, Ind. Streifen, i. p. 11.

of

the

other mss.

See

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In one year a

tion.

IV.

woman arose from it.

She came

forth as if dripping, and clarified butter gathered on her

Mitra and Vanma came to meet her.

" 8. They said to her

Who art thou ? ' She said

The daughter of Mann.' They rejoined

Say that

'No,' she said, he who has begotten

thou art ours.'

me, his I am.'

" Then they wished her to be their sister, and she half
agreed and half did not agree, but went away, and came

step.

,

:

:

,

:

,

,

to Manu.

" 9. Manu said to her

,

I

am thy daughter.

he asked.

" She replied

,

,

:

,

Who art thou

?

,

She said :

How, lady, art thou my daugh-

ter ? '

:

,

The libations which thou hast poured
thickened milk, whey

into the water, clarified butter,

and curds, by them thou hast begotten me. I am a benediction— perform (me) this
benediction at the sacrifices.

If thou perform (me) it at the sacrifice, thou wilt be rich

And whatever blessing thou
in offspring and cattle.

He therewith ask by me, will always accrue to thee.'

fore performed that benediction in the middle of the
sacrifice, for the middle of the sacrifice is that which
comes between the introductory and the final offerings.

"10. Then Manu went about with her, singing

And with her

praises and toiling, wishing for offspring.

he begat that offspring which is called the offspring of
Manu and whatever blessing he asked with her, always

She is indeed Ie?a, and whosoever,
accrued to him.

r

;

knowing this, goes about (sacrifices) with Ma, begets the
same offspring which Manu begat, and whatever blessing
he asks with her,

always accrues to him.

"

This, no doubt, is the account of a deluge, and Manu
acts in some respects the same part which

Noah in the Old Testament.

But

if

is

assigned to

there are similari-

—

•

OBJECTIONS.

ties,

think of the dissimilarities, and

explained.

It

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how they are to be

quite clear that, if this story was bor-

is

rowed from a Semitic source, it was not borrowed from the Old Testament, for in that case it would really seem impossible to account for the differences between the two stories. That it may have been borrowed * from some

unknown Semitic source cannot, of course, be disproved, because no tangible proof has ever been produced that

would admit of being disproved. But if it were, it would be the only Semitic loan in ancient Sanskrit literature and that alone ought to make us pause. The story of the boar and the tortoise too, can be traced back to the Vedic literature.

—

!

Taittiriya Samhita

" At first

:

f

was water, fluid. Prayapati, the lord

He

of creatures, having become wind, moved on it.

saw this earth, and becoming a boar, he took it up. Becoming Visvakarman, the maker of all things, he cleaned it.

It spread and became the widespread Earth, and

this is why the Earth is called IVffhivi, the wide

spread. "

And we find in the xSatapatha Brahmana \ the following slight allusion at least to the tortoise myth

:

" Prayapati, assuming the form of a tortoise (Kurina), brought forth

all

In so far as he brought

creatures.

them forth, he made them (akarot), and because he made them he was (called) tortoise (Kurma). A tortoise is (called)

Kasyapa, and therefore all creatures are called

* It is not necessary to establish literary borrowing for on the theory of Bible inspiration and trustworthiness we must assume that ;

the Aryans as well as the Semites were saved in the ark.

The story

of a flood supports the story of the flood to a certain extent.

Am. Pubs.

f VII. 1, 5, 1 seq.
t

;

Muir, i. p. 52

;

Colebrooke, Essays, i. 75.

VII. 5, 1, 5 ; Muir, "Original Sanskrit Texts," i. p. 54.

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IV.

Kasyapa, tortoise-like. He who was this tortoise (Kurina) was really Aditya (the sun). "

One other allusion to something like a deluge,* important chiefly on account of the name of Manu occurring in it, has been pointed out in the Kanaka (XI. 2), where this short sentence occurs " The waters cleaned this, Manu alone remained."

All this shows that ideas of a deluge, that is, of a submersion of the earth by water and of its rescue through divine aid, were not altogether unknown in the early traditions of India, while in later times they were embodied in several of the Avataras of Vi si mu.

When we examine the numerous accounts of a deluge
:

among different nations in almost every

part

of

the

world, we can easily perceive that they do not refer to

one single historical event, but to a natural phenomenon repeated every year, namely, the deluge or flood of the rainy season or the winter, f

This is nowhere clearer than in Babylon. Sir Henry Rawlinson was the first to point out that the twelve cantos of the poem of Izdubar or Nimrod refer to the twelve months of the year and the twelve representative Dr. Haupt afterward pointed out signs of the Zodiac.

that Babani, the wise bull-man in the second canto, corresponds to the second month, Ijjar, April-May, reprethat the union sented in the Zodiac by the bull
;

between Babani and Nimrod in the third canto corresponds to the third month, Sivan, May- June, represented that the sickness of Nimrod in the Zodiac by the twins in the seventh canto corresponds to the seventh month, Tishri, September-October, when the sun begins to wane and that the flood in the eleventh canto corre;

;

* Weber, "Indisclie Streifen," i. p. 11.

1

See Lecture V. p. 172.

OBJECTIONS.

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sponds to the eleventh month, Shabatfu, dedicated to the
6torin-god Rimmon,* represented in the Zodiac by the

waterman, f

If that is so, we have surely a right to claim the same

for the story of the Deluge in India
which we are bound to admit in other countries. And
even if it could be proved that in the form in which
these legends have reached us in India they show traces
of foreign influences,:}: the fact would still remain that

natural origin

such influences have been perceived in comparatively
modern treatises only, and not in the ancient hymns of
the Rig- Veda.

Other conjectures have been made with even less foundation than that which would
place the ancient poets of

China has been
nay even Persia, Parthia, and Bactria,
countries beyond the reach of India at that early time of
which we are here speaking, and probably not even then
consolidated into independent nations or kingdoms.

I

only wonder that traces of the lost Jewish tribes have
not been discovered in the Vedas, considering that
Afghanistan has so often been pointed out as one of their
India under the influence of Babylon.

appealed

to,

favorite retreats.

After having thus carefully examined all the traces of
supposed foreign influences that have been brought for-

ward by various scholars, I think
really is no trace

I may say that there

whatever of any foreign influence in

the language, the religion, or the ceremonial of the
ancient Vedic literature of India.

As it stands before

* More accurately Itamanu, the Vul or storm-god of George Smith
and the god of the Mind and higher intellect at Babylon. His arcane

name is said to have been Yav, liY or 'I do. — A. W.
" Der Keilinschriftliche Sintfluthbericht, 1881," p. 10.
f See Haupt,
" Genesis and Avesta" (German translation), i. p. 148.
f See M. M.,

;

—
LECTURE

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us now, so it

lias grown

IV.

up, protected by the mountain

ramparts in the north, the Indus and the Desert in the west, the Indus or what was called the sea in the south,

and the Ganges in the east. It presents us with a home-grown poetry and a home-grown religion and ;

history has preserved to us at least this one relic, in

order to teach us what the

human mind can achieve if

surrounded by a scenery and by conditions of life that might have made man's life on earth a para-

left to itself,

dise, if

man did not possess the strange art of turning

even a paradise into a place of misery.*

* No one is more competent than the learned author to give a verdict on all the evidence which has been gathered ; but we are only at

the beginning of research into the intercourse of mankind in remote times, and much that was once thought home-grown has already been

traced to distant points.

It is in

the general line of progress in re-

search that more evidence may be expected to connect Vedic thought

with other cultures.

Am. Pubs.

LECTURE Y.

THE LESSONS OF THE YEDA.

Although there is hardly any department of learning which has not received new light and new life from the ancient literature of India, yet nowhere is the light that comes to us from India so important, so novel, and so rich as in the study of religion and mythology.

It is to

this subject therefore that I

ing lectures of this course.

mean to devote the remainI

do so, partly because I

feel myself most at home in that ancient world of Vedic literature in which the germs of

Aryan religion have to

be studied, partly because I believe that for a proper understanding of the deepest convictions, or, if you like, the strongest prejudices of the modern Hindus, nothing is so useful as a knowledge of the Yeda. It is perfectly true that nothing would give a false impression of the actual Brahmanical religion than the ancient Vedic literature, supposing we were to imagine that three thousand years could have passed over India without producing any change. Such a mistake would be nearly as absurd as to deny any difference between the Vedic Sanskrit and the spoken Bengali. But no one will gain a scholarlike knowledge or a true insight into the secret springs of Bengali who is ignorant of the grammar of Sanskrit and no one will ever understand the present religious, philosophical, legal, and social opinions of the Hindus who is unable to trace them back to their true sources in the Yeda.

;

LECTURE

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V.

remember how, many years ago, when I began to publish for the first time the text and the commentary of the Rig- Veda, it was argued by a certain, perI still

haps not quite disinterested party, that the Veda was perfectly useless ; that no man in India, however learned,

could read it, and that

it was

of

no use either for mis-

sionaries or for any one else who wished to study and to It was said that we ought to

influence the native mind.

study the later Sanskrit, the Laws of

Mann, the epic

poems, and, more particularly, the Purawas. The Veda might do very well for German students, but not for Englishmen.

There was no excuse for such ignorant assertions even thirty years ago, for in these very books, in the Laws of

Manu, in the Mahabharata, and in the Purawas, the V eda is all

everywhere proclaimed as the highest authority in " A Brahman," says Manu, matters of religion.*

" unlearned in holy writ, like dry grass on fire."

is

extinguished in an instant

" A twice-born man (that is, a

Brahmana, a Kshatriya, and a Vaisva) not having studied the Veda, soon falls, even when living, to the condition of a Audra, and his descendants after him."

Iiow far this license of ignorant assertion may be earned is shown by the same authorities who denied the importance of the Veda for a historical study of Indian

thought, boldly charging those wily priests, the Brah-
mans, with having withheld their sacred literature from
any but their own caste. How, so far from withholding
it, the Brahmans have always been striving, and often
striving in vain, to make the study of their sacred litera-
ture obligatory on
all
castes except the Audras,
passages just quoted from
were threatened
if
and the
Manu show what penalties
children of the second and third
* "Wilson, Lectures, p. 9.

THE LESSONS OF THE VEDA.

castes, the

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Kshatriyas and Vaisyas, were not instructed

in the sacred literature of the Brahmins.

At present the Brahmins themselves have spoken, and the reception they have accorded to my edition of the

Big- Veda* and its native commentary, the zeal with which they have themselves taken up the study of Vedic literature, and the earnestness with which different sects are still discussing the proper use that should be made of their ancient religious writings, show abundantly that a

Sanskrit scholar ignorant of, or, I should rather say, de-

termined to ignore the Veda, would be not much better than a Hebrew scholar ignorant of the Old Testament. I shall

now proceed to give you some characteristic

specimens of the religion and poetry of the Big- Veda.

They can only be few, and as there is nothing like system or unity of plan in that collection of 1017 hymns, which we call the Samhita of the Big- Veda, I cannot promise that they will give you a complete panoramic view of that intellectual world in which our Vedic ancestors passed their life on earth.

I could not even answer the question, if you were to ask it whether the religion of the Veda was polytheistic

As it has been doubted, and even denied, that the publication, had some important

bearing on the resuscitation of the religious life of India, I feel bound _ to give at least one from the many testimonials which I have received from India.

It comes from the Adi Brahma Samaj,

founded by Ram Mohun Roy, and now represented by its three

branches, the Adi Brahma Samaj, the Brahma Samaj of India, and

" The Committee of the Adi Brahma

the Sadharano Brahma Samaj.

Samaj beg to offer you their hearty congratulations on the completion of the gigantic task which has occupied you for the last

*

of the Big-Veda and its native commentary has

quarter of a century. By publishing the Big-Veda at a time when Vedic learning has by some sad fatality become almost extinct in the land of its birth, you have conferred a boon upon us Hindus, for which we cannot but be eternally grateful."

LECTURE

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or monotheistic.
that word, it

is

T.

Monotheistic, in the usual sense of

decidedly not, though there are

hymns

that assert the unity of the Divine as fearlessly as any

passage of the Old Testament, or the

New Testament,

Thus one poet says (Kig- Veda I. 164, 46)

" That which is one sages name it in various ways they
"

call it Agni, Yama, Matarisvan.

"

The wise poets represent by

Another poet says

or the Koran.

—

,

:

:

words Him who
many ways."*

their

is one

with beautiful wings, in

And again we hear of a being called Hiran^agarbha,
the golden germ (whatever the original of that name may

have been), of whom the poet says f "In the beginning
he was the one born lord of
there arose Hirawyagarbha
all this.

He established the earth and this sky. Who

:

;

is

the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice ?”

Ilirawyagarbha, the poet says,

That

“ is alone God above all

—

gods” (yaA deveshu adhi devaA ekaA asit) an assertion of the unity of the Divine which could hardly be exceeded in strength by any passage from the Old Testament.

But by the side of such passages, which are few in number, there are thousands in which ever so many Even their divine beings are praised and prayed to. number is sometimes given as “thrice eleven”;}: or thirty-three, and one poet assigns eleven gods to the sky, eleven to the earth, and eleven to the waters, § the waters here intended being those of the atmosphere and These thirty-three gods have even wives the clouds.

apportioned to them,| though few of these only have as yet attained to the honor of a name.^

£ Muir, iv. 9.

\ Eig-Veda X. 121.

Eig-Veda III. 6, 9.

§ Eig-Veda I. 139, 11.

T The following names of Devapatnis or wives of the gods are

* Eig-Veda X. 114, 5.

|

THE LESSONS OF THE VEDA.

These

thirty-three gods,

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however, by no means in-

clude all the Vedic gods, for such important deities as

Agni, the

fire,

Soma, the rain, the Maruts or Storm-

gods, the Asvins, the gods of Morning and Evening, the

Waters, the Dawn, the Sun are mentioned separately and there are not wanting passages in which the poet is carried away into exaggerations, till he proclaims the number of his gods to be, not only thirty-three, but three thousand three hundred and thirty-nine.*

If therefore there must be a name for the religion of the Rig- Veda, polytheism would seem at first sight the most appropriate. Polytheism, however, has assumed with us a meaning which renders it totally inapplicable to the Vedic religion.

Our ideas of polytheism being chiefly derived from Greece and Rome, we understand by it a certain more or less organized system of gods, different in power and rank, and all subordinate to a supreme God, a Zeus or Jupiter.

The Vedic polytheism differs from the Greek and Roman polytheism, and, I may add, likewise from

;

the polytheism of the Ural-Altaic, the Polynesian, the

American, and most of the African races, in the same manner as a confederacy of village communities differs from a monarchy. There are traces of an earlier stage of village-community life to be discovered in the later

republican and monarchical constitutions, and in the same

manner nothing can be clearer, particularly in Greece, than that the monarchy of Zeus was preceded by what given in the Vaitana Sutra XV. 3 of Agni,

(ed.

Garbe)

:

Prithivi,

the wife

Yak of Vata, Sena of Indra, Dhena of Brihaspati, Pathya

of Pushan, Gayatri of Vasu, Trislhubh of Rudra,

Anushhibh

Soma.

Gagati of Aditya,

of Mitra, Vi ray of Vanina, Pankti of Vishnu, Dikslia of

* Rig-Veda III. 9, 9.

LECTURE

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V.

may be called the septarchy of several of the great gods of Greece.

The same remark applies to the mythology of the Teutonic nations also.*

In the Veda, however,

the gods worshipped as supreme by each sept stand still side

by side. No one is first always, no one is last. Even gods of a decidedly inferior and limited

character.

character assume occasionally in the eyes of a devoted

poet a supreme place above

all

other gods.

It

was

necessary, therefore, for the purpose of accurate reasoning, to have a

name, different from polytheism to signify,

namely this worship of single gods, each occupying for a

time a supreme position, and I proposed for it the name of Kathenotheism, that

is, a

worship of one god after

another, or of Ilenotheism, the worship of single gods.

This shorter name of Ilenotheism has found more gen-

erally conveying more definitely the opposition between Henotheism the worship of one only God, and Ilenotheism the worship of single gods and, if but properly defined, it will answer its purpose very well.

However, in researches of this kind we cannot be too much on our guard against technical terms. They

eral acceptance, as

sition

,

,

are inevitable, I

leading.

*

;

know

;

but they are almost always mis-

There is, for instance, a

Grimm showed

that

while at other times he

Tliorr

is

is

hymn addressed to

sometimes the supreme god,

the son of Odinn.

This, as Professor

Zimmer truly remarks, need not be regarded as the result of a revolution, or even of gradual decay, as in the case of

Dvaus and Tyr,

but simply as inherent in the character of a nascent polytheism.

See Zeitschrift fur D. A., vol. xii. p. 174.

j "Among not yet civilized races prayers are addressed to a god with a special object, and to that god who is supposed to be most powerful in a special domain. He becomes for the moment the highest god to whom all others must give place. He may be invoked as the highest and the only god, without any slight being intended for the other gods." Zimmer, 1. c. p. 175.

—

the Indus and the rivers that fall into it, of which I hope to read you a translation, because it determines very accurately the geographical scene on which the

poets

the

of

Veda

passed

their

life.

Now native

scholars call these rivers devatas or deities, and Euro-

pean translators too speak of them as gods and goddesses.

But in the language used by the poet with regard to the Indus and the other rivers, there is nothing to justify us in saying that he considered these rivers as

gods and goddesses unless we mean by gods and goddesses something very different from what the Greeks called River-gods and River-goddesses, Nymphs, Naja,

des, or even Muses.

And what applies to these rivers applies more or less to all the objects of Vedic worship.

They all are still

between what is seen by the senses, what is created by fancy, and what is postulated by the under-

oscillating

standing

;

they are things, persons, causes, according to

and if we call them gods or goddesses, we must remember the remark of all the varying disposition of the poets ancient native

theologian,

;

who reminds

us that

by

devata or .deity he means no more than the object celebrated in a hymn, while Ii i
s h i or seer means no more
than the subject or the author of a hymn.

t

It is difficult to treat of the so-called

gods celebrated

Veda according to any system,

for the simple

in the

reason that the concepts of these gods and the

hymns

addressed to them sprang up spontaneously and without

any pre-established

plan.

It is best perhaps for our
purpose to follow an ancient Brahmanical writer, who is

supposed to have lived about 100 b.c. He tells us of
students of the Veda, before his time, who admitted three

A g n or fire, whose place is on the

V a y u or I n d r a, the wind and the god of the

deities only, viz. ,

earth ;

i

LECTURE

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thunderstorm, whose place

is

V.

in

the air; and Siirya,

the sun, whose place is in the sky.

These deities, they

maintained, received severally many appellations, in con-

sequence of their greatness, or of the diversity of their functions, just as a priest, according to the functions

which he performs at various sacrifices, receives various names.

This is one view of the Yedic gods, and, though too

narrow, it cannot be denied that there is some truth in

A very useful division of the Yedic gods might be made, and has been made by Yaska, into terrestrial aerial and celestial and if the old Hindu theologians meant no more than that all the manifestations of divine power in nature might be traced back to three centres of force, one in the sky, one in the air, and one on the earth, he deserves great credit for his sagacity.

But he himself perceived evidently that this generalization was not quite applicable to all the gods, and he

"Or, it may be, these gods are all disgoes onto say tinct beings, for the praises addressed to them are disThis is quite right. tinct, and their appellations also."

It is the very object of most of these divine names to it.

,

,

,

:

impart distinct individuality to the manifestations of the powers of nature and though the philosopher or the inspired poet might perceive that these numerous names

;

were but names, while that which was named was one and one only, this was certainly not the idea of most of

the Yedic Ah'shis themselves, still less of the people who listened to their songs at fairs and festivals. It is the peculiar character

which we have
Divine
that

is

of that phase

to study

in the

of

religious

thought

Yeda, that in

it

the

conceived and represented as manifold, and

many functions are shared in common by various
made at organizing

gods, no attempt having yet been

the whole body of the gods, sharply separating one from the other, and subordinating all of them to several or, in the end, to one supreme head.

Availing ourselves of the division of the Yedic gods into terrestrial, aerial, and celestial, as proposed by some of the earliest Indian theologians, we should have to

begin with the gods connected with the earth.

Before

we examine them, however, we have first to

consider one of the earliest objects of worship and adoration,

namely Earth and Heaven, or Heaven and Earth

conceived as a divine couple.

,

Not only in India, but

among many other nations, both savage, half-savage, or civilized, we meet with Heaven and Earth as one of the pondered on, transfigured, and animated by the early poets, and more or less clearly conceived by earliest objects,

early philosophers.

It is surprising that it should be so,

for the conception of the Earth as an independent being,

and of Heaven as an independent being, and then of both together as a divine couple embracing the whole universe, requires a considerable effort of abstraction, far

more than the concepts of other divine powers, such as the Fire, the Rain, the Lightning, or the Sun. Still so it is,

and as it may help us to understand the

ideas about Heaven and Earth, as

we find them in the

Yeda, and show us at the same time the strong contrast between the mythology of the Aryans and that of real savages (a contrast of great importance, though I admit very difficult to explain), I shall read you first some extracts from a book, published by a friend of mine, the Rev. William Wyatt Gill, for many years an active and

most successful missionary in Mangaia, one of those
Polynesian islands that form a girdle round one quarter
of our globe,* and all share in the same language, the
* " Es handelt sich liier nicht um amerikanisclie ocler afrikanisclie

:

LECTURE

170

T.

same religion, the same mythology, and the same cusThe book is called " Myths and Songs from the South Pacific,"* and it is full of interest to the student of mythology and religion.

The story, as told him by the natives of Mangaia,

toms.

runs as follows

:

f

" The sky is built of solid blue stone.
it

almost touched the earth

broad leaves of the

t e

At one time
upon the stout

resting

;

v e (which attains the height of

about six feet) and the delicate indigenous arrow-root

(whose slender stem rarely exceeds three feet).

In this narrow space between earth and sky the inhabitants

of

this

Ru, whose usual
come up

world were pent up.

residence was in Avaiki, or the shades, had
for a time to this world of ours.

Pitying the wretched

confined residence of the inhabitants, he employed himself in
endeavoring to raise the sky a
little.

For this

purpose he cut a number of strong stakes of different
kinds of trees, and firmly planted them in the ground at

Rangimotia, the centre of the island, and with him the
This was a considerable improvecentre of the world.

ment, as mortals were thereby enabled to stand erect
and to walk about without inconvenience.
Hence Ru

was named

,

The sky-supporter.

(1794)

,

,

Wherefore Teka sings

Force up the sky, O Ru,
And let the space be clear

Zersplitterung, sondern

,

!

eine iiberraschende Gleichartigkeit dehnt

wenn wir

Oceanien in der vollen AufEassung nehmen mit Einschluss Mikxo.
und Mela-nesiens (bis Malaya), selbst weiter. Es lasst sich sagen,
dass ein einheitlicher Gedankenbau, in etwa 120 L'angen und 70
Breitegraden, ein Yiiertel unsers Erdglobus uberwolbt. " Bastian,
sich durch die Weite und Breite des Still en Oceans, und

—

Die Heilige Sage der Polynesier, p. 57

* Henry S. King & Co., London, 1876.

;

f P. 58.

THE LESSONS OF THE YEDA.

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" One day when the old man was surveying his work,
his graceless son

Maui contemptuously asked him what

he was doing there.
to talk ?

Ru replied

,

:

Who told youngsters

Take care of yourself, or I will hurl you out
of existence.'

" Do it, then,' shouted Maui.
,

" Ru was as good as his word, and forthwith seized
Maui, who was small of stature, and threw him to a
In falling Maui assumed the form of a
great height.
bird, and lightly touched the ground, perfectly unharmed.
Maui, now thirsting for revenge, in a moment
resumed his natural form, but exaggerated to gigantic
proportions, and ran to his father, saying
:

•

Eu, who supportest the many heavens,

The third, even to the highest, ascend

,

!

Inserting his head between the old man's legs, he exerted
all

sky and

his prodigious strength,
all,

and hurled poor Ru,

to a tremendous height

—so high, indeed,

sky could never get back again.
Unluckily, however, for the sky-supporting Ru, his head
and shoulders got entangled among the stars. He
struggled hard, but fruitlessly, to extricate himself.
that the blue

*

Maui walked off well pleased with having raised the
sky to its present height, but left half his father's body

and both his legs ingloriously suspended between heaven
and earth. Thus perished Ru. His body rotted away,
and his bones came tumbling down from time to time,
and were shivered on the earth into countless fragments.
These shivered bones of Ru are scattered over every hill
and valley of Mangaia, to the very edge of the sea, "

What the natives call

“the bones of

Ru” (te ivio

Ru) are pieces of pumice-stone.
Now let us consider, first of all, whether this story,

LECTURE

172

which with

V.

slight variations is told all over the Polynesian islands,* is pure nonsense, or whether there was some sense in it.

originally

sense

is

My conviction is that non-

everywhere the child of

fortunately

sense, only

that un-

many children, like that youngster Maui, much wiser than their fathers, and

consider themselves

occasionally succeed in hurling them out of existence. It is a peculiarity of

many of the ancient myths that

they represent events which happen every day, or every year, as having happened once upon a time.f

The daily

between day and night, the yearly battle between winter and spring, are represented almost like historical events, and some of the episodes and touches belonging originally to these constant battles of nature, have certainly been transferred into and mixed up with battles battle

that took place at a certain time, such as, for instance, the siege of Troy.

When historical recollections failed,

legendary accounts of the ancient battles between Night

and Morning, Winter and Spring, were always at hand
and, as in modern times we constantly hear " good
stories," which we have known from our childhood, told
again and again of any man whom they seem to. fit, in the
same manner, in ancient times, any act of prowess, or
" the
daring, or mischief, originally told of the sun,
;

Conqueror of gloomy Night," was readily transferred to and believed of any local
hero who might seem
to be a second Jupiter, or Mars, or Hercules.
I have little doubt therefore that as the accounts of a
deluge, for instance, which we find almost everywhere,
orient

are originally recollections of the annual torrents of rain
or snow that covered the
*

worlds within the ken of

There is a second version of the story even in the small island
see
Myths and Songs," p. 71.

ot Mangaia
f

little

,

;

See before, p. 158.

A

THE LESSONS OF THE VEDA.

173

the ancient village-bards, * this tearing asunder of heaven
and earth too was originally no more than a description
During a dark
of what might be seen every morning.
the two seemed
night the sky seemed to cover the earth
to be one, and could not be distinguished one from the
Then came the Dawn, which with its bright
other, f
;

rays lifted the covering of the dark night to a certain
point, till at last Maui appeared, small in stature, a mere
child, that is, the

denly, as

it

sun of the morning

—thrown up sud—

were, when his first rays shot through the

sky from beneath the horizon, then falling back to the
earth, like a bird, and rising in gigantic form on the

morning sky. The dawn now was hurled away, and the
sky was seen lifted high above the earth and Maui, the
sun, marched on well pleased with having raised the sky
;

to its present height.

Why pumice-stone should be called the bones of Ru,
we cannot tell, without knowing a great deal more of
the language of Mangaia than we do at present.

It is
most likely an independent saying, and was afterward
united with the story of Ru and Maui.

Row I must quote at least a few extracts from a Maori
legend as written down by Judge Manning

:

\

" This is the Genesis of the New Zealanders
" The Heavens which are above us, and the Earth
:

* This explanation
scholars.

also one of judgment.
f

is

considered altogether inadequate by

It is, of course,

many

not altogether a question of learning, but

—

m. Puns.

" The Sacred Books of the East," vol. i. p. 249

:

"The first half

the earth, the second half the heaven, their uniting the rain, the
uniter Paryanya." And so it is when it (Paryanya) rains thus
is

strongly

— without ceasing, day and night together- -then they say

also, "Heaven

and earth have come together.''

Aranyaka, III. 2, 2.

\

— From the Aitareya-

— A. W.

Bastian, Heilige Sago der I'olynesier, p. 36.

LECTURE

174

V.

of men, and
which lies beneath us, are the progenitors

the origin of all things.

" Formerly the Heaven lay upon the Earth, and all
was darkness.

.

" And the children of Heaven and Earth sought to
light and darkness,
discover the difference between

...

between day and night.

" So the sons of Rangi (Heaven) and of Papa (Earth)
Let us seek means whereconsulted together, and said,
to separate them
by to destroy Heaven and Earth, or
,

1

from each other.

" Then said Tumatauenga (the God of War),
destroy them both.

•

,

Tane-Maliuta (the Forest God), JNot
Let one of them go upward
let them be separated.
let the other remain below
stranger to us

" Then
so

Let us

1

said

and become a
and be a parent for us.

;

,

" Then four of the gods tried to separate Heaven

while the
Earth, but did not succeed,

tiftli,

and

Tane, suc-

ceeded.
great

separated,
After Heaven and Earth had been
it, one of their
expresses
storms arose, or, as the poet
tried to
winds,
the
Tawhiri-Matea, the god of
<<

sons,

his parents by his
revenue the outrage committed on
dripThen follow dismal dusky days, and
brothers.
the
All
blasts.
scorching
ping chilly skies, and arid
p-od's fight, till

at last

Tu only remains, the god of war,

who had devoured all his brothers,

except the Storm.

which the greater part of the
the waters, and but a small
earth was overwhelmed by

More

fights follow, in

light continued to

After that,

portion remained dry.
increased, so also the people
increase, and as the light

who had been hidden between
creased

.

•

And

so

Heaven and Earth in-

generation

was

added

to

THE LESSON'S OF THE VEDA.

175

who

generation clown to the time of Maui-Potiki, lie

brought death into the world.

" Now in these latter days Heaven remains far removed from his wife, the Earth but the love of the

;

wife rises upward in sighs toward her husband.

These

are the mists which fly upward from the mountain-tops ;

and the

tears of

Heaven fall downward on

behold the dew-drops !'

his wife ;

,

So far the Maori Genesis.

Let us

now return to the Veda, and compare these

crude and somewhat grotesque legends with the language of the ancient Aryan poets.

In the hymns of the ItigVeda the separating and keeping apart of Heaven and

Earth is several times alluded to, and here too it is repreIn I. 67,

sented as the work of the most valiant gods.

3 it is Agni, fire, who holds the earth and supports the heaven

in X. 89, 4 it is Indra Avho keeps them apart

in IX. 101, 15 Soma is celebrated for the same deed,

and in III. 31, 12 other gods too share the same honor.*

In the Aitareya Brahmana we read f " These tw o

;

;

r

:

worlds (Heaven and Earth) were once joined together.
They went asunder. Then it did not rain, nor did the

And the five tribes did not agree with one
sun shine.

The gods then brought the two (Heaven and
Earth) together, and when they came together they
formed a wedding of the gods.
Here we have in a shorter form the same fundamental ideas first, that formerly
Heaven and Earth

another.

, ,

r

:

were together that afterward they were separated that
when they were thus separated there was war throughout
nature, and neither rain nor sunshine
that, lastly,
;

;

;

* Bergaigne, " La Religion Vedique," p. 240,
\ Ait. Br. IV.

27

;

Muir, iv. p. 23,

LECTURE

176

Heaven and Earth were

Y.

conciliated,

and that then a

great wedding took place.

How I need hardly remind those who are acquainted
with Greek and

Roman literature, how familiar these

and similar conceptions about a marriage between Heaven
and earth were in Greece and Italy. They seem to
possess there a more special reference to the annual
reconciliation between Heaven and Earth, which takes
place in spring, and to their former estrangement during

But the first cosmological separation of the
winter.

two always points to the want of light and the imposduring the night, and the
gradual

sibility of distinction

lifting up of the blue sky through the rising of the sun.*
In the Homeric hymns f the Earth is addressed as

" Mother of gods, tne wife of the starry Heaven

J

and the Heaven or ^Etlier is often called the father.
Their marriage too is described, as, for instance, by
Euripides, when he says
:

"There is the mighty Earth, Jove's JEtther
He (the either) is the creator of men and gods
:

;

The earth receiving the moist drops of rain,
Bears mortals,
Bears food, and the tribes of animals.
Hence she is not unjustly regarded

As the mother of all." §

* See Muir, iv. p. 24.

f

\ Xalpe Beuv pimp, aXox'

Homer, Hymn xxx. 17.

O vpavov aorepoevroc.

§ Euripides, Chrysippus,

fragrn. 6 (edit. Didot, p. 824) :

Tata peyi-arr) rn'i Aide; atOrjp,
o piv avOpukuv cat OeCiv yeverup,
fy

J'

vypoftblov f oraybvat; vot'iovq

Tzapabe^apcvT)

tiktcl Ovarovc,

riKTCL 61 iiopuv, f)C'Aa re (jr/puv,

oBev ovk abinoc
prjrrip

ndvruv vevopiorai.

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And what is more curious still is that we have evidence that Euripides received this

teacher, the philosopher Anaxagoras.

Halicarnassus *

tells

doctrine from

his

For Dionysius of

us that Euripides frequented the

lectures of Anaxagoras.

Now, it was the theory of that

philosopher that originally all things were in

all things,

but that afterward they became separated.

Euripides

and became doubtful regarding that theory.

He accordingly propounds

the ancient doctrine by the mouth of another, namely
later in life associated with Sokrates,

Melanippe, who says

:

" This saying (myth) is not mine, but came from my
mother, that formerly Heaven and Earth were one
shape but when they were separated from each other,
;

they gave birth and brought
trees, birds, beasts,

and the

all

things into the light,

fishes Avliom the sea feeds,

and the race of mortals."

Thus we have met with the same idea of the original union, of a separation, and of a subsequent reunion of Heaven and Earth in Greece, in India, and in the Polynesian islands.

Let us

now see how the poets of the Yeda address

these two beings, Heaven and Earth.

They are mostly addressed in the dual, as two beings forming but one concept. We meet, however, with verses which are addressed to the Earth by herself, and which speak of her as " kind, without thorns, and pleasant to dwell on,"^f while there are clear traces in

some of the hymns that at one time Dyaus, the sky, was the supreme deity. \ When invoked together they are

* Dionysius Halie., vol. v. p. 355

;

Muir, v. p. 27.

Rig-Veda I. 22, 15.

" Lectures on the Science of Language," vol. ii.

p. 468.

\ See

f

LECTURE

178

Y.

Dyavaprithivyau, from d y u, the sky, and

called

p r i t l i i v i, the broad earth.

we examine their epithets, we find that many of

If

them reflect simply the physical aspects of Heaven and Earth.

Thus they are called uru, wide uruvyaia,

widely expanded, dure -ante, with limits far apart,

g a b h i r a, deep ghrHavat, giving fat madli ud u g h a, yielding honey or dew payasvat, full of

;

;

;

;

milk

;

bhuri-retas, rich in seed.

Another class of epithets represents them already as

endowed with certain human and superhuman qualities,

such as asa«I'at, never tiring, a g a r a, not decaying,

which brings us very near to immortal adruh, not injuring, or not deceiving,

pra&etas, provident, and

then pita-mata, father and mother, devaputra, having

the gods for their sons, r i t a - v r i d h and r i t a v a t,

protectors of the TA'ta, of what is right, guardians of

;

eternal laws.

Here you see what is so interesting in the Veda, the gradual advance from the material to the spiritual, from the sensuous to the supersensuous, from the human to the

superhuman and the divine.

Heaven and Earth were

seen, and, according to our notions, they might simply

But the ancient

They could see
Heaven and Earth, but they never saw them in their
They felt that there was something beyond the
entirety.
purely finite aspect of these beings, and therefore they
thought of them, not as they would think of a stone, or
be classed as visible and finite beings.
poets were

a

tree,

or

more honest to themselves.

a dog, but as

something not- finite, not

al-

together visible or knowable, yet as something important
to themselves, powerful, strong to bless, but also strong

Whatever was between Heaven and Earth

to hurt.

seemed

to

be

theirs, their property, their

realm, their

;

THE LESSONS OF THE YEDA.

179

a

They held and embraced all they seemed
The Devas or bright beings, the
to have produced all.
dominion.

sun,

;

the dawn, the

fire,

the wind, the rain, were

theirs, and were called therefore the offspring of

all

Heaven

Thus Heaven and Earth became the Uniand Mother.
Then we ask at once " Were then these Heaven and
Earth gods ?" But gods in what sense ? In our sense of
and Earth.

versal Father

:

God ? Why, in our sense, God is altogether incapable of
a plural.

Then in the Greek sense of the word ? No,
for what the Greeks called gods was the

certainly not ;

result of an intellectual growth totally independent of the

Veda or of India.
call

We must never forget that what we

gods in ancient mythologies

living, individual beings, of

or that.

are

not substantial,

whom we can predicate this

Dev a, which wo translate by god, is nothing

expressive of a quality shared by
heaven and earth, by the sun and the stars and the dawn
and the sea, namely brightness and the idea of god, at
that early time, contains neither more nor less than what
That is

is shared in common by all these bright beings.

to say, the idea of god is not an idea ready-made, which
could be applied in its abstract purity to heaven and
earth and other such like beings

but it is an idea,

growing out of the concepts of heaven and earth and of
the other blight beings, slowly separating itself from
them, but never containing more than what was contained, though confusedly, in the
objects to which it was

but an adjective,

;

successively applied.

Nor must it be supposed that heaven and earth, having
once been raised to the rank of undecaying or immortal
beings, of divine parents, of guardians of the laws, were

thus permanently settled in the religious consciousness of
the people.

Far from

it.

When the ideas of other

LECTURE

180

V.

more active and more distinctly personal

* the Yedic Ah'shis asked without

gods had been elaborated,

hesitation

Who then has made heaven and earth ? not

exactly Heaven and Earth, as conceived before, but

heaven and earth as seen every day, as a part of what

began to be called Nature or the Universe.

Thus one poet says

*'

He was indeed among the gods the cleverest workman who produced the two brilliant ones (heaven and

gods, and of

:

:

that gladden all things

he who measured out

two bright ones (heaven and earth) by his wisdom,

and established them on everlasting supports."

And again :f " He was a good workman who produced heaven and earth the wise, who by his might

brought together these two (heaven and earth), the earth),

;

the

;

wide, the

deep, the

well-fasliioned in

the bottomless

space."

Very soon this great work of making heaven and earth was ascribed, like other mighty works, to the mightiest

At first we read that Indra,

of their gods, to Indra.

originally only a kind of Jupiter pluvius, or god of rain,

stretched out heaven and earth, like a hide ;+ that he

held them in his hand,§ that he upholds heaven and

and that he grants heaven and earth to his
But very soon Indra is praised for having
made Heaven and Earth ** and then, when the poet
remembers that Heaven and Earth had been praised
elsewhere as the parents of the gods, and more especially
as the parents of Indra, he does not hesitate for a

earth,||

worshippers. \

;

moment, but

says

:

ff

" What poets

living before us

* Rig-Yeda I. 160, 4.

||

f L. c. IV. 56, 3.

f L. c. m. 34, 8.

i L. c.

§ L.

Vm. 6, 5.

c. III.

30, 5.

L. c. in. 34, 8.

** L. c. Vm. 36, 4.

tf L. c. X. 54, 3.

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have reached the end of all thy greatness ? for thou hast indeed begotten thy father and thy mother together*

from thy own body !"

That is a strong measure, and a god who once could do that, was no doubt capable of anything afterward. The same idea, namely that Indra is greater than heaven and earth, is expressed in a less outrageous way by

who says f that Indra is greater than heaven and earth, and that both together are only a
" The divine Dyaus bowed half of Indra.
Or again
another poet,

:

^

before Indra, before Indra the great Earth

bowed with

" At the birth of thy splendor
Dyaus tfeinbled, the Earth trembled for fear of thy anger. "§
her wide

spaces."

Thus, from one point of view, Heaven and Earth were the greatest gods, they were the parents of everything, and therefore of the gods also, such as Indra and others.

But, from another point of view, every god that was considered as supreme at one time or other, must necessarily have

made heaven and earth, must at all events

be greater than heaven and earth, and thus the child

became greater than the father, a)', became the father of his father.

Indra was not the only god that created heaven and ascribed to

inent

earth.

In

one

hymn

creation

that

is

||

Soma and Pushan, by no means very prom-

characters

golden germ)

;

;

in another

f to Iirawyagarbha (the

in another again to a

god who is simply

Dhatri, the Creator,** or Vis valvar man, ft the

called

* Cf. IV. 17, 4, where Dyaus

Muir, iv. 31, note.

f

Eig-Veda VI. 30, 1.

\

L.

c.

I.

131, 1.

§ L. c. IV. 17, 2.

is

the father of Indra

||

;

see

however

L. c. II. 40, 1.

1 L. c. X. 121, 9.

** L. c. X. 190, 3.

ft L- c. X. 81, 2.

LECTURE

182

Y.

maker

of all tilings.

Other gods, such as Mitra and SavitW, names of the sun, are praised for upholding

Heaven and Earth, and the same task is sometimes performed by the old god Yanina * also. What I wish you to observe in all this is the perfect freedom with which these so-called gods or Devas are handled, and particularly the ease and naturalness with which now the one, now the other emerges as supreme out of this chaotic tlieogony.

This is the peculiar char-

acter of the ancient Yedic religion, totally different both

from the Polytheism and from the Monotheism as we and if the see it in the Greek and the Jewish religions Yeda had taught us nothing else but this henotheistic phase, which must everywhere have preceded the more highly-organized phase of Polytheism which we see in Greece, in Rome, and elsewhere, the study of the Yeda would not have been in vain.

;

It

may be quite true that the poetry of the Yeda is

neither beautiful, in our sense of the word, nor very profound ; but

it

is

giant spectres of

When we see those two
Heaven and Earth on the background

instructive.

of the Yedic religion, exerting their influence for a time, and then vanishing before the light of younger and more active gods, we learn a lesson which it is well to learn, and which we can hardly learn anywhere else the lesson

—

—
how gods were made and unmade how the Beyond or
the Infinite was named by different names in order to
bring it near to the mind of man, to make it for a time
comprehensible, until, when name after name had proved
of no avail, a nameless God was felt to answer best the
restless cravings of the human heart.
I shall

next translate to you the hymn to which I refer the Rivers

ferred before as addressed to the Rivers.

* Rig-Yeda VI. 70, 1.

THE LESSONS OF THE VEDA.

183

are to be called deities at all, they belong to the class of

But the reason why I single out this hymn is not so much because it throws new light on the theogonic process, but because it may help to impart some terrestrial deities.

reality to the vague conceptions which we

form to our-

selves of the ancient Yedic poets and their surroundings.

The rivers invoked are, as we shall see, the real /.

.

.

the Punjab, and the poem shows a much wider geographi-

horizon than we should expect from a mere village-

cal

bard.*

1.

u Let the poet declare,

O Waters, your exceeding

By seven
greatness, here in the seat of Vivasvat. f
seven they have come forth in three courses, but

and

the

Sindhu (the Indus) exceeds all the other wandering rivers
by her strength.

" Varuua dug out paths for thee to walk on, when

2.

thou rannest to the race. \ Thou proceedest on a pre*

Rig-Veda X. 75.

See Hibberfc Lectures, Lect. iv.

Vivasvat is a name of the sun, and the seat or home of Vivasvat
can hardly be anything but the earth, as the home of the sun, or,
f

in a more special sense, the place where a sacrifice is offered.

J I

formerly translated yat vajan abhi adrava/i tvam by "when thou rankest for the prizes." Grassman had translated similarly, "When thou, O Sindhu, rankest to the prize of the battle," while Ludwig wrote, "When thou, O Sindhu, wast flowing on to greater powers."

VSya,

connected with vegeo,

vigeo,

vigil,

wacker

(see

Curtius, Grundziige, No. 159), is one of the many difficult words in

may be guessed, but in many places cannot yet be determined with certainty. Vfuya occurs the Veda the general meaning of which

very frequently, both in the singular and the plural, and some of

meanings are clear enough. The Petersburg Dictionary gives list of them

swiftness, race, prize of race, gain, treasure, race-horse, etc.

Here we perceive at once the difficulty

of tracing all these meanings back to a common source, though it might be possible to begin with the meanings of strength, strife, contest, race, whether friendly or warlike, then to proceed to what is won in a race or in war, viz. booty, treasure, and lastly to take its

the following

—

LECTURE

184

Y.

capituous rklge of the earth, when thou art lord in the
van of all the moving streams.

3. " The sound rises up to heaven above the earth
;

she stirs up with splendor her endless power.*
a cloud, the showers

As from

thunder forth, when the Sindhu

comes, roaring like a bull.

4.

"To thee, O Sindhu, they (the other rivers) come

lowing mother-cows (run) to their young with their
milk.f Like a king in battle thou leadest the two -wings,
as

when thou

readiest

the front

of these down-rushing:

rivers.

5.

" Accept,

O GangA (Ganges), YamunA (Jumna),

Sarasvati (Sursuti), Autudri (Sutlej), Paruslmi (IrAvAti,

vagah in the more general sense of acquisitions, goods, even goods
bestowed as gifts. We have a similar transition of meaning in the
Greek «0/loc, contest, contest for a prize, and u0'aov, the prize of
contest, reward, gift, while in the plural r a d rJ?.a stands again for

The Vedic vayambhara may

contest, or even the place of combat.

in fact he rendered by ad^oijtopog, vayasati by dQXoovv

The transition from fight to prize is seen in passages such as
Eig-Veda VI. 45, 12, vilyan indra sravayyan tvaya yeshna hitam
dhanam,
May we with thy help, O Indra, win the glorious fights,

:

,

,

the offered prize" (cf. a0'Xo0crj] f).

Eig-Veda VIII.

19,

18,

te

it

vSyebhif

yigyua mahat

dhanam,

" They won great wealth by battles."

What we want for a proper understanding of our verse, are
we have, as here, a movement toward vayas in the

passages where

for instance

X. 53, 8, atra

Such passages are few

yahama ye asan asevah sivan vayam lit tarema abhi vayan, "Let
us leave here those who -were unlucky (the dead), and let us get up
No more is probably meant here when the Sindhu
to lucky toils."

plural.

is

:

;

said to run toward her vayas, that

is,

her struggles, her

her race across the mountains with the other rivers.

* On sushma, strength, see Eig-Veda, translation,

We find subhram .s-Qshmam II. 11,

IV. 17, 12.

•(•

See Muir, Santkrit Texts, v. p. 344.

;

and

iyarti

vol.

with

i.

fight,

p.

105.

sQshmam

THE LESSONS OF THE VEDA.

185

Ravi), my praise !* With the Asikni (Akesines) listen, O
MarudvWdha,f and with the Vitasta (Ilydaspes, Behat)

;

O Ar^ikiya,J listen with the Sushoma. §
6.

" First thou goest united with the TV/sh&ima on

journey, with the Susartu, the Rasa (Ramha,
Araxes ? ||), and the Aveti O Sindhu, with the Kubha
(Ivophen, Cabul river) to the Gomati (Gomal), with the
Mehatnu to the Krumu (Kurum) with whom tliou pro-

thy

—

—

ceedest together.

7

.

" Sparkling,

bright,

with

carries the waters across the

mighty

plains

splendor

she

--the unconquered

Sindhu, the quickest of the quick, like a beautiful mare

—a sight to

8.

see.

" Rich in horses, in chariots, in garments, in gold,

in booty,

T in wool,** and in straw, ff the Sindhu, hand-
some and young, clothes herself in sweet flowers \\
.
*

"O Marudvridha with Asikni, Vitasta; O Aryikiya, listen with

"Asikni and Vitasta and
Ludwig.
with the Sushoma, hear us, O Aryikiya," Grassman.
the Sushoma,

name

Marudvridha,

According to Roth
Hydaspes, before the
junction with the Hydraotes according to Ludwig, the river after
the junction with Hydraotes. Zimmer (Altindisches Leben, p. 12)
adopts Roth's, Kiepert in his maps follows Ludwig's opinion.
Vivien de Saintt According to Iaska, the Aryikiya is the Vipas.
Martin takes it for the country watered by the Suwan, the Soanos
f

Marudvridha, a general

the combined course of

for river.

tho Akesines and
;

of Megasthenes.
§

According

to

Yaska the Sushoma is tho Indus. Vivien de
it with the Suwan.
Zimmer (1. c. p. 14)

Saint-Martin identifies

points out that in Arrian, Indica, iv. 12, there

is a various reading

Soamos for Soanos.
||

" Chips from a German Workshop," vol. i. p. 157.

by no means an easy word. Hence all translations. Muir translates, "yielding nutriment;" Zimmer, "having plenty of quick horses;" Ludwig, "like a strong mare." Vayin, no doubt, means a strong horse, a Vayinivati

is

tors vary, and none settles the meaning.

[Notes **, +t,

on next page.]

LECTURE

1S6

V.

" The Sindhm has joked her easy chariot with horses
may she conquer prizes for us in the race. The
9.

;

but vayini never occurs in the Rig-Yeda in the sense of a mare,
and the text is not vayinivat, but vayinivati. If vayini meant mare,
we might translate rich in mares, but that would be a mere repetition
after svasva, possessed of good horses.

Vayinivati is chiefly applied
to Ushas, Sarasvati, and here to the river Sindhu.

It is joined

with vayebyi/i, Rig-Yeda I. 3, 10, which, if vayini meant mare,
would mean " rich in mares through horses." "We also read, Rig-Yeda
I.

48, 16, sam (na h mimikshva) vayaift vayinivati, which we can
hardly translate by "give us horses, thou who art possessed of
mares

nor, Rig-Yeda I. 92, 15, yukshva hi vayinivati asvan,
"harness the horses, thou who art rich in mares." In most of the
passages where vayinivati occurs, the goddess thus addressed is
represented as rich, and asked to bestow wealth, and I should
racer,

,

therefore prefer to take vayini, as a collective abstract noun, like
tretini, in the

sense of wealth, originally booty, and to translate

vayinivati simply by rich, a meaning well adapted to every passage

where the word occurs.

** Urnavati, rich in wool, probably refers to the flocks of sheep
which the North-West of India was famous. See Rig-Veda I.

for

126,

7.

Muir transff Silamavati does not occur again in the Rig-Veda.

Zimmer, " rich in water

Ludwig takes it as

lates, " rich in plants

Sayana states that silama is a plant which is made

That the meaning of silamavati was forgotten at an

early time we see by the Atharva-Yeda III. 12, 2, substituting

sunritavati, for silamavati, as preserved in the Aankhayana Grihyasutras, 3, 3.

I think silama means straw, from whatever plant it may be taken, and this would be equally applicable to a sala, a house, a sthuna, a post, and to the river Indus. It may have been, as Ludwig conjectures, an old local name, and in that case it may possibly account for the name given in later times to the Suleiman into ropes.

range.

^ Madhuvndh is likewise a word which does not occur again in Sayana explains it by nirgundi and similar plants, is meant.

Guuda is the name of a grass, madhuvndh therefore may have been a plant such as sugarcane^, that yielded a sweet juice, the Upper Indus being famous for sugar-cane

see Hiouen-thsang, II. p. 105.

I take adhivaste with

Roth in the sense "she dresses herself," as we might say "the river the Rig-Yeda.

but

it

is

doubtful what plant

;

greatness of her chariot is praised as truly great

—that

chariot which is irresistible, which has its own glory, and
abundant strength.”*

This hymn does not sound perhaps very poetical, in
our sense of the word yet if you will try to realize the
thoughts of the poet who composed it, you will perceive
that it is not without some bold and powerful concep;

tions.

Take the modern peasants, living in their villages by
the side of the Thames, and you must admit that he
would be a remarkable man who could bring himself to
look on the Thames as a kind of a general, riding at the
head of many English rivers, and leading them on to a
Yet it is easier to travel in England,
race or a battle.

and to gain a commanding view of the river-system of
the country, than it was three thousand years ago to
travel over India, even over that part of India which the
He takes in at one swoop
poet of our hymn commands.
three great river-systems,

or,

as

he

calls

them, three

great armies of rivers--those flowing from the north-

west into the Indus, those joining it from the north-east,
and, in the distance, the Ganges and the
their tributaries.

Jumnah with

Look on the map and you will see how

well these three armies are determined ; but our poet

had no map

— he had nothing but high mountains and

sharp eyes to carry out his trigonometrical survey.

is dressed in heather."

How

Muir translates, " she traverses a land yield-

Zimmer, "she clothes herself in Madhuvridh
ing sweetness

Ludwig, " the Silamavati throws herself into the increaser of the honeyAll this
shows how little progress can be made in
Vedic scholarship by merely translating either words or verses,
without giving at the same time a full justification of the meaning
assigned to every single word.

* See Petersburg Dictionary, s. v. virapsin.

sweet dew."

LECTURE

188

V.

I call a man, who for the first time could see those three marching armies of rivers, a poet.

The next thing that strikes one in that hymn if hymn we must call it- – is the fact that all these rivers, large and small, have their own proper names.

That

shows a considerable advance in civilized life, and it proves no small degree of coherence, or what the French call solidarity, between the tribes who had taken possession of Northern India.

whose banks they settle upon the river." Of course there

are many names for river.

It may be called the

–

runner,* the fertilizer, the roarer
ical metaphor,

– or, with a

little poet-

the arrow, the horse, the cow, the father,

the mother, the watchman, the child of the mountains.

Many rivers had many names in different parts of their

was only when communication between

became more frequent, and a fixed

terminology was felt to be a matter of necessity, that the

rivers of a country were properly baptized and registered. All this had been gone through in India before

tered.

our hymn became possible.

And now we have to consider another, to my mind

most startling fact. We here have a number of names

of the rivers of India, as they were known to one single

We then hear nothing of

poet, say about 1000 b.c.

India till we come to the days of Alexander, and when

we look at the names of the Indian rivers, represented

as well as they could be by Alexander's companions,

mere strangers in India, and by means of a strange

language and a strange alphabet, we recognize, without much difficulty, nearly all of the old Yedic names.

course, and

it

different settlements

* " Among
rivers, all

tlie Hottentots, the Kunene, Okavango, and Orange
have the name of Garib, i.e. the Runner." Dr. Tlieoph.

Hahn, Gape Times, July 11, 1882.

—

THE LESSONS OF THE VEDA.

In

tills

respect

the names of

ivers

189

have a great

advantage over the names of towns in India.

What we

now call Dilli or Delhi * was in ancient times called
Indraprastha, in later times Shahjahnabad.

Oude is

Ayodhya, but the old name of Saketa is forgotten. The
town of Patliputra, known to the Greeks as Palimbothra, is now called Patna, f

Now I can assure you this persistency of the Yedic
river-names was to my mind something so startling that

I often said to myself, This cannot be
there must be

something wrong here. I do not wonder so much at
the names of the Indus and the Ganges being the same.

The Indus was known to early traders, whether by sea
or by land.

Skylax sailed from the country of the

Paktys, i.e. the Puslitus, as the Afghans still call

That

themselves, down to the mouth of the Indus.

was under Darius Ilystaspes (521-486). Even before
that time India and the Indians were known by their
name, which was derived from Sindhu the name of their

—

,

frontier river.

The neighboring tribes who spoke Iranian

languages all pronounced, like the Persian, the

s as

an

Thus Sindhu became Hindhu (Hidhu), and, as h's
were dropped even at that early time, Hindhu became

Indu.

Thus the river was called Indos, the people

Indoi by the Greeks, who first heard of India from the
Persians.

Sindhu probably meant originally the divider, keeper,
and defender, from sidh, to keep off. It was a masculine, before it became a
feminine.

No more telling

name could have been given to a broad river, which
guarded peaceful settlers both against the inroads of

* De/di, not Del-high.

— A. W.

" Archaeological Survey of India," vol. xii. p. 113.

" Indus incolis Sindus appellatus."

Pliny, Hist. Nat. vi. 20, 71

f Cunningham,

t

:

LECTURE

190

hostile tribes

Y.

and the attacks of wild animals.

A com-

mon name for the ancient settlements of the Aryans in India was "the Seven Rivers," " Sapta SindhavaA." But though sindliu was used as an appellative noun for river in general (cf. Rig- Veda VI. 19, 5, samudre na sindhavaA yadamanaA, " like rivers longing for the sea"), it remained throughout the whole history of India the name of its powerful guardian river, the Indus.

In some passages of the Rig-Ar eda it has been pointed out that sindliu might better be translated by " sea," a

change of meaning, if so it can be called, fully explained

by the geographical conditions of the country. There are places where people could swim across the Indus, there are others where no eye could tell whether the boundless expanse of water should be called river or sea.

The two run

into

each

other,

as

every sailor

knows, and naturally the meaning of sindliu, river, runs into the meaning of sindliu, sea.

But besides the two great rivers, the Indus and the Ganges in Sanskrit the Ganga, literally the Go-go we have the smaller rivers, and many of their names also agree with the names preserved to us by the companions

—

—

of Alexander.*

The Yamuna, the Jumna, was known to Ptolemy as Ahaiiovva, -f to Pliny as Jomanes, to Arrian, somewhat

corrupted, as Jbbares.J

The Autudri, or, as it was afterward called, Yatadru,
meaning " running in a hundred streams," was known
Pliny called it
to Ptolemy as Z adapting or Z dpadpog
Sydrus and Megasthenes, too, was probably acquainted
;

;

* The history of these names has been treated by Professor Lassen,
in his

" Indische Alterthumskunde," and more lately by Professor

Kaegi, in his very careful essay,
f Ptol.

vii. 1, 29.

"Der Rig-Veda," pp. 146, 147.
t

Arrian, Indica, viii. 5.

£

THE LESSONS OF THE VEDA.
with

as

it

Z asdpSpg.

In the Veda*

191

formed with

it

the Vipas the frontier of the Punjab, and we hear of
fierce battles fought at that time,

it

may be on the same

spot where in 1846 the battle of the Sutledge was fought
by Sir Hugh Gough and Sir Henry Hardinge.

It

was

probably on the Vipas (later Vipasa), a north-western
tributary of the Sutledge, that Alexander's army turned
back.

The river was then called Hyphasis

IlypasiSjt a very fair

it

Vipas, which means "unfettered."
is

;

Pliny calls

approximation to the Vedic
Its

modern name

Bias or Bejah.

The next river on the west is the Vedic Paruslim,
known as Iravati, which Strabo calls Hyarotis,
while Arrian gives it a more Greek appearance by calling
it Ilydraotes.
It is the modern Rawi.
river which the Ten Kings when attacking the Trifasus
under Sudas tried to cross from the west by cutting off
its water.
But their stratagem failed, and they perished
in the river (Rig- Veda VII. 18, 8-9).
We then come to the Asikni, which means " black."
better

j;

That river had another name also, Aandrabhaga, which
means streak of the moon." The Greeks, however,
pronounced that Zavdapo^{dyog}, and this had the unlucky
Ilesychius
meaning of
the devourer of Alexander."
tells us that in order to avert the bad omen Alexander
£ £

£

* Rig-Veda III, 33, 1
"From the lap of the mountains Yipas and
Sutudri rush forth with their water like two lusty mares neighing,
:

freed from their tethers, like two bright mother-cows licking (their
calf).

" Ordered by Indra and waiting his bidding you run toward the sea
like

two charioteers

;

running together, as your waters rise, the one

goes into the other, you bright ones."

•(•

Other classical names are Hypanis, Bipasis, and Bibasis.

identifies it with the Argikiya.

t Cf.

Nirukta IX. 26.

Yaska

LECTURE

192

Y.

changed the name of that river into 'A keolvt)⁵, which would mean "the Healer;" but he does not tell, what the Yeda tells us, that this name 'Akeaiivrjg was a Greek adaptation of another name of the same river, namely Asikni, which had evidently supplied to Alexander the idea of calling the Asikni 'A ksolvttis.

It is the

modern

Chinab.

Next to the Akesines we have the Yedic Yitasta, the last

of the rivers of the Punjab, changed in Greek into

Hydaspes.

It was to this river that Alexander retired,

before sending his fleet

army back

to

Babylon.

down the Indus and leading his

It

is

the

modern Behat or

Jilam.

I could identify still more of these Yedic rivers, such as,

for instance,

modern Kabul

the

Kubha, the Greek Cophen, the names which I have

river ;* but

* " The first tributaries which join the Indus before its meeting with the Kubha or the Kabul river cannot be determined. All travellers in these northern countries complain of the continual changes in the names of the rivers, and we can hardly hope to find traces of the Vedic names in existence there after the lapse of three or four

The rivers intended may be the Shauyook, Ladak, Abba Seen, and Burrindu, and one of the four rivers, the Rasa, has assumed an almost fabulous character in the Veda. After the Indus has joined the Kubha or the Kabul river, two names occur, the Gomati and Krumu, which I believe I was the first to identify with the modern rivers the Gomal and Kurrum. (Roth, Nirukta, Erlauterungen, p. 43, Anm.) The Gomal falls into the Indus, between Dera Ismael Khan and Paharpore, and although Elphinstone calls it a river thousand years.

only during the rainy season, Klaproth (Foe-koue-ki, p. 23) describes course as far more considerable, and adds 'Un peu a l'est de Sirmagha, le Gomal traverse la cliaine de montagnes de Soliman, passe devant Raghzi, et fertilise le pays habit e par les tribus de Dauletkhail et de Gandehpour. II se dess&che au defile de Pezou, et its upper

:

alors
son lit ne se remplit plus d'eau que dans la saison des pluies
seulement il rejoint la droite de V Indus, au sud-est de bourg de PaharThe Kurrum
falls into the Indus north of the Gomal, while,
pour.'
;

THE LESSONS OF THE VEDA.

193

traced from the Yeda to Alexander, and in

many cases

from Alexander again to our own time, seem to me sufficient to impress upon us the real and historical character of the Yeda.

Suppose the Yeda were a forgery suppose at least that it had been put together how could we explain after the time of Alexander these names ?

They are names that have mostly a meaning in Sanskrit, they are names corresponding very closely to their Greek corruptions, as pronounced and written down by people who did not know Sanskrit.

—

—

How is a forgery possible here
I selected this

?

hymn for two reasons.

First,

because

it shows us the

widest geographical horizon of the Yedic

poets, confined

by the snowy mountains in the north,

the Indus and the range of the Suleiman mountains in the west, the Indus or the seas in the south, and the valley of the
that,

the

Jumna and Ganges in the east. Beyond open, was unknown to the
Secondly, because the same hymn gives

world, though

Yedic poets.

us also a kind of historical background to the

Y edic

These rivers, as we may see them to-day, as they were seen by Alexander and his Macedonians, were seen also by the Yedic poets.

Here we have an historical continuity—almost living witnesses, to tell us that the people whose songs have been so strangely, ay, you may almost say, so miraculously preserved to us, were real people, lairds with their clans, priests, or rather, age.

according to the poet, we should expect it south.

It might he urged

that poets are not bound by the same rules as geographers, as we see, for instance, in the verse immediately preceding.

But if it should

be taken as a serious objection, it will be better to give up the Gomati than the Krumu, the latter being the larger of the two, and we might then take Gomati, 'rich in cattle,' as an adjective belonging to Krumu."— From a review of General Cunningham's "Ancient Geography of India," in Nature, 1871, Sept. 14.

—
LECTURE

194

V.

servants of their gods, shepherds with their flocks, dotted about, on the hills and valleys, with inclosures or palisades

here and there, with a few strongholds, too, in case of need

— living their short

life might

life

on earth, as at that time

he lived by men, without much pushing and

—

crowding and trampling on each other spring, summer, and winter leading them on from year to year,

and the sun in his rising and setting lifting up their thoughts from their meadows and groves which they loved, to a world in the East, from which they had come, or to a world in the West, to which they were gladly hastening on.

They had what I call religion,

though it was very simple, and hardly reduced as yet to "There is a Beyond," that was the form of a creed.

all they felt and knew, though they tried, as well as they could, to give names to that Beyond, and thus to change religion into a religion. They had not as yet a

name for God

—certainly not

in our sense of the word

or even a general name for the gods

name

after

;

but they invented

name to enable them to grasp and com-

prehend by some outward and visible tokens powers
whose presence they felt in nature, though their true
and full essence was to them, as it is to us, invisible and
incomprehensible.

LECTURE

VI.

VEDIC DEITIES.

The next important phenomenon of nature which was represented in the Veda as a terrestrial deity is Fire, in Sanskrit Agni, in Latin ignis.

In the worship which is

paid to the Fire and in the high praises bestowed on

Agni we can clearly perceive the traces of a period in the history of

man in which not only the most essential

comforts of life, but life itself, depended on the knowledge of producing

fire.

To

us

fire

has become so

familiar that we can hardly form an idea of

what life

But how did the ancient dwellers on earth get command and possession of fire ? The Vedic poets tell us that fire first came to them from the sky, in the form of lightning, but that it disappeared would be without it.

again, and that then Matarisvan,

a being to a certain

extent like Prometheus, brought

back and confided it

Bhrfgus (Phleg-

it

to the safe keeping of the clan of the

yas).*

In other poems we hear of the mystery of fire being produced by rubbing pieces of wood and here it is a ;

name of the wood thus used for rubbing is in Sanskrit Pramantha, a word which, as Kuhn has shown, would in Greek come very near to the name of Prometheus. The possession of fire, whether curious fact that the

by preserving it as sacred on the hearth, or by producing at pleasure with the fire-drill, represents an enormous

it

* Muir, iv. p. 209

LECTURE

step in early civilization.

It

VI.

enabled people

to

cook

meat instead of eating it raw it gave them the power of carrying on their work by night and in colder climates it really preserved them from being frozen to their

;

;

death.

No wonder, therefore, that the fire should have been praised and worshipped as the best and kindest of

gods, the only god who had come

down from heaven to

on earth, the friend of man, the messenger of the gods, the mediator between gods and men, the immortal among mortals. He, it is said, protects the settlements of the Aryans, and frightens away the black-skinned live

enemies.

Soon, however, fire was conceived by the Vedic poets under the more general character of light and warmth, and then the presence of Agni was perceived, not only on the hearth and the altar, but in the Dawn, in the Sun, and in the world beyond the Sun, while at the same time his power was recognized as ripening, or as they called it, as cooking, the fruits of the earth, and as supporting also the warmth and the life of the human body.

From that point of view Agni, like other powers, rose to the rank of a

Supreme God.*

He is said to

—

have stretched out heaven and earth naturally, because

without his light heaven and earth would have been in
The next poet says that visible and undistinguishable.

Agni held heaven aloft by his light, that he kept the
two worlds asunder and in the end Agni is said to be
the progenitor and father of heaven and earth, and the
maker of all that flies, or walks, or stands, or moves on
;

earth.

Here we have once more the same process before our
The human mind begins with being startled by

eyes.

a single or repeated event, such as the lightning striking
* Muir, iv. p. 214.

YEDIC DEITIES.

and devouring a whole forest, or a spark of fire
breaking forth from wood being rubbed against wood,

a tree

whether in a forest, or in the wheel of a carriage, or at
Man then begins
last in a fire-drill, devised on purpose.
to wonder at what to him is a miracle, none the less so
because

it

is

a fact, a simple, natural fact.

lie sees the

power, but he can only guess at its cause,
and if he is to speak of it, he can only do so by speaking
effects of a

of

as

it

an agent, or as something like a human agent,

and, if in some respects not quite human, in others more
than human or superhuman.

Thus the concept of Fire

and while it became more and more generalized,
it also became
more sublime, more incomprehensible,
more divine. Without Agni, without fire, light, and
warmth, life would have been impossible. Hence he
became the author and giver of life, of the life of plants
and animals and of men and his favor having once
been implored for "light and life and all things," what
wonder that in the minds of some poets, and in the
traditions of this or that village-community he should
have been raised to the rank of a supreme ruler, a god
above all gods, their own true god

grew

;

;

!

We now proceed to consider the powers which the ancient poets might have discovered in the

air,

in the

more particularly, in those meteoric conflicts which by thunder, lightning, darkness, storms, and showers of rain must have taught man that very imclouds, and,

portant lesson that he was

not

alone

in

this

world.

Many philosophers, as you know, believe that all religion arose from fear or terror,

and that without thunder and

lightning to teach us, we should never have believed in

any gods or god.

view.

This

is

a one-sided a,nd exaggerated

Thunderstorms, no doubt, had a large share in

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arousing feelings of awe and terror, and in making man conscious of his weakness and dependence.

Even in the

Yeda, Indra is introduced as saying: " Yes, when I send thunder and lightning, then you believe in me." But what we call religion would never have sprung from Religion is trust and that trust fear and terror alone.

arose in the beginning from the impressions made on the mind and heart of man by the order and wisdom of nature, and more particularly by those regularly re,

curring events, the return of the sun, the revival of the

moon, the order of the

seasons, the law of cause

and

and traced

gradually discovered in

all

things,

back in the end to a cause of

all

causes, by whatever

effect,

name we choose to call it.

Still

the meteoric

phenomena had, no doubt,

their

important share in the production of ancient deities

;

and in the poems of the Yedic Rishis they naturally occupy a very prominent place. If we were asked who

was the principal god of the Yedic period, we should probably, judging from the remains of that poetry which we possess, say it was Indra, the god of the blue sky, the Indian Zeus, the gatherer of the clouds, the giver of rain, the wielder of the thunderbolt, the conqueror of

darkness, and of

all the powers

of darkness, the bringer

vigor, and life, the
and lord of the whole world. Indra is this, and much more in the Yeda. He is supreme in the hymns of many poets, and may have been so in the prayers addressed to him by many of the ancient septs or village communities in India. Compared with him the other gods are said to be decrepit old men.

Heaven, the old

Heaven or Dyaus, formerly the father of all the gods, nay the father of Indra himself, bows before him, and

of light, the source of

freshness,

ruler

the Earth trembles at his approach.

Yet Indra never

VEDIC DEITIES.

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commanded the permanent allegiance of all the other
nay, we know from the
Yeda itself that there were skeptics, even at that early
time, who denied that there was any such thing as
gods, like Zeus and Jupiter

;

In dr a.*

By the side of Indra, and associated with him in his
battles,

and sometimes hardly distinguishable from him,

we find the representatives of the wind, called Vata or
Yayu, and the more

terrible storm-gods, the Maruts,

literally the Smashers.

When speaking of the Wind, a poet says :f " Where
was he born ? Whence did he spring ? the life of the
That god moves about
germ of the world
where he listetli, his voices are heard, but he is not to be
"
seen.
gods, the

!

The Maruts are more terrible than Yata, the wind.
They are clearly the representatives of such storms as
are known in India, when the air is darkened by dust
and clouds, when in a moment the trees are stripped of
their foliage, their branches shivered, their stems snap-

ped, when the earth seems to reel and the mountains

foam and fury.

Then the poet sees the Maruts approaching with golden

to shake, and the rivers are lashed into

helmets, with spotted skins on their shoulders, brandish-

ing golden spears, whirling their axes, shooting fiery
arrows, and cracking their whips amid thunder and light-

They are the comrades of Indra, sometimes, like
Indra, the sons of Dyaus or the sky, but also the sons

ning.

of another terrible god, called Rudra, or the Howler, a
lighting god, to whom
a

many hymns are addressed. In
new character is evolved, that of a healer and
saviour

– a very natural transition in India, where nothing

so

him

is

powerful

for

dispelling

* Hibbert Lectures, p. 307.

miasmas, restoring
f X. 168, 3, 4.

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TI.

and imparting fresh vigor to man and beast, as
a thunderstorm, following after weeks of heat and

health,

drought.

All these and several others, such as Paryanya and the
Ah'bhus, are the gods of mid-air, the most active and

dramatic gods, ever present to the fancy of the ancient

and in several cases the prototypes of later heroes,

poets,

celebrated in the epic poems of India.

In battles, more

were con-

particularly, these fighting gods of the sky

stant^ invoked.*
protector of

Indra

is

the leader

in battles, the

bright Aryans, the destroyer of the

the

" He has thrown
down fifty thousand black fellows," the poet says, " and
black aboriginal inhabitants of India.

their

strongholds crumbled

Strange to say, Indra

is

away

like

an

old

rag."

praised for having saved his

people from their enemies, much as Jehovah was praised

by the Jewish prophets.

that

when Sudas, the

pressed hard in

Thus we read

in one

pious king of the

hymn

T/dtsus,

his battle with the ten kings,

was

Indra

changed the flood into an easy ford, and thus saved
Sudas.

we read :f " Thou hast restrained
the flood
the great river for the sake of Turviti Vayya
moved in obedience to thee, and thou madest the rivers
In another hymn

:

is not very diiferent from the
" He divided the sea, and caused
them to pass through and he made the waters to stand

This

easy to cross."

Psalmist (7S

:

13)

:

;

as an heap.

, ,

And there are other passages which have reminded
some students of the Yeda of Joshua's battle,:}: when
the sun stood still and the moon stayed, until the people

had avenged themselves upon their enemies.

For we

* See Kaegi, Eig-Veda, p. 61.

f Eig-Veda II. 13, 12 ; IV. 19, 6.

J

Joshua x. 13,

VEDIC DEITIES.

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read in the Veda also, as Professor Kaegi has pointed out (1.

p. 63), that

c.

" Indra lengthened the days into

the night," and that "the

Sun unharnessed its chariot

in the middle of the day."*

In some of the hymns addressed to Indra his original thunderstorm seems

connection with the sky and the

He has become a spiritual god, the

quite forgotten.

all people, f who sees and

hears everything, % nay, who inspires men with their best

only king of

thoughts.

worlds and

all

ISTo

one is equal to him, no one excels him.

The name of Indra is peculiar to India, and must have been formed after the separation of the great Aryan family had taken place, for we find it neither in Greek, nor in Latin, nor in German.

There are Vedic gods, as

I mentioned before, whose names must have been framed

before

that

though

greatly

separation,

which

and

modified in

occur

character,

therefore,

sometimes

Greek, sometimes in Latin, sometimes in the

Dyau for instance,

U s a s is Eos,

is

Surya

is

Helios,

Agni is ignis,

Nyx,

Teutonic, and Slavonic dialects.

is

in

Celtic,

s,

the same word as Zeus or Ju-piter,

li

ISTakta

B h a g a is Baga in Old Persian, B o g u in Old Slavonic,

V arinia is Uranos, A7 ata is Wotan, Va & is vox, and

in the name of the Maruts or the storm-gods, the germs

of the Italic god of war, Mars, have been discovered.

Besides these direct coincidences, some indirect relations

have been established between Hermes and Sara m e y a,

Dionysos and D y u n i s y a, Prometheus and p r a in a n t h a, Orpheus and

i b h u, Erinnys and S a r a n y u,

Pan and P a v a n a. §

,

R

* Rig- Veda IV. 30, 3

f L.

;

X. 138, 3.

VIII. 37, 3.

c.

VIII. 78, 5.

t L. c.

§ I am very strongly inclined to regard these names as Kushite or
Semitic

Hermes, from Din- the Snn Dionysos, from dyan, the

;

;

LECTURE

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VI.

But while the name of Indra as the god of the sky, also as the god of the thunderstorm, and the giver of rain, is unknown among the north-western members of the Aryan family, the name of another god who sometimes acts the part of Indra (IndraA Paryanyatma), but is much less prominent in the Yeda, I mean Paryanya, must have existed before that of Indra, because two at least of the Aryan languages have carried it, as we shall see, to Germany, and to the very shores of the Baltic. Sometimes this Paryanya stands in the place of Dyaus, the sky.

Thus we read in the Atliarva- Yeda, XII. 1, 12 :* " The Earth is the mother, and I am the son of the Paryanya is the father

Earth.

In another place (XII.

1,

;

may he help us

! ' '

42) the Earth, instead of

being the wife of Heaven or Dyaus, is called the wife of Paryanya.

X ow who or what is this Paryanya

?

There have been

long controversies about him, f as to whether he

is

the

same as Dyaus, Heaven, or the same as Indra, the successor of Dyaus, whether he is the god of the sky, of the cloud, or of the rain.

To me it seems that this very expression, god of the sky, god of the cloud, is so entire an anachronism that

we could not even translate it into Yedic Sanskrit with It is true, no doubt, we out committing a solecism.

must use our modern ways of speaking when we wish to
but we
represent the thoughts of the ancient world
cannot be too much on our guard against accepting the
;

dictionary representative of an ancient word for its real
judge, and

nisi,

mankind

;

Orpheus, from Orfa, the Arabic name of

—

Prometheus, from pro and manthano, to learn. A. W.

* Muir, iv. p. 23.

4 Ibid. p. 142.

An excellent paper on Paryanya was published by

Edessa

;

Biihler in 1862, "Orient und Occident," vol. i. p. 214.

VEDIC DEITIES.

203

D e v a, no doubt, means 'gods
,

counterpart.

and P a r y a n y a means

,

,

cloud,

,

,

' 5

,

and 'god,

' ,

but no one could say in

Sanskrit paryanyasya deva/i, "the god of the
cloud. " The god, or the divine, or transcendental element,

does not come from without, to be added to the cloud or
to the sky or to the earth, but it springs from the cloud

and the sky and the earth, and is slowly elaborated into
an independent concept.

As many words in

ancient

languages have an undefined meaning, and lend themselves

various

to

purposes

according to

intentions of the speakers, the

share

in

this

elastic

There

and

various

the

names of the gods also

plastic

character

of ancient

means

where it means rain. There

are passages where Paryanya takes the place which elsewhere is filled by Dyaus, the sky, or by Indra, the active god of the atmosphere.

This may seem very

wrong and very unscientific to the scientific mythologist.

But it cannot be helped. It is the nature of ancient

thought and ancient language to be unscientific, and

we must learn to master it as well as we can, instead of

finding fault with it, and complaining that our forespeech.

are

passages where Paryanya

cloud, there are passages

fathers did not reason exactly as we do.

There are passages in the Yedic hymns where Paryanya appears as a supreme

Dyaus, the sky.

god.

lie

is

called

father,

like

He is called asura, the living or life-

giving god, a name peculiar to the oldest and the greatest gods.

One

whole world

poet says,* " He rules as god over the
;

all

creatures rest in

him

;

he

is

the

life

(atma) of all that moves and rests."

Surely it is difficult to say more of a supreme god than what is here said of Paryanya. Yet in other hymns he is represented as performing his office, namely that of
* Rig-Veda VII. 101, 6.

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VI.

sending rain upon the earth, under the control of Mitra and Yai'ii/i, who are then considered as the highest lords, the mightiest rulers of heaven and earth.*

There are other verses, again, where paryanya occurs with hardly any traces of personality, hut simply as a

name of cloud or rain.

Thus we read :f " Even by day

the

Maruts (the

storm-gods) produce darkness with the cloud that carries water,

when they moisten the earth."

Here cloud is

paryanya, and it is evidently used as an appellative, and not as a proper name.

The same word occurs in the plural also, and we read of many paryanyas or clouds vivifying the earth. \

"When Devapi prays for rain in favor of his brother, he says :§ " O lord of my prayer (Brfhaapati), whether thou be Mitra or Vanina or Pushan, come to my sacrifice Whether thou be together with the Adityas,
!

the Vasusor the Maruts, let the cloud (paryanya) rain for

Yantanu. "

And again

:

" Stir up the rainy cloud " (paryanya).

In several places it makes no difference whether translate paryanya

we

by cloud or by rain, for those who

pray for rain, pray for the cloud, and whatever may be the benefits of the rain, they may nearly

all

be called

There is a curious hymn, for instance, addressed to the frogs who, at the beginning of the rains, come forth from the dry ponds, and embrace each other and chatter together, and whom the poet compares to priests singing at a sacrifice, a not very the benefits of the cloud.

complimentary remark from a poet who is himself supposed to have been a priest. Their voice is said to have been revived by paryanya, which we shall naturally
* Rig-Veda V. 63, 3-6.

\ L. c. I. 164, 51.

\ Li. c. I, 38, 9.

§ L. c. X. 98, 1.

VEDIC DEITIES.

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"by rain," though, no doubt, the poet may
have meant, for all we know, either a cloud, or even the
god Paryanya himself.
translate

hymns addressed to
when conceived as a god, or at least as so

I shall try to translate one of the

Paryanya,

much of a god as it was possible to be at that stage in
the intellectual growth of the human race.*
1.

" Invoke the strong god with these songs

Paryanya, worship him with veneration
roaring

bull,

scattering

drops,

gives

!

!

praise

for he, the

seed-fruit

to

plants.

2

.

" lie cuts the trees asunder, he kills evil spirits

;

the whole world trembles before his mighty weapon.

Even the

guiltless

flees

before

the

powerful,

when

Paryanya thundering strikes down the evil-doers.

3. " Like a charioteer, striking his horses with a whip,
he puts forth his messenger of rain. From afar arise
the roarings of the lion, when Paryanya makes the sky
full of rain.

"The

winds blow, the lightnings fly, plants

sky pours.

Food is produced for the

whole world, when Paryanya blesses the earth with his

4.

spring up, the

seed

" O Paryanya, thou at whose work the earth bows
down, thou at whose work hoofed animals are scattered,
thou at whose work the plants assume all forms, grant
5.

thou to us thy great protection

6.

!

" O, Maruts, give us the rain of heaven, make the

streams of the strong horse run down

* Rig-Veda Y. 83.

!

And come thou

See Biihler, " Orient und Occident," vol. i. p.

Zimmer, " Altindisches Leben," p. 43.

f Both Biihler (" Orient und Occident," vol. i. p. 224) and Zimmer

214

;

(Z. f. D. A. vii. p. 169) say that the lightning is represented as the
son of Paryanya in Rig-Veda VII. 101, 1. This seems doubtful.

L/ECTURE Vt.

hither with thy thunder, pouring out water, for thou

(O Paryanya) art the living god, thou art our father.

7. " Do thou roar, and thunder, and give fruitfulness

Fly around us with thy chariot

!

full

of water

!

Draw forth thy water-skin, when it has been opened

and turned downward, and

places become level

8.

let

" Draw up the large bucket, and pour it out

with fatness

9.

!

;

let

Soak heaven and earth

there be a good draught for the

the streams pour forth freely

cows

the high and the low

!

and let

!

!

" O Paryanya, when roaring and thundering thou

kildest the evil-doers,

then everything rejoices, whatever

lives on earth.

" Thou hast sent

rain, stop now

Thou hast

made the deserts passable, thou hast made plants grow
for food, and thou hast obtained praise from men."

This is a Yedic hymn, and a very fair specimen of
what these ancient hymns are. There is nothing very

10.

!

grand and poetical about them, and yet, I say, take
thousands and thousands of people living in our villages,
and depending on rain for their very life, and not many
of them will be able to compose such a prayer for rain,
even though three thousand years have passed over our

Nor

heads since Paryanya was first invoked in India.

are these verses entirely without poetical conceptions and

Whoever has watched a real thunderstorm

descriptions.

in a hot climate will recognize the truth of those quick

sentences

:

" the winds blow, the lightnings

spring up, the hoofed cattle are scattered."

idea without

a certain

pours

out skin

after

skin

(in

carried) down upon the earth.

plants

Paryanya

and

which water was then
drastic reality,
draws a bucket of water from
fly,
Nor is the
that
his well in heaven,

YEDIC DEITIES.

There

hymn.

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is even a moral sentiment perceptible in this
" When the storms roar, and the lightnings flash

and the rain pours down, even the guiltless trembles,
and evildoers are struck down." Here we clearly see
that the poet did not look upon the storm simply as an
outbreak of the violence of nature, but that he had a
presentiment of a higher will and power which even the
for who, he seems to say, is entirely free
guiltless fears
;

from guilt ?
If

now we ask again, Who is Paryanya ? or What is

Paryanya ? we can answer that

paryanya was meant

originally for the cloud, so far as

it

gives rain

;

but as

soon as the idea of a giver arose, the visible cloud became
the outward appearance only, or the body of that giver,

and the giver himself was somewhere else, we know not
where.

In some verses Paryanya seems to step into the
place of Dyaus, the sky, and PWthivi, the earth, is his
wife.

In other places,* however, he is the son of Dyaus
or the sky, though no thought is given in that early
stage to the fact that thus Paryanya might seem to be
the husband of his mother.

We saw that even the idea
of Indra being the father of his
startle the ancient poets

own

father did not

beyond an exclamation that it

was a very wonderful thing indeed.

Sometimes Paryanya does the work of Indra, f the
Jupiter Pluvius of the Veda

sometimes of Vayu, the
wind, sometimes of Soma, the giver of rain.

Yet with

all this he is not Dyaus, nor Indra, nor the Maruts, nor
Vayu, nor Soma. lie stands by himself, a separate
;

person, a separate god, as

we should say

—nay, one of

the oldest of all the Aryan gods.

His name, paryanya,
* Kig-Veda VII. 102,

1.

is

derived from

a

f L. c.

root pary,

VIII.

6, 1.

LECTURE

208

VI.

parallel forms pars and parsh, must (1
the meaning of sprinkling, irrigating,
had
think) have
An interchange between final y s, and sli,
moistening.

which, like

its

,

without parallel
may, no doubt, seem unusual, but it is not
roots pmg, pinthe
instance,
have, for

We

in Sanskrit.

gere

;

etc.) ;

adorn (as in pesas, twudXog,
urn's,
forget
rig, to rub, mWsh, to rub out, to

pish, to nib ; pis, to

m

;

mulcere.

mrig forms its participle as mmh-ta,

—

This very root

are roots, such
hke vay, islha, and vis, vishfo nay there
a final hngual or guttural,
as dr uli, which optionally take

;

such as dīru[^] and dīruk.*

We may therefore compare parg in paryanya with
of

such words

as

pWshata, prnhati, speckled,

drop

speckled, cloud, eart
water ;f also parsu, cloud, pmni,

,

and in Greek ttpo£(o), neptivoq, etc⁴

from pary, to sprinkle, Paryanya would
"

or gives rain." §

have meant originally he who irrigates
family

When the different members of the Aryan

as

well

as

Hindus

dispersed, they might all of them,

carried

have

Slaves,

Greeks and Celts, and Teutons and

you know that it

But

them.

with

cloud

that name for

commonwealth ot

happened very often that out of the

and the same word was

their ancient language, one

not by all, but by only

be,

preserved, as the case might

even by one

four, or three, or two, or

If derived

six, or five, or

* See Max Muller, Sanskrit

Grammar, § 174, 10.

HI. 3, 15, vidynt-stanayitnu-prisbitesbu.

103,
commentary on the Unadi-sfttras m.
as the etypnsh,
verb
the
in
into
g
admits the same transition of sh
+ Cf Gobli.

Grihya

S.

t Uggvaladatta, in bis

mon of parganya.
p,

.

,

lie Dictionary to

,

.

BiiMer, " Orient nnd Occident,

8 for different etymologies, see
Tents,"
214 Muir, " Origin.l Sanskrit
the

Eig-Veda,

Deutsches Alterthum, Neue Folge,'

a.

v.;

„ ;i.

p. 14« ; Gr.ssni.nn.in

Zimmer,

vii. p. 164.

Zeitscnft

fur

VEDIC DEITIES.

only of the seven principal heirs

;

209

and yet, as we know

that there was no historical contact between them, after

they had once parted from each other, long before the

beginning of what we

call history,

the fact that two of

Aryan languages have preserved the same finished
word with the same finished meaning, is proof sufficient
that it belonged to the most ancient treasure of Aryan
the

thought.

Now there is no trace, at least no very clear trace, of
Paryanya, in Greek, or Latin, or Celtic,
Teutonic.

In Slavonic, too,

come to that almost forgotten side-branch
Lettic,

or

we look in vain,

even

in

till

we

called the

comprising the spoken Lituanian and Lettish

,

and the now extinct Old Prussia/n. Lituania is no
longer an independent state, but it was once, not more
than six centuries ago, a Grand Duchy, independent

Grand Duke was

Ringold, who ruled from 1235, and his successors made

both of Russia and Poland.

Its first

successful conquests against the Russians.

In 1368 these

grand dukes became kings of Poland, and in 1569 the two countries were united. When Poland was divided between Russia and Prussia, part of Lithuania fell to the former, part to the latter.

There are still about one million and a half of people who speak Lithuanian in

Russia and Prussia, while Lettish is spoken by about one million in Curland and Livonia.

The Lithuanian language even as it is now spoken by the

common people, contains some extremely primitive

—

in some cases almost identical with

These forms are all the more curious, because they are but few in number, and the rest of the language has suffered much from the wear and tear of centuries.

Now in that remote Lithuanian language we find that our old friend Paryanya has taken refuge.

There he

grammatical forms

Sanskrit.

LECTURE

210

lives to the present day,

VI.

while even in India he is almost

forgotten, at least in the spoken languages
in Lithuania, not

among a

;

and there,

many centuries back might be heard

Christianized or nearly Christianized people,

prayers for rain, not very different from that which I
translated to you from the Rig-

Yeda.

In Lithuanian the

god of thunder was called Perkunas ,* and the same
word is still used in the sense of thunder. In Old
Prussian, thunder was percunos, and in Lettish to the
present day perkons is thunder, god of thunder, f
It

was,

believe,

I

identified the

Yedic

Grimm who for the first time
P aryany a with the Old Slavonic

Perun, the Polish Piorun, the Bohemian Peraun. These
words had formerly been derived by Dobrovsky and
Grimm (" Teutonic
others from the root peru, I strike.

Mythology," Engl, transl., p. 171) showed that the
fuller forms Perkunas, Pehrkons, and Perkunos existed
in Lithuanian, Lettish, Old Prussian, and that even the
Mordvinians had adopted the name Porguini as that of
their thunder-god.

Simon Grunau, who finished his chronicle in 1521,
speaks of three gods, as worshipped by the Old Prussians,

Patollo,

Patrimpo, and Perkuno, and he

that Perkuno was invoked

states

" for storm's sake, that they

might have rain and fair weather at the proper time,
and thunder and lightning should not injure them." :}

* In order to identify Perkunas

with Paiv/anva, we must go an-

other step backward, and look upon g or g, in the root parg, as a
weakening of an original k in park. This, however, is a frequent

phonetic process.

ii.

See Bihler, in Benfey's " Orient und Occident,"

p. 717.

I

Lituanian

perkun-kulke,

thunder-bolt,

perkuno

gaisis,

storm.

See Voelkel, "Die lettischen Sprachreste, " 1879, p. 23.

Perkuno, war der dritte Abgott und man ihn anruffte urn's Ge-
witters willen, damit sie ltegen batten und schon wetter zu seiner
,,

V 13 DIC DEITIES.

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The following Lituanian prayer has been preserved to us by Lasitzki :*

" Cheek thyself,
fortune on my field

O Percnna, and do not send mis!

and I shall give thee this flitch."

Among the neighbors of the Lets, the Esthonians,
who, though

un-Aryan

in

language,

have evidently

learned much from their Aryan neighbors, the following

prayer was heard, addressed by an old peasant to their
god Picker or Picken the god of thunder and rain, as

,

late as the seventeenth century.):

" Dear Thunder (woda Picker), we offer to thee an
ox that has two horns and four cloven hoofs we would
pray thee for our ploughing and sowing, that our straw
Push elsewhere
be copper-red, our grain golden-yellow.

;

all the thick

black clouds, over great fens, high forests,

and wildernesses.

Put unto

us,

ploughers and sowers,

give a fruitful season and sweet rain.

Holy Thunder

guard our seed- field, that it bear good
straw below, good ears above, and good grain within. "§
(polia Picken),

Now, I say again, I do not wish you to admire this
primitive poetry, primitive, whether it is repeated in the

Esthonian fens in the seventeenth century of our era, or

sung in the valley of the Indus in the seventeenth
Zeit, und ihn der Donner und blixkein sekaden tkett."

sides bei den alten Preussen," Berlin, 1870, p. 23.

Cf.

" Gotte-

The triad of the

gods is called Triburti, Tryboze 1. c. p. 29.

* Grimm, " Teutonic Mythology," p. 175 and Lasitzki (Lasicius)

" Joannes De Kussorum, Moscovitarum et Tartarorum religione, sacrificiis, nuptiarum
et funerum ritu, Spiras Nemetum, " 1582

idem De

;

;

;

Diis Samagitarum.

c. p. 170, quoting from Joh. Gutsclaff, " Kurzer Bericht

f Grimm,

und Unterricht von der falsch heilig genannten Bacho in Liefland
Wohhanda," Dorpat, 1644. pp. 362-364.

Esthonian Pitkne, the Finnish Pitcainen (?).

t In modern

1.

" Ehstnische Miir§ On foreign influences in Esthonian stories, see

chen," von T. Kreutzwald, 1869, Vorwort (by Schiefner), p. iv.

LECTURE

212

century before our era.

YI.

Let {esthetic

they like about these uncouth poems.
Is it not worth a great

critics

I

say what

only ask you,

many poems, to have established

this fact, that the same god

Parpanya, the god of clouds
and thunder and lightning and rain, who was invoked in
India a thousand years before India was discovered by
Alexander, should have been remembered and believed
in by Lituanian

peasants on the frontier between East

Prussia and Russia, not

more than two hundred years

ago, and should have retained

its

name Parpanya,

old

which in Sanskrit meant " showering," under the form
of Perhuna which in Lituanian is a name and a name
only, without any etymological meaning at all
nay,
should live on, as some scholars assure us, in an abbreviated form in most Slavonic
dialects, namely, in
Old Slavonic as Perun in Polish as Piorun, in Bohemian as Peraun, all meaning
thunder or thunderstorm ?*
Such facts strike me as if we saw the blood suddenly
beginning to flow again through the veins of old mummies or as if the Egyptian
statues of black granite
were suddenly to begin to speak again. Touched by
the rays of modern science the old words call them
,

;

,

;

mummies or statues

—begin indeed to

—

live again, the old

names of gods and heroes begin indeed to speak again.

*

Grimm suggests in his " Teutonic Mythology "

that Parganya

should be identified with the Gothic fairguni, or mountain.

He im-

gaines that from being regarded as the abode of the god it had finally

been called by his name. Fergunna, and Virginnia, two names of mounThe name of the
god, if pretains in Germany, are relics of the name.

served in the Gothic, would have been Fairguneis and indeed in the Old
Norse language Fiorgynn is the father of Frigg, the wife of Odin, and
Fiorgynnior, the Earth-goddess, is mother of Thor. Professor Zimmer
takes the same view.

Grimm thinks that the Greeks and Romans, by
changing/ into h, represented Fergunni byHercynia, and, in fine, he
traces the words berg and burg back to Parganya.

A. W,

,

—

VEDIC DEITIES.

All that is old becomes new, all that is new becomes old,
 and that one word, Paryanya, seems, like a charm, to
 open before our eyes the cave or cottage in which the
 whether
 fathers of the Aryan race, our own fathers
 we live on the Baltic or on the Indian Ocean are seen
 gathered together, taking refuge from the buckets of

—
 —

“ Stop

now, Paryanya

Paryanya, and

saying,

hast sent rain

thou hast made the deserts passable, and

;

hast made the plants to

grow

;

;

thou

and thou hast obtained

praise from man.”

We have still to consider the third class of gods, in
 addition to the gods of the earth and the sky, namely

the gods of the highest heaven, more serene in their
 character than the active and fighting gods of the air

and the clouds, and more remote from the eyes of man,
 and therefore more mysterious in the exercise of their
 power than the gods of the earth or the air.

The principal deity is here no doubt the bright sky
 the old Dyaus, worshipped as we know by the
 Aryans before they broke up into separate people and
 languages, and surviving in Greece as Zeus, in Italy as
 Jupiter, Ieleaven-fatlier, and among the Teutonic tribes
 In the Veda we saw him chiefly inas Tyr and Tiu.
 voked in connection with the earth, as Dyava-pwthivi,

Heaven and Earth. He is invoked by himself also, but he is a vanishing god, and his place is taken in most of the Vedic poems by the younger and more active god, himself,

Indra.

Another representative

of

the

highest heaven,

as

covering, embracing, and shielding all things, is Varuna, a name derived from the root var, to cover, and identical

with the Greek Ouranos. This god is one of the most interesting creations of the Hindu mind, because though

LECTURE

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TI.

we can still perceive the physical background from which
the vast, starry, brilliant expanse above, his

"\

edic gods, have
features, more than those of any of the
before us
stands

become completely transfigured, and he

he

rises,

punishes the evils as a god who watches over the world,
even forgives the sins of those who implore his
doer, and

pardon.

I shall read you one of the hymns addressed

to him

~

:

" Let us be blessed in thy service, O Tarawa, for we
day
always flunk of thee and praise thee, greeting thee
approach
the
at
altar,
the
on
lighted
day, like the fires

by

of the rich dawns."

2.

" O Yanina, our guide, let us stand in thy keeping,
thou

who art rich in heroes and praised far and wide

!

And you, unconquered sons of Aditi, deign to accept us
as your friends,

O gods !"

" Aditya, the

ruler,

3.

sent

follow the law of Yanina.

forth

these

rivers ; they

They tire not, they cease

,

like birds they fly quickly everywhere.

" Take from me

sin, like a fetter, and

not

,

;

4.

we shall

my

O Yaruna, the spring of thy law. Let not the

Let not the

thread be cut while I weave my song

increase,

!

form of the workman break before the time

5.

!

" Take far away from me this terror, O Yaruna

Like as

Thou, O righteous king, have mercy on me

for away

sin

a rope from a calf, remove from me my

of an

from thee I am not master even of the twinkling

;

!

;

eye."

6.

" Do not strike us, Yaruna, with weapons which at
Let us not go where the
thy will hurt the evil-doer.
has vanished

lio-ht

live."

4 4

!

Scatter our enemies, that we

may

7.

We did formerly, O Yaruna, and do now, and shall
* Rig-Veila II. 28.

VEDIC DEITIES.

in future also, sing praises to thee,

215

O mighty one

!

For

on thee, unconquerable hero, rest all statutes, immovable,

8.

as if established on a rock."

" Move faraway from me all self-committed guilt, and
may I not, O king, suffer for what others have committed

Many dawns liaye not yet dawned

!

to live in them,

O Yaru/ia."

;

grant us

9.

You may have observed that in several verses of this
hymn Varima was called Aditya, or son of Aditi. Now
Aditi

means infinitude from dita, bound, and a,

,

that is, not bound, not limited, absolute, infinite.
itself is

not,

Aditi

now and then invoked in the Veda, as the Be-

yond, as what is beyond the earth and the sky, and the
sun and the dawn a most surprising conception in that

—

early

period of

religious

thought.

More

frequently,

however, than Aditi, we meet with the Adityas, literally the sons of Aditi, or the gods beyond the visible earth

—

and sky in one sense, the infinite gods. One of them Varima, others Mitra and Aryaman (Bhaga, Daksha, Amsa), most of them abstract names, though pointing to heaven and the solar light of heaven as their first, though

is

almost forgotten source.

When Mitra and Varima are invoked together, we can still perceive dimly that they were meant originally for day and night, light and darkness.

But in their

more personal and so to say dramatic aspect, day and night appear in the Vedic mythology as the two Asvins, the two horsemen.

Aditi, too, the infinite, still shows a few traces of her

being originally connected with the boundless

Dawn

;

but again, in her more personal and dramatic character,

Dawn is praised by the Vedic poets as Ushas, the Greek Eos, the beautiful maid of the morning, loved by the A-svins, loved by the sun, but vanishing before him

the

LECTURE

216

at the very moment when

he

VI.

tries to

embrace her with

The sun himself, whom we saw reflected several times before in some of the divine personhis

golden rays.

ifications of the air

and the sky and even of the earth,

appears once more in his full personality, as the sun of the sky, under the

names of Surya

4

(Helios),

Savitvi,

Puslian, and Yishnu, and many more.

You see from all this how great a mistake it would be to attempt to reduce the whole of solar concepts,

seen

and to

solar

Aryan mythology to

concepts only.

We have

how largely the earth, the air, and the sky have

each contributed their share to the earliest religious and mythological treasury of the Yedic Aryans. less, the

Neverthe-

Sun occupied in that ancient collection of Aryan
thought, which

we

call

Mythology, the same

central

and commanding position which, under different names,
it still holds

in our own thoughts.

"What we call the Morning, the ancient Aryans called
" and there is no solemnity so
the Sun or the Dawn
deep to a rightly-thinking creature as that of the Dawn. "
;

(These are not my words, but the words of one of our
greatest poets, one of the truest worshippers of Nature

What we call Noon, and Evening, and
we call Spring and Winter, what we call

John Ruskin.)
Night, what

Year, and Time, and Life, and Eternity— all this the
And yet wise people won ancient Aryans called Sun.
der and say, How curious that the ancient Aryans should
have had so many solar myths. Why, every time we
say " Good-morning," we commit a solar myth.

poet

Every

who sings about " the May driving the Winter

again" commits a solar myth. Every
of our newspapers ringing out
the old year and ringing in the new is brimful of solar

from the

field

" Christmas number"

—

myths.

—

Be not afraid of solar myths, but whenever in

VEDIC DEITIES.

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ancient mythology you meet with a name that, according
to the strictest phonetic rules (for this is a sine qua non),

can be traced back to a word meaning sun, or dawn, or
morning, or night, or spring or winter, accept it for
what it was meant to be, and do not be greatly surprised,
if a story told

of a solar eponymos was originally a solar

myth.

No one has more strongly protested against the extravagances of comparative
mythologists in

everything into solar legends, than I have

;

changing

but if I read

some of the arguments brought forward against this new
science, I confess they remind me of nothing so much as
of the arguments brought forward, centuries ago, against

People then appealed to
what is called Common Sense, which ought to teach
everybody that Antipodes could not possibly exist, because they would tumble off.
The best answer that

And I

astronomers could give, was, " Go and see."
can give no better answer to those learned skeptics who
try to ridicule the Science of Comparative Mythology
" Go and see !" that is, go and read the Yeda, and
before you have finished the first Maṅṛāla, I can promise
you, you will no longer shake your wise heads at solar
myths, whether in India, or in Greece, or in Italy, or
even in England, where we see so little of the sun, and
talk all the more about the weather
that is, about a
the existence of Antipodes

!

—

—

solar myth.

We have thus seen from the hymns

and prayers

preserved to us in the Rig- Veda, how a large number of
so-called Devas, bright

and sunny beings, or gods, were

called into existence, how the whole world was peopled

with them, and every act of nature, whether on the
earth or in the air or in the highest heaven, ascribed to
their

agency.

When we

say

it

thunders, they said

LECTURE

218

Indra

thunders

;

when we

VI.

say,

it

rains,

they said

Paryanya pours out his buckets when we say, it dawns,
they said the beautiful Ushas appears like a dancer,
displaying her splendor
when we say, it grows dark,
they said Surya unharnesses his steeds.

The whole of
nature was alive to the poets of the Veda, the presence
of the gods was felt everywhere, and in that sentiment
of the presence of the gods there was a germ of religious morality, sufficiently
strong, it would seem, to
restrain people from committing as it were before the
eyes of their gods what they were ashamed to commit
before the eyes of men.

When speaking of Varuua,

the old god of the sky, one poet says :*

" Vanina, the great lord of these worlds, sees as if he
were near. If a man stands or walks or hides, if he
goes to lie down or to get up, what two people sitting
together whisper to each other, King Varima knows it,
he is there as the third, for This earth too belongs to
Vanina, the King, and this wide sky with its ends far
apart.

The two seas (the sky and the ocean) are
Vanina's loins he is also contained in this small drop
He who should flee far beyond the sky, even
of water.

not

he would

be rid of Varuna, the King.}; His spies
with thousand

proceed from heaven toward this world

;

;

;

;

eyes they overlook this earth.
this,

what is between heaven and
beyond.

men.

King Varuna sees all
earth,

and what

is

He has counted the twinklings of the eyes of

As a player throws down the dice, he settles all

* Atharva-Veda IV. 16.
f

me.

Psalm cxxxix. 1, 2, "O Lord, thou hast searched me and known
Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou under-

standest my thought afar off."
\

Psalm cxxxix. 9, "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell
in the uttermost parts of the sea ; even there shall thy hand lead me,
and thy right hand shall hold me."

VEDIC DEITIES.
things (irrevocably).

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May all thy fatal snares which
stand spread out seven by seven and threefold, catch the
man who tells a lie, may they pass by him who speaks
the truth."

You see this is as beautiful, and in some respects as
And yet we know that

true, as anything in the Psalms.

there never was such a Deva, or god, or such a thing
as

We know it is a mere name, meaning

Varima.

originally

" covering

or

all-embracing,"

which

was

applied to the visible starry sky, and afterward, by a
process perfectly intelligible, developed into the
of

a

endowed with human

Being,

name

and superhuman

qualities.

And what applies to Yarima applies to all the other
gods of the Veda and the Vedic religion, whether three
in number, or thirty-three, or, as one poet said,

" three

thousand three hundred and thirty-nine gods."*

They

are all but names, quite as much as Jupiter and Apollo
and Minerva

;

in fact, quite as

much as all the gods of

every religion who are called by such appellative titles.
Possibly, if any one

had said this during the Vedic

or even

during the Periklean age in

age in India,

Greece, he would have been called, like Sokrates, a

And yet nothing can be
blasphemer or an atheist.

clearer or truer, and we shall see that some of the poets
of the Veda too, and, still more, the later Vedantie
philosopher, had a clear insight that it was so.

Only let us be careful in the use of that phrase " it is
a mere name."

No name is a mere name. Every
name was originally meant for something only it often
failed to express what it was meant to express, and then
became a weak or an empty name, or what we then call
" a mere name." So it was with these names of the

;

Rig-veda III. 9, 9

;

X. 52, G.

LECTURE

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Vedic

gods.

They were

all

VI.

meant

Bayonet^ the Invisible behind the

to

express

the

Visible, the Infinite

within the Finite, the Supernatural above the Natural,

They failed

the Divine, omnipresent, and omnipotent.

always

must

nature,

very

its

in expressing what, by

remain inexpressible. But that Inexpressible itself remained, and in spite of all these failures, it never

ancient

the

of

cumbed, or vanished from the mind

and better

thinkers and poets, but always called for new

call for

names, nay calls for them even now, and will

them to the very end of man's existence upon earth.

LECTURE

YII.

TED A AND VEDANTA.

I do not wonder that I should have been asked by some of my hearers to devote part of my last lecture

to

how the Yedic literature composed and preserved, if writing

answering the question,

could have been

was unknown in India before 500 b.c. while the hymns Class of the Rig- Veda are said to date from 1500 n.c. ical scholars naturally ask what is the date of our oldest mss. of the Rig-Veda, and what is the evidence on which

,

so high an antiquity is assigned to its contents. try to answer this question as well as I can,

I shall

and I shall

begin with a humble confession that the oldest mss. of the Rig-Veda, known to us at present, date not from

1500 n.c., but from about 1500 a.d.

We have therefore a gap of three thousand years, which it will require a strong arch of argument to bridge over.

But that is not all.

You may know how, in the beginning of this century, when the age of the Homeric poems was discussed, a German scholar, Frederick August Wolf, asked two momentous questions

1. At what time did the Greeks first become ac:

quainted with the alphabet and use

it

for inscriptions

on public monuments, coins, shields, and for contracts, both public and private ? *

* On the early use of letters for public inscriptions, see

Hayman,

LECTURE

222

2.

VII.

At what time did the Greeks first think of using;
writing for literary purposes, and what materials did
they employ for that purpose ?

These two questions and the answers they elicited
threw quite a new light on the nebulous periods of

Greek literature.
any other

in

A fact more firmly established than
the ancient history of Greece
is

that the

Ionians learned the alphabet from the Phenicians.

The

Ionians always called their letters Phenician letters,*
and the very name of Alphabet was a Phenician word.

We can well understand that the Phenicians should have
taught the Ionians in Asia Minor a knowledge of the
alphabet, partly for commercial purposes, i.e. for making
contracts, partly for enabling
little

sheets,

them

called Pei'iplus ,

to use those useful

Circumnavigations,

or

which at that time were as precious to sailors as maps
were to the adventurous seamen of the middle ages.
But from that to a written literature, in our sense of the

word, there is still a wide step.

It is well known that

the Germans, particularly in the North, had their Bunes for inscriptions on tombs, goblets, public monuments, but not for literary purposes. f Even if a few Ionians at Miletus and other centres of political and commercial life acquired the art of writing, where could they find writing materials ? and still more important, where could they find readers ? The Ionians, when they began to write, had to be satisfied with a hide or pieces of leather, which they called diphthera and until that was ,

Journal of Philology, 1879, pp. 141, 142, 150

;

Hicks, " Manual of Greek

Historical Inscriptions," pp. 1 seqq.

* Herod,

(v.

59) says

:

" I saw Phenician letters on certain tripods

in a temple of the Ismenian Apollo at Thebes in Boeotia, the most of

them like the Ionian letters."

" Die Nordisch Germanischen Volker, " p. 240.

| Munch,

VEDA ANI) VEDANTA.

223

brought to the perfection of vellum or parchment, the occupation of an author cannot have been very agreeable.*

So far as we know

at present the

Ionians began to

write about the middle of the sixth century b.c. ; and,

whatever may have been said to the contrary, Wolf's dictum still holds good that with them the beginning of a written literature was the same as the beginning of prose writing.

Writing at that time was an effort, and such an effort was made for some great purpose only. Hence the first written skins were what we should call Murray's Handbooks, called Periegesis or Periodos or, if treating of sea-voyages, Periplus, that is, guide-books, books to lead travellers round a country or round a town.

Connected with these itineraries were the accounts of the foundations of cities, the Ktisis.

Such books existed in Asia Minor during the sixth and fifth centuries, and their writers were called by a general term, Logographi, or "koyioi or Aoyotrotoi, as opposed to aoidoi the poets. They were the forerunners of the Greek historians, and Herodotus (443 b.c.), the so-called father of history,

,

,

made frequent use of their works. The whole of this incipient literary activity belonged from " Guides through towns and to Asia Minor. countries, ' ' literature

seems to have spread at an early

time to Guides through life, or philosophical dicta, such

* Herod., (v. 58) says " The Ionians from of old call $\pi\upsilon\pi\tau\omicron\varsigma$; $\tau\iota\nu\theta\epsilon\pi\alpha\iota$, because once, in default of the former, they used to employ the lat:

ter.

And even down to my own time, many of the barbarians write

on such diphtherse."

f Hekateos and Kadmos of Miletos (520 b. c.), Charon of Lampsakos (504 b. o.), Xanthos the Lydian (463 b.c.), Flierekydes of Lero (480 b. c.), Hellanikos of Mitylene (450 b. c.), etc.

LECTURE

224

VII.

Anaximander the Ionian (610-547
and Pherekydes the Syrian (540 b.c.). These
names carry us into the broad daylight of history, for
Anaximander was the teacher of Anaximenes, Anaximenes of Anaxagoras, and Anaxagoras
of Perikles. At
that time writing was a recognized art, and its cultivation had been rendered
possible chiefly through trade
In the
with Egypt and the importation of papyrus.
writing
had
idea
of
the
time of .zEschylos (500 b.c.)
again
become so familiar that he could use it again and
are ascribed to

as

b.c.*),

in poetical metaphors,!

and there seems

little

reason

why we should doubt that both Peisistratos (528 b.c.)
and Polykrates of Samos (523 b.c.) were among the first
collectors of Greek manuscripts.
In this manner the simple questions asked by Wolf
helped to reduce the history of ancient Greek literature
to some kind of order, particularly with reference to its
first beginnings.

seem but reasonable that the two
first questions to be asked by the students of Sanskrit
literature should have been
1. At what time did the people of India become
It would therefore

:

acquainted with an alphabet ?

2.

At what time did they first use such alphabet for

literary purposes ?

Curiously enough, however, these questions remained
in abeyance for a long time, and, as a consequence, it

was impossible to introduce even the

first

elements of

order into the chaos of ancient Sanskrit literature.

I can

here state

a

few

facts only.

There are no

* Lewis, " Astronomy," p. 92.

See Hayman, Journal of Philology, 1879, p. 139.

See M. M., "History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature," pp. 497

" On the Introduction of Writing in India."

seqq.,

•)•

\

VEDA AND VEDANTA.

225

anywhere in India before the
These inscriptions are

inscriptions to be found

middle of the third century b.o.

Buddhist, put up during the reign of Asoka, the grand-

Aandragupta, who was the

contemporary of

Megasthenes lived as ambassador of Seleucus.

Here, as you

see, we are on historical ground.

In fact, there is little

doubt that Asoka, the king who put up these inscriptions in several parts of his
vast kingdom, reigned from

259-222 B.o.

son of

Seleucus, and at whose court in Patalibothra

—

These inscriptions are written in two alphabets one
left, and clearly derived from an
Aramaean, that is, a Semitic alphabet the other written
from left to right, and clearly an adaptation, and an
written from right to

;

artificial or systematic adaptation,

to

the

requirements

of

an

of a Semitic alphabet

second alphabet became the source of

That

language.

Indian

all

Indian alpha-

and of many alphabets carried chiefly by Buddhist teachers far beyond the limits of India, though it is possible that the earliest Tamil alphabet may have been directly derived from the same Semitic source which supplied both the dextrorsum and the sinistrorumm
bets,

alphabets of India.

Here then we have the first

fact

—

viz.

that writing,

even for monumental purposes, was unknown

in

India

before the third century b.o.

But writing

for commercial purposes was

when he

said

in

Megasthenes was no doubt quite

India before that time.
right

known

that

the

Indians

did not

know

were not written, and that they

But Nearchus, the
administered justice from memory.
admiral of Alexander the Great, who sailed down the
Indus (325 b.c.), and was therefore brought in contact

letters,* that their laws

* M. M., " History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature," p. 515.

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with the merchants frequenting the maritime stations of India, was probably equally right in declaring that " the Indians wrote letters on cotton that had been well beaten together."

These were no

doubt

commercial docu-

ments, contracts, it may be, with Phenician or Egyptian captains,

and they would prove nothing as to the exwhat we mean by a istence in India at that time of written literature.

In fact,

what Megasthenes

said

Nearclius himself affirms

after him,

namely that " the

laws of the sophists in India were not written." at the same time, the Greek travellers in India

If,

speak of

marked by the Indians with with numbers, all this would

mile-stones, and of cattle

various

signs

and

also

perfectly agree with what

we know from other sources,

that though the art of writing may have reached India

before the time of Alexander's conquest, its employment
for literary purposes cannot date

from a much earlier

time.

Here then we

are brought face to face with a most

Writing

startling fact.

was unknown in India before

the fourth century before Christ, and yet we are asked

to believe that the Yedic literature in its three welldefined periods, the Mantra,
Brahmana, and Sutra

periods, goes back to at least a thousand years before

our era.

Now the Big- Veda alone, which contains a collection

books of hymns addressed to various deities,

1017 (1028) poems, 10,580 verses, and about

How were these poems composed

153, 526 words.*

and how,

for they are composed in very perfect metre

of

ten

consists of

—

having been composed, were they handed down

from 1500 before Christ to 1500 after Christ, the time

to which most of our best Sanskrit mss. belong ?

after

* M. M., " Hibbert Lectures," p. 153.

VEDA AND VEDANTA.

by

Entirely

memory .*

– what will sound

This

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may sound

startling,

more startling, and yet is a fact that can easily be ascertained by anybody who doubts it— at the present moment, if every ms. of the Rig -Veda were lost, we should be able to recover the whole of it from the memory of the /S'rotriyas in India. These native students learn the Yeda by heart, and they learn it from the mouth of their Guru, never from a and after a ms., still less from my printed edition hut

still

—

—

time they teach it again to their pupils.
I have had such students in

my room at Oxford, who

not only could repeat these hymns, but

them with the proper accents

who repeated

Yedic Sanskrit
has accents like Greek), nay, who, when looking through my printed edition of the Rig- Yeda, could point out a (for the

misprint without the slightest hesitation.

you more.

There are hardly any various readings in our mss. of the Rig- Yeda, but various schools in India have their own readings of certain passages, and they hand down those readings with great care.
So,

I

can

tell

instead of collating mss., as we do in

Greek and Latin,

I have asked some friends of mine to collate those Yedic

students, who carry their own Rig- Veda in their memory,

and to let me have the various readings from these living authorities.

Here then we are not dealing with theories, but with which anybody may verify. The whole of the

facts,

Rig- Yeda, and a great deal more, present

still

moment in the oral tradition of

exists

a

at

the

number of

* Learning was anciently preserved by memory. The Jewish, or Kubala, or Tradition was not written for many centuries.

The Druids of ancient Britain preserved their litanies in the same way, and to a Bard a good memory was indispensable, or he would have been refused initiation. A. W. rather Chaldaic

—

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who, if they liked, could write down every
and every accent, exactly as we find them in our
old mss.

Of course, this learning by heart is carried on
under a strict discipline it is, in fact, considered as a
scholars
letter,

;

sacred duty.

A native friend of mine, himself a very

distinguished Yedic scholar, tells me that a hoy, who is to

he brought up as a student of the Rig- Veda, has to spend
about eight years in the house of his teacher. He has
to learn ten books
first, the hymns of the Rig- Veda
:

;

then a prose treatise on sacrifices, called the Brahmana

then the so-called Forest-book or Aranyaka

;

;

then the

on domestic ceremonies and lastly, six treatises
on pronunciation, grammar, etymology, metre, astronrules

;

omy, and ceremonial.

These ten books, it has been calculated, contain nearly
80,000 lines, each line reckoned as thirty-two syllables.

A pupil studies every day during the eight years of
his

theological apprenticeship, except on the holidays,

which are called "non-reading days." There being 360
days in a lunar year, the eight years would give him 2880
days.

Deduct from this 364 holidays, and you get 2496
working days during the eight years. If you divide the

number of lines, 30,000, by the number of working days, you get about twelve lines to be learned each day,

though much time is taken up, in addition, for practising and rehearsing what has been learned before.

Now this is the state of things at present, though I doubt whether it will impress on

it

will last

much longer, and I always

my friends in India, and therefore impress

on those also who will soon be settled as civil servants in India, the duty of trying to learn all that can still be

learned from those living libraries.

Much ancient Sanskrit

lore will be lost forever when that race of Brahmins

becomes extinct.

YEDA AND VEDANTA.

But now let us look back.

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About a thousand years

ago a Chinese of the name of I-tsing, a Buddhist, went to Indra to learn Sanskrit, in order to be able to translate some of the sacred books of his own religion, which

were originally written in Sanskrit, into Chinese. He left China in 671, arrived at Tamralipti in India in 673, and went to the great College and Monastery of Nalanda, where he studied Sanskrit. He returned to China in 695, and died in 703.*

In one of his works which we still possess in Chinese, he gives an account of what he saw in India, not only

among his own co-religionists, the Buddhists, but likewise among the Brahmans, of

the Buddhist priests he says that after they have learned to recite the five and the ten precepts, they are

taught the 400 hymns of MatwZ'eta, and afterward the 150 hymns of the same poet. When they are able to recite these,

they begin the study of the Sutras of their

They also learn by heart the 6ratakaBuddha in former

Sacred Canon.

mdla,J which gives an account of

Speaking of what he calls the Southern Sea, which he visited after

" There are more

leaving India, I-tsing says

than ten

islands in the South Sea.

There both priests and layof existence.

states

islands

of the

:

men

recite the

6r&takamala, as they recite the

mentioned before

Chinese.

;

hymns

but it has not yet been translated into

, ,

* See my article on the date of the Kasika in the Indian Antiquary, 1880, p. 305.

f The translation of the most important passages in I-tsing' s work was made for me by one of my Japanese pupils, K. Kasawara.

\ See Bunyiu Nanjio's "Catalogue of the Chinese Tripitaka," p. 372, where Aryasura, who must have lived before 431 a.d., is men-

tioned as the author of the " (Jatakamaht.'

,

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Til.

One of these stories, he proceeds to say, was versified by a king (Aie-zhih) and set to music, and was performed before the public with a band and dancing evidently a Buddhist mystery play. I-tsing then gives a short account of the system of

he

Children,

education.

learn

says,

the

forty-nine

and the 10,000 compound letters when they are six years old, and generally finish them in half a year. This corresponds to about 300 verses, each sloka of thirty-two syllables.

It

was originally taught by letters

At eight years, children begin to learn grammar of Bimini, and know it after about eight

Mahesvara.

the

months.

It consists of 1000 s-lokas, called Sutras.

Then follows the list of roots (dliatu) and the three appendices (khila),

again

consisting

of

1000

slokas.

Boys begin the three appendices when they are ten years old, and finish them in three years.

When they have reached the age of fifteen, they begin to study a commentary on the grammar (Sutra), and spend five years on learning it.

And here I-tsing

gives the following advice to his countrymen, many of whom came to India to learn Sanskrit, but seem to have very imperfectly.

learned

it

writes,

“go

to

should first of
their

wishing to

subjects ;

labor.

if

not,

These works

But this is suited

by heart.

study there, they

learn these grammatical works, and

all

then only other

waste

India,

“ If men of China,” he

for

*

they will

merely

should be learned

men of high quality

They should study hard day and night,

They

without letting a moment pass for idle repose.

only.

.

.

.

should be like Confucius, through whose hard study the

binding of his Yili-king was three times cut asunder,

and like Sui-shih, who used to read

Then follows a

a book repeatedly one hundred times."

being worn away

;

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remark, more intelligible in Chinese than in English
,"

:

The hairs of a bull are counted by thousands, the horn
of a unicorn is only one.

, ,

I-tsing then speaks of the high degree of perfection to
which the memory of these students attained, both
among Buddhists and heretics. " Such men," he says,
" could commit to memory the contents of two volumes,
learning them only once."

And then turning to the heretics or what we should
,

call the

orthodox Brahmins, he says

:

" The Brahmanas

are regarded throughout the five divisions of India as
the most respectable.

They do not walk with the other

three castes, and other mixed classes of people are
further

dissociated

Scriptures,

from

They revere

them.

the four Yedas, containing about

The Yedas

still

their

100,000

handed down from
mouth to mouth, not written on paper. There are in
every generation some intelligent Brahmans who can
I myself saw such
recite those 100,000 verses.
verses.

.

.

.

are

...

men.''

Here then we have an eye-witness who, in the seventh
century after Christ, visited India, learned Sanskrit, and
spent about twenty years

in

different

monasteries

—

man who had no theories of his own about oral tradition,
but who, on the contrary, as coming from China, was
quite familiar with the idea of a written, nay, of a printed
literature

:

" The Yedas are
down from mouth to

and yet what does he say ?

not written on paper, but handed

mouth. '

,

How, I do not quite agree here with I-tsing.

At all

events, we

must not conclude from what he says that
there existed no Sanskrit mss. at all at his time.

We

know they existed.
of

We know that in the first century
our era Sanskrit mss. were carried from
India to

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VII.

China, and translated there. Most likely therefore there were mss. of the Veda also in existence. But I-tsing, for all that, was right in supposing that these mss. were not allowed to be used by students, and that they had always to learn the Yeda by heart and from the mouth of a properly qualified teacher.

The very fact that in the later law-books severe punishments are threatened against persons who copy the Yeda or learn it from a mss., shows that mss. existed, and that their existence interfered seriously with the ancient privileges of

the

Brahmans, as the only legitimate teachers of their sacred scriptures.

If now, after having heard this account of I-tsing, we go back for about another thousand years, we shall feel less skeptical in accepting the evidence which we find in

the so-called Pratisakhyas, that

is,

collections of rules

which, so far as we know at present, go back to the fifth century before our era, and which the same as what

tell

us almost exactly

we can see in India at the

present

moment, namely that the education of children of the three twice-born castes, the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, and Yai.syas, consisted in their passing at least eight years in

the house of a Guru, and learning by heart the ancient

Yedic hymns.

The art of teaching had even at that early time been reduced to a perfect system, and at that time certainly there is not the slightest trace of anything, such as a book, or skin, or parchment, a sheet of paper, pen or ink, being known even by name to the people of India

;

while every expression connected with what we should call literature, points to a literature (we cannot help using that word) existing in memory only, and being handed down with the most scrupulous care by means of oral tradition.

I had to enter into these details because I know that,

with our ideas of

literature,

it

requires

an

effort

to

imagine the bare possibility of a large amount of poetry,

and still more of prose, existing in any but a written

And yet here too we only see what we see elsewhere, namely that man, before the great discoveries of

civilization were made, was able by greater individual

efforts to achieve what to us, accustomed to easier contrivances, seems almost impossible.

So-called savages

were able to chip flints, to get fire by rubbing sticks of wood, which baffles our handiest workmen. Are we to

suppose that, if they wished to preserve some songs

which, as they believed, had once secured them the

favor of their gods, had brought rain from heaven, or

led them on to victory, they would have found no

means of doing so ? We have only to read such accounts

as, for instance, Mr. William Wyatt Gill has given us

in his " Historical Sketches of Savage Life in Polynesia,"* to see how anxious even savages are to preform.

serve the records of their ancient heroes,

kings,

and

gods, particularly when the dignity or nobility of certain

on these songs, or when they contain

what might be called the title-deeds to large estates.

And that the Medic Indians were not the only savages

of antiquity who discovered the means of preserving a

large literature by means of oral tradition, we may learn

from Csesar,f not a very credulous witness, who tells us

that the " Druids were said to know a large number of

verses by heart

that some of them spent twenty years

in learning them, and that they considered it wrong to

commit them to writing" exactly the same story which

families depends

;

—

we hear in India.

* Wellington, 1880.

)

De Bello Gall. vi. 14

[p. 506.

;

“ History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature,”

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We must return once more to the question of dates.
We have traced the existence of the Veda, as handed down by oral tradition, from our days to the days of I-tsiug in the seventh century after Christ,

and again

to the period of the Pratisakhyas, in the fifth century before Christ.

In that fifth century b.c. took place the rise of Buddhism, a religion built up on the ruins of the Yedic religion, and founded, so to say, on the denial of the divine authority ascribed to the

Yeda by all orthodox

Brahmans.

Whatever exists, therefore, of Vedic literature must be accommodated within the centuries preceding the rise of Buddhism, and if I tell you that there are three periods of Yedic literature to be accommodated, the third presupposing the second, and the second the first, and that even that first period presents us with a collec-

and a systematic collection of Yedic hymns, I think you will agree with me that it is from no desire for an extreme antiquity, but simply from a respect for facts, that students of the Yeda have come to the conclusion that these hymns, of which the mss. do not carry

tion,

us back beyond the fifteenth century after Christ, took their origin in the fifteenth century before Christ.

it

One fact I must mention once more, because I think may carry conviction even against the stoutest skepti-

cism.

mentioned that the earliest inscriptions discovered in India belong to the reign of King Asoka, the grandson of Aandragupta, who reigned from 259-222 before

I

What is the language of those inscriptions?

Certainly not.

Is it the Sanskrit of the Yedic hymns ?

Christ.

Is

it

the later Sanskrit of the

Brahmanas and Sutras ?

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These inscriptions are written in the local dialects as then spoken in India, and these local dialects differ from the grammatical Sanskrit about as much as Italian does from Latin. Certainly not.

'What

from

follows

Sanskrit of the

this ?

First,

that

the archaic

Veda had ceased to be spoken before

Secondly, that even the later the third century b.c.

grammatical Sanskrit was no longer spoken and understood by the people at large ; that Sanskrit therefore

had ceased, nay, we may say, had long ceased to be the spoken language of the country when Buddhism arose, and that therefore the youth and manhood of the ancient Vedic language lie far beyond the period that gave birth to the teaching of Buddha, who, though he may have known Sanskrit, and even Vedic Sanskrit, insisted again and again on the duty that his disciples should

preach his doctrines in the language of the people whom they wished to benefit.

And now, when the time allotted to me is nearly at it always happens, that I have not been able to say one half of what I hoped to say as to

an end, I find, as

the lessons to be learned by us in India, even with regard to this

one branch of human knowledge only, the study of the origin of religion.

I hope, however, I may have

succeeded in showing you the entirely new aspect which
the old problem

of the theogony or the origin and
growth of the Devas or gods, assumes from the light
thrown upon it by the Veda. Instead of positive theories,

,

we now have positive facts, such as you look for

in vain

anywhere

else ;

and though there

is

still

a con-

siderable interval between the Devas of the Veda, even
in their highest form, and such concepts as Zeus, Apollon,

and Athene, yet the chief riddle is solved, and we

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know now at last what stuff the gods of the ancient world were made of.

But

this

theogonic process

is

but one side of the

ancient Vedic religion, and there are two other sides of at least the same importance and of even a deeper interest to us.

There are in fact three religions in the Veda, or, if I may say so, three naves in one great temple, reared, as it were, before our eyes by poets, prophets, and philosophers. Here too we can find the work and the workers.

men.

We have not to deal with hard formulas only,

We

with unintelligible ceremonies, or petrified fetiches.

human mind arrives by a

perfectly

rational process at all its later irrationalities.

This is

can see

how

the

Veda from all other Sacred

what distinguishes

Books. Much, no doubt, in the Veda also, and in the

the

Vedic ceremonial, is already old and unintelligible, hard, and petrified. But in many cases the development of names and concepts, their transition from the natural to the supernatural, from the individual to the general, is very fine

still going on, and it is for that very reason that

may almost impossible, to translate the
growing thoughts of the Veda into the full-grown and
it

so difficult,

more than full-grown language of our time.

Let us take one of the oldest words for god in the
Veda, such as d e v a, the Latin deus. The dictionaries tell
you that d e v a means god and gods, and so, no doubt,
But if we always translated deva in the Vedic
it does.

hymns by god, we should not be translating, but completely transforming the
thoughts of the "Y edic poets.

is totally

I do not mean only that our idea of God
different from the idea that was intended to be expressed
but even the Greek and Roman concept of

by deva;

gods would be totally inadequate to convey the thoughts

VEDA AND VEDANTA.

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imbedded in the Yedic deva. D e v a meant originally bright, and nothing else. Meaning bright, it was constantly used of the sky, the stars, the sun, the dawn, the and when a poet day, the spring, the rivers, the earth wished to speak of all of these by one and the same word by what we should call a general term he called them D e v a s. When that had been done, Deva did no longer mean " the Bright ones," but the name compre;

—

—

hended all the qualities which the sky and the sun and the

dawn shared in common, excluding only those that

were peculiar to each.
Here you see how,

by the

simplest

process,

the

Devas, the bright ones, might become and did become the Devas, the heavenly, the kind, the powerful, the

—

the immortal and, in the end, something very like the Oeoc (or dm) of Greeks and Romans. invisible,

In this way one Beyond, the

Beyond of Nature, was

built up in the ancient religion of the Yeda, and peopled

with Devas, and Asuras, and Yasus, and Adityas,

all

names for the bright solar, celestial, diurnal, and vernal powers of nature, without altogether excluding, however, even the dark and unfriendly powers, those of the

night, of the dark clouds, or of winter, capable of mischief, but always destined

in the end to

succumb to the

valor and strength of their bright antagonists.

We now come to the second nave of the Yedic temple,
the second Beyond that was dimly perceived, and grasped

and named by the ancient
the Departed Spirits.*

Rishis,

namely the world of

* See De Coulanges, " The Ancient City," Book

I. II.

" We had

worship of the dead among the Hellenes, among the Latins,
among the Sabines, among the Etruscans we also find it among the
Aryas of India. Mention is made of it in the hymns of the Rig-Veda.
this

;

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There was in India, as elsewhere, another very early faith,

springing up naturally in the hearts of the people,

that their fathers and mothers,

when they departed this

departed to a Beyond, wherever

might he, either

in the East from whence all the bright Devas seemed to come, or more commonly in the West, the land to which they seemed to go, called in the Veda the realm of Yama or the setting sun.

The idea that beings which

once had been, could ever cease to be, had not yet entered their minds

and from the belief that their

fathers existed somewhere, though they could see them

no more, there arose the belief in another Beyond, and

the germs of another religion.

Nor was the actual power of the fathers quite imperTheir prescriptible or extinct even after their death.

ence continued to be felt in the ancient laws and customs

of the family, most of which rested on their will and

their authority.

While their fathers were alive and

strong, their will was law

and when, after their death,

doubts or disputes arose on points of law or custom, it

was but natural that the memory and the authority of

the fathers should be appealed to to settle such points

that the law should still be their will.

life,

it

;

;

spoken of in the Laws of Mann as the most ancient worship

Before men had any notion of Indra or of Zeus,

they adored the dead they feared them, and addressed them prayers.

It seems that the religious sentiment began in this way.

It was perhaps while looking upon the dead that man first conceived the idea of the supernatural, and to have a hope beyond what he saw.

Death

was the first mystery, and it placed man on the track of other mysteries.

It raised his thoughts from the visible to the invisible, from

the transitory to the eternal, from the human to the divine."

It is

among men.

.

.

.

;

The sacred fire represented the ancestors, and therefore was revered and kept carefully from profanation by the presence of a stranger.

—

A. W.

" On the path on which his fathers and grandfathers have walked, on that path of good men let him walk, and he will not go wrong." In the same manner then in which, out of the bright powers of nature, the Devas or gods had arisen, there arose out of predicates shared in common by the departed, such as pit ri s, fathers, p r e t a, gone away, another general concept, what we should call Manes the kind ones, Ancestors, Shades Spirits or Ghosts whose worship was nowhere more fully developed than in India. That common name, P t r i s or Fathers gradually attracted toward itself all that the fathers shared in common. It came to mean not only fathers, but invisible, kind, powerful, immortal, heavenly beings, and we can watch in the Veda, better perhaps than anywhere else, the inevitable, yet most touching metamorphosis of ancient thought the love of the child for father and mother becoming transfigured into an instinctive belief

Tims Mann says (IV. 178)

:

,

,

,

,

i

,

—

in the immortality of the soul.
It is strange, and really more than strange, that not only should this important and prominent side of the ancient religion of the Hindus

have been ignored, bnt that of

late its very existence should have been doubted.

I feel

few words in support of what I have said just now of the supreme importance of this belief in and this worship of ancestral spirits in India from the most ancient to the most modern times. Mr. Herbert Spencer, who has done so much in calling obliged, therefore, to add a

attention
religion

to

ancestors

as

a

natural ingredient

of

among all savage nations, declares in the most

emphatic manner,* " that he has seen it implied, that
he has heard it in conversation, and that he now has it
before him in print, that no Indo-European or Semitic

* " Principles of Sociology," p. 313.

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nation, so far as we know, seems to have made a religion of the worship of the dead."

I do not doubt his words,

but I think that on so important a point, Mr. Herbert Spencer ought to have named its authorities.

It seems

me almost impossible that anybody who has

to

ever

opened a book on India should have made such a state. There are hymns in the Rig-Veda addressed to

ment. There are full descriptions of the worship of the Fathers.

The

due to the Fathers in the Brahmanas and Sutras.

epic poems, the law books, the Puranas, all are brimful

The whole social

of allusions to ancestral offerings.

fabric of India, with its laws of inheritance and marriage, rests on a belief in the Manes

told that no Indo-European nation seems to have made a religion of the worship of the dead.

The Persians had their Fravashis, the Greeks their *émouai*, or rather their *deoi* and their *Saturoi*,

—

ta d'xoi), *Itu j'qovloi*, (*pvXaKeg dvrjrcsv ai'Opionuv oi pa (pvAaooovaiv .rs d'waS nal*

a^erXia epya,

i/epa kaadptvol -dvrrj (poirCjvTEg en'

aiav ,

-Aov-odorai (Hesiodi Opera et Dies, vv. 122-126) ;f

among the Romans the *Lares familiares* and the

while

the Manes were worshipped more zealously than any

other gods.;}:

Manu goes so far as to tell us in one place

* " The Hindu Law of Inheritance is based upon the Hindu religion, and we must be cautious that in administering Hindu law we do

not, by acting

upon our notions derived from English law, inadver-

tently wound or offend the religious feelings of those affected by our decisions."

who may be

– Bengal Law Reports, 103.

" Earth- wandering demons, they their charge began,

f

The ministers of good and guards of man

;

Veiled with a mantle of aerial light,
O'er Earth's wide space they wing their hovering flight."

" De Leg." H. 9, 22, " Deorum manium jura sancta

X Cicero,

sunto

;

nos leto datos divos habento."

YEDA AND VEDANTA.
(III. 203)

:

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" An oblation by Brahmans to their ancestor
transcends an oblation to the deities
and yet we are
told that no Indo-European nation seems to have made
a religion of the worship of the dead.

Such things ought really not to be, if there is to be
any progress in historical research, and I cannot help
thinking that what Mr. Herbert Spencer meant was
probably no more than that some scholars did not admit
that the worship of the dead formed the whole of the
That,
religion of any of the Indo-European nations.
no doubt, is perfectly true, but it would be equally true,
And on this
I believe, of almost any other religion.
point again the students of anthropology

will

learn

more, I believe, from the Yeda than from any other
book.

In the Yeda the

invoked

Pitres, or fathers, are

to-

gether with the Devas, or gods, but they are not con-

founded with them. The Devas never become PitWs,
and though such adjectives as d e v a are sometimes applied to the PitWs, and they
are raised to the rank of
the older classes of Devas (Manu III. 192, 284, YayAavalkya I. 268), it is easy to
see that the PitWs and Devas
had each their independent origin, and that they represent two totally distinct
phases of the human mind in
the creation of its objects of worship.

This is a lesson

which ought never to be forgotten.

We read in the Rig- Yeda, YI. 52, 4 " May the

rising Dawns protect me, may the flowing Rivers protect me, may the firm Mountains protect me, may the
:

Fathers protect

me at this invocation of the gods."

Here nothing can be clearer than the separate existence of the Fathers, apart from the Dawns, the Rivers, and the Mountains, though they are included in one common

Devahuti, however, or invocation of the gods.

LECTURE

VII.

We must distinguish, however, from the very first, between two classes, or rather between two concepts of Fathers, the one comprising the distant, half -forgotten, and almost mythical ancestors of certain families or of what would have been to the poets of the Yeda, the whole human race, the other consisting of the fathers who had but lately departed, and who were still, as it were, personally remembered and revered.

The old ancestors in general approach more nearly to They are often represented as having gone to the abode of Yama, the ruler of the departed, and to live there in company with some of the Devas (Rig- Yeda VII. 76, 4, devanam sadhamadaA Rig- Yeda X. 16, 1, devanam vasaniA).
the gods.

;

We sometimes read of the great-grandfathers being in heaven, the grandfathers in the sky, the fathers on the earth, the first in

company with the Adityas, the second

with the Rudras, the last with the Yasus.

All these are

individual poetical conceptions.*

Yama himself is sometimes invoked as if he were one of the Fathers, the first of mortals that died or that trod

the path of the Fathers (the pitm'yima, X. 2, 7) leading to

the

common

Deva-like nature

sunset in

is

the West.f

never completely

Still

lost,

his

r.eal

and, as the

god of the setting sun, lie is indeed the leader of the Fathers, but not one of the Fathers himself.:}

Many of the benefits which men enjoyed on earth were referred to the Fathers, as having first been proSee Atharva-Veda XVIII. 2, 49.

Rig-Veda X. 14, 1-2. He is called Vaivasvata, the solar (X. 58, 1), and even the son of Vivasvat (X. 14, 5). In a later phase of religious thought Yama is conceived as the first man (Atharva-Veda XVIII. 3, 13, as compared with Big-Veda X. 14, 1).

X Rig-Veda X. 14.

*

f

cured and first enjoyed by them. They performed the first sacrifices, and secured the benefits arising from them. Even the great events in nature, such as the rising of the sun, the light of the

day and the darkness

of the night, were sometimes referred to them, and they

were praised for having

11). * broken open the dark stable of

having

brought out the cows, that is,

the morning and

They were even praised for

the days (X. 68,

having adorned the night with stars, while in later writing the stars are said to be the lights of the good people who have entered into heaven, f Similar ideas, we know, prevailed among the ancient Persians, Greeks, and Romans.

The Fathers are called in the Veda truthful

(satya),

wise (suvidatra),

righteous (Wtavat),

poets (kavi), leaders (patliikrit), and one of their most

frequent epithets

somya, delighting in Soma, Soma

is

being the ancient intoxicating beverage of the Vedic

which was believed to bestow immortality, £ but which had been lost, or at all events had become difficult to obtain by the Aryans, after their migration into the Punjab. § iik'shis,

The families of the BhWgus, the Angiras, the Atharall have their Pittr/s or Fathers, who are invoked

to sit down on the grass and to accept the offerings placed there for them.

Even the name of PitWyayvTa,

sacrifice of the Fathers, occurs already in the hymns of vans

the Rig-Veda.^f

The following is one of the hymns of the Rig- Veda by

* In the Avesta many of these things are clone

by Ahura-Mazda

with the help of the Fravashis.

VI. 6, 4, 8.

f See Satapatha Brahmana I. 9, 3, 10

Rig-Veda VIII. 48, 3 " We drank Soma, we became immortal,

;

t

:

we went to the light, we found the gods

§ Rig-Veda IX. 97, 39.

||

VIII. 48, 12.

L. c. X. 14, G.

f L. c. X. 16, 10.

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VII.

to come to
which those ancient Fathers were invited

*

their sacrifice (Rig-veda X. 15)

Fathers, the lowest, the

1. "May the Soma-loving

May the gentle and

highest, and the middle, arise.

life (again), protect

to

come

have

righteous Fathers who

:

®

.

.

ns in these invocations

he for the Fathers to-day, for

2. " May this salutation

whether they

after

those who have departed before or

among the

or

earth,

now dwell in the sky above the

!

;

blessed people.

3.

"I

the wise Fathers

invited

come hither

.

.

quickly, and sitting on the

.

may

they

grass readily

partake of the poured-out draught

help, you Fathers

4 " Come hither to us with your

these libations

prepared

have

on the grass

!

who sit

We

!

for you, accept

them

!

Come hither with your most

health and wealth withblessed protection, and give us

out fail

nji

!

-.1

" The Soma-loving Fathers have been called hither

Let

are placed on the grass.

to their dear viands which

them

let

bless,

them approach, let them listen, let them

5.

protect us

6.

cept

!

" Bending your knee and sitting on my right, ac-

all this

—

sacrifice.

any wrong that we

Do not hurt us, O Fathers, for

may have committed against you,

men as we are.

7.

“ When you sit down on the lap of the red dawns,

O Fathers, give

mortal

grant wealth to the generous

and bestow

here,

of this man

of your treasure to the sons

!

vigor here on us

8

!

“ May Yama, as a friend with friends, consume

the offerings according to his

wish, united with those old

my own is given by

* A translation considerably differing from
for 1880,” p. 34.

Sarvadhikari in his “ Tagore Lectures

VEDA AND VEDANTA.

245

Soma-loving Fathers of ours, the YasishtfAas, who arranged the Soma draught.
9. " Come hither, O Agni, with those wise and truthful Fathers who like to sit

down near the hearth, who
when yearning for the gods, who knew the
sacrifice, and who were strong in praise with their songs.

" Come, O Agni, with those ancient fathers who
10.

like to sit down near the hearth, who forever praise
the gods, the truthful, who eat and drink our oblations,
making company with Indra and the gods.

11. " O Fathers, you who have been consumed by
Agni, come here, sit down on your seats, you kind
guides

Eat of the offerings which we have placed on
thirsted

!

the turf, and then grant us wealth and strong offspring

" O Agni,

12.

O

6r;itavedas,'x

,

at

!

our request thou

first rendered them

Thou gavest them to the Fathers, and they fed

hast carried the offerings, having

sweet.

on their share.

tions

Eat

also,

O god, the proffered obla-

!

" The Fathers who are here, and the Fathers who

13.

are not here, those whom

we know, and those whom we
know not, thou f?ata vedas, knowest how many they are,

accept the well-made sacrifice with the sacrificial portions

!

" To those who, whether burned by fire or not
burned by fire, rejoice in their share in the midst of

14.

heaven, grant thou, 0 King, that their body

may take

that life which they wish for !"f

* Cf. Max Muller, Kig-Veda, transl. vol. i. p. 24.

f

In a previous note will be found the statement by Professor De

Coulanges, of Strasburg, that in India, as in other countries, a belief
in the ancestral spirits came first, and a belief in divinities afterward.

Professor Muller cites other arguments which might be employed in
support of such a theory.

The name of the oldest and

greatest

LECTURE

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VII.

Distinct from the worship offered to these primitive ancestors, is the reverence which from an early time was felt to be due by children to their

also to their grandfather,

departed father, soon

and great-grandfather.

The

ceremonies in which these more personal feelings found

among the Devas, for instance, is not simply Dyaus, but Dyaush-pita, Heaven-Father and there are several names of the same character,

;

not only in Sanskrit, but in Greek and Latin also. Jupiter and Zeus Pater are forms of the appellation mentioned, and mean the Father in Heaven. It does certainly look as though Dyaus, the sky, had be-

come personal and worshipped only after he had been raised to the category of a Pitri, a father and that this predicate of Father must

;

have been elaborated first before it could have been used, to comprehend Dyaus, the sky, Varuna, and other Devas. Professor Muller, however, denies that this is the whole truth in the case. The Vedic poets, he remarks, believed in Devas gods, if we must so call them and Manushyas, men, Pitn's, fathers –literally, the bright ones

—

;

;

(Atharva-Veda, X. 6, 32.) Who came first and who came but as soon as the three were placed side after it is difficult to say mortals.

;

by side, the Devas certainly stood the highest, then followed the Ancient thought did not comprePitris, and last came the mortals. hend the three under one concept, but it paved the way to it. The mortals after passing through death became Fathers, and the Fathers became the companions of the Devas. In Manu there is an advance beyond this point. The world, all

that moves and rests, we are told (Manu III., 201), has been made by the Devas but the Devas and Danavas were born of the Pitris, and ;

the Pitris of the Pishis.

Vedas, seven in

number

Originally the Kishis were the poets of the ;

and we are not told how they came to be

placed above the Devas and Pitris. It does not, however, appear The Vedas were the production utterly beyond the power to solve. of the /iish'is, and the Pitris, being perpetuated thus to human mem-

The Devas sprung from the Pitris, because it was usual to apotheosize the dead. " Our ancestors desired," says Cicero, " that the men who had quitted this ory, became by a figure of speech their offspring.

life should

be counted in the number of gods."

Again, the concep-

tion of patrons or Pitris to each family and tribe naturally led to the idea of a Providence over all

;

and so the Pitri begat the Deva.

religion preceded and has outlasted the other.

—A. W.

This

VEDA AND VEDANTA.
expression were of a

more domestic

247
character,

and

al-

lowed therefore of greater local variety.
It

would be quite impossible

to give here

even an

abstract only of the minute regulations which have been

preserved to us in the Brahmanas, the iSrauta, Grdiya,

and SamayaMrika Sutras, the Law-books, and a mass of
manuals on the performance of endless rites, all

Such are the minute

intended to honor the Departed.

prescriptions as to times and seasons, as to altars and
offerings, as to the number and shape of the sacrificial
vessels, as to the proper postures of the sacrificers, and
the different arrangements of the vessels, that it is
extremely difficult to catch hold of what we really care
for, namely, the thoughts and intentions of those who

Much has been

first

devised all these intricacies.

written on this class of sacrifices by European scholars
also, beginning with Colebrooke's excellent essays on
"The Religious Ceremonies of the Hindus," first publater

lished in the

" Asiatic Researches," vol.

v.

Calcutta,

But when we ask the simple question, What was
the thought from whence all this outward ceremonial
sprang, and what was the natural craving of the human
heart which it seemed to satisfy, we hardly get an in1798.

telligible

answer anywhere.

It is true that

Araddhas

continue to be performed all over India to the present day, but

we know how widely the modern ceremonial

has diverged from the rules laid down in the old Aastras,

and it is quite clear from the descriptions given to us by recent travellers that no one can understand the purport

even of these survivals of the old ceremonial, unless he understands Sanskrit and can read the old Sutras.

We

are indeed told in full detail how the cakes were made which the Spirits were supposed to eat, how many stalks of grass were to be used on which they had to be offered,

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how long each stalk ought to be, and in what direction it

should be held.

All the things which teach us noth-

ing are explained to us in abundance, but the few things

which the true scholar really cares for are passed over, as if they had no interest to us at all, and have to be discovered under heaps of rubbish.

In order to gain a little light, I think we ought to distinguish between

the PitWyay«a, as

1. The daily ancestral sacrifice,

one of the five Great Sacrifices (Mahay ay/Tas)

2. The monthly ancestral sacrifice, the PmcZa-pitWyaywa, as part of the New and Full-moon sacrifice

3. The funeral ceremonies on the death of a house-

—

;

;

holder

;

The Agapes, or feasts of love and charity, commonly called Araddhas, at which food and other chari⁴.

table

gifts

memory

were

bestowed on

the

deceased

of

deserving

ancestors.

persons in

The name

of

Araddha belongs properly to this last class only, but it has been transferred to the second and third class of sacrifices also, because Araddha formed an important part in them.

The daily Pitṛyāga or Ancestor-worship is one of
'*

the five sacrifices, sometimes called the Great Sacrifices, which every married man ought to perform day by day.

They are mentioned in the Grihyasūtras (Asv. III. 1),
Devas, Bhūṭayāga, for animals,
Pitṛyāga, for the Fathers, Brahmayāga, for
Brahman, i.e. study of the Yeda, and Manuṣyayāga,
for men, i.e. hospitality, etc.
as Devayāga, for the
etc.,

* Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa XI. 5, G, 1

;

Taitt. Ar. II. 11, 10 ;

Grihya-sūtras III. 1,1; Paraskara Grihya-sūtras II. 9, 1
Dharmasūtras, translated by Bhandarkar, pp. 47 seq.

;

Aśvalayana

Apastamba,

»

VEDA AND VEDANTA.

Manu (III.

70)

tells

us

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the same, namely, that a

married man has five great religious duties to perform

1. The Brahma-sacrifice, i.e. the studying and teach:

ing of the Yeda (sometimes called Ahuta).

The Pitṛ /-sacrifice, i.e. the offering of cakes and water to the Manes (sometimes called Prasita).

3. The Deva-sacrifice, i.e. the offering of oblations to

2.

the gods (sometimes called Huta).

4.

The Bhuta-sacrifice, i.e. the giving of food to living

creatures (sometimes called Prahuta).

5.

The Manushya -sacrifice, i.e. the receiving of guests

with hospitality (sometimes called Bñihmya huta).*

The performance of this daily Pitṛfyay«a seems to have been extremely simple. The householder had to put his

sacred

cord

on

the

right

shoulder,

to

say

“ Svadlia to the Fathers,” and to throw the remains

of certain offerings toward the south.

The human impulse to this sacrifice, if sacrifice it can
The five "great sacrifices"

be called, is clear enough.

comprehended in early times the whole duty of man
from day to day. They were connected with his daily
meal 4 When this meal was preparing, and before he
could touch it himself, he was to offer something to the
gods, a Yaisvadeva offering, § in which the chief deities
were Agni, fire, Soma the Yi.ve Devas, Dhanvantari,
the kind of Aesculapius, Kuhu and Anumati (phases of
the moon), Prayapati, lord of creatures, Dyava-pWthivi,

Heaven and Earth, and SvislhakWt, the

fire

on the

hearth.

||

* In tlie iSTinktiayana Grikyā (I. 5) four Pfika-ya^ftas are mentioned,
called Huta, aliuta, prahuta, prusita.

f A.sv. Grihya-siitras I. 3, 10.

j

||

Manu III. 117-118.

See Des Coulanges, "Ancient City," I. 3.

§ L. c. IH. 85.

"Especially were the

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VII.

having thus satisfied the gods in the four quarters, the householder had to throw some oblations into the open air, which were intended for animals, and After

in some cases for invisible beings, ghosts

and such like.

Then he was to remember the Departed, the Pitrs, with some offerings

;

but even after having done this he was

not yet to begin his own repast, unless he had also given

something to strangers (atithis).

When all this had been fulfilled, and when, besides, the householder, as

we should say, had said his daily

what he had learned of the Yeda, then and then only was he in harmony with the world that surrounded him, the five Great Sacrifices had been performed by him, and he was free from all the sins arising from a thoughtless and selfish life. prayers, or repeated

This Pitriyaywa, as one of the five daily sacrifices, is described in the Brahmanas, the

GWhya and Samay-

meals of the family religious acts. The god [the sacred fire] presided there. He had cooked the bread and prepared the food a prayer, therefore, was due at the beginning and end of the repast. Before eating, they placed upon the altar the first fruits of the food ; before drinking, they poured out a libation of wine. This was the god's portion. No one doubted that he was present, that he ate and drank for did they not see the flame increase as if it had been nourished by the provisions offered ? Thus the meal was divided between the man and the god. It was a sacred ceremony, by which they held The religion of the sacred fire communion with each other.

dates from the distant and dim epoch when there were yet no Greeks, no Italians, no Hindus, when there were only Aryas. When the tribes separated they earned this worship with them, some to the banks of the Ganges, others to the shores of the Mediterranean. Each group chose its own gods, but all preserved as an ancient

;

;

.

.

.

.

.

.

legacy the first religion which they had known and practiced in the
common cradle of their race.

, ,

The fire in the house denoted the ancestor, or pitri, and in turn
the serpent was revered as a living fire, and so an appropriate symbol
of the First Father.
A. W.

—

Veda and vedanta.

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a&arika Sutras, and, of course, in the legal Samhitas.

Rajendralal Mitra* informs us that " orthodox Brah-

mans to this day profess to observe all these five ceremonies, but that in reality only the offerings to the gods

and manes are strictly observed, while the reading is completed by the repetition of the Gayatri only, and charity and feeding of animals are casual and uncertain."

Quite different from this simple daily ancestral offering is the

Pitmyay^a or Pi/iAi-pitmyay«a, which forms part

many of the statutable sacrifices, and, first of all, of
of

New

and Full-moon sacrifice. Here again the human motive is intelligible enough. It was the con-

the

templation of the regular course of nature, the
dis-

covery of order in the coming and going of the heavenly bodies, the

growing confidence in some ruling power of

the world which lifted man's thoughts from his daily

work to higher regions, and filled his heart with a desire to approach these higher

powers with

praise, thanks-

And it was at such moments as

giving, and offerings.

the waning of the moon that his thoughts would most naturally turn to those

whose life had waned, whose

bright faces were no longer visible on earth, his fathers

or ancestors.

Therefore at the very beginning of the

New-moon sacrifice, we are told in the Brahmaraisf and
in the Arauta-sutras, that a Pitriyayw, a sacrifice to the

Fathers, has to be performed.

A Aaru or pie had to be
prepared in the Dakshmagñi, the southern fire, and the
offerings, consisting of

were

specially

water and round cakes (pizzas),

dedicated

to

father,

grandfather,

and

great-grandfather, while the wife of the sacrificer,
* " Taittiriyaranyaka,

,
,

if

Preface, p. 23.

f Masi masi vo 'sanam iti srute/i

;

Gobliiliya CfWliya sutras, p. 1055.

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VII.

she wished for a son, was allowed to eat one of the cakes.*

Similar ancestral offerings took place during other

New and Full-moon sacrifices form the general type.

It may be quite true that these two kinds of ancestral sacrifices have the same object and share the same name, but their character is different and if, as has often been the case, they are mixed up together, we lose the most important lessons which a study of the ancient ceremonies teaches too, of which the

;

monial should teach us.

I cannot describe the difference

between these two Pitruyasnas more decisively than by pointing out that the former was performed by the father of a family, or, if we may say so, by a layman, the latter by a regular priest, or a class of priests, selected by the sacrificer to act in his behalf.

As the Hindus themselves would put it, the former is a grhya, a domestic, the latter a srauta, a priestly ceremony, f

We now come to a third class of ceremonies which are likewise domestic and personal, but which differ from the two preceding ceremonies by their occasional character, I mean the funeral, as distinct from the ancestral ceremonies.

In one respect these funeral ceremonies represent may

an earlier phase of worship than the daily and monthly ancestral sacrifices. They lead up to them,

* See Pitririyagṇa, von Dr. O. Donner, 1870.

The restriction

to three ancestors, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, occurs

in the Vāsaneyi-saṃhitā, XIX. 36-37.

There is, however, great variety in these matters, according to

Thus, according to the Gobhila-saṃhitā, the Pitririyagṇa

is to be considered as srauta, not as grhya (pitririyagṇaḥ khalv āsmau Māhātmya nasti)

while others maintain that an

f

different sakhas.

;

agnimat should perform the srnarta, a srautagnimat the srauta Pitriyagna.

see Gobhiliya Grihya-sutras, p. 671.

On page 667 we read :

anagner amavasyasraddha, nanvaharyam ity adara/uyam.

;

Veda and vedanta.
and, as

it

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were, prepare the departed for their future

dignity as Pitrs or Ancestors.

On the other hand, the

conception of Ancestors in general must have existed before any departed person could have been raised to that rank, and I therefore preferred to describe the ancestral sacrifices first.

Nor need I enter here very fully into the character of the special funeral ceremonies of India.

I described

them in a special paper, " On Sepulture and Sacrificial Customs in the Veda," nearly thirty years ago.* Their spirit is the same as that of the funeral ceremonies of Greeks, Romans, Slavonic, and Teutonic nations, and the coincidences between them all are often most surprising.

In Vedic times the people in India both burned and buried their dead, and they did this with a certain solemnity, and, after a time, according to fixed rules.

Their ideas about the status of the departed, after their

body had been burned and their ashes buried, varied considerably, but in the main they seem to have believed in a life to come, not very different from our life on earth, and in the power of the departed to confer blessings on their descendants. It soon therefore became the interest

of the survivors to secure the favor of then-

departed friends by observances and offerings which, at first,

were the spontaneous manifestation of human which soon became traditional, technical,

feelings, but

in fact, ritual.

On the day on which the corpse had been burned, the relatives (samanodakas) bathed and poured out a handful

of water to the deceased, pronouncing his name and that

* " Über Todtenbestattung und Opfergebr&uche im Veda, in Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft," vol. ix. 1856.

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of liis family.*

At sunset they returned home, and, as was but natural, they were told to cook nothing during the first night, and to observe certain rules during the next day up to ten days, according to the character of the deceased. These were days of mourning, or, as they

deceased. were afterward called, days of impurity, when the mourners withdrew from contact with the world, and shrank by a natural impulse from the ordinary occupations and pleasures of life.f

Then followed the collecting of the ashes on the 11tli, 13tli,

or 15th day of the dark half of the moon.

On

returning from thence they bathed, and then offered

what was called a Araddha to the departed.

This word Araddha, which meets us here for the first time, is full of interesting lessons, if only properly understood.

First of all it should be noted that it is absent,

not only from the hymns, but, so far as

we know at

from the ancient Brāhminas. It seems

There is a

therefore a word of a more modern origin.

passage in Apastamba's Dharmasūtras which betrays, on the part of the author, a consciousness of the more present, even

modern origin of the Araddhas

:

\

" Formerly men and gods lived together in this world. Then the gods in reward of their sacrifices went

Those men who

to heaven, but men were left behind.

perform sacrifices in the same manner as the gods did, dwelt (after death) with the gods and Brahman in heaven.

Now (seeing men left behind) Manu revealed

* Asvalayana Grihya-sutras IV. 4, 10.
•).

Manu V. 64-65.

\ Biihler,

Apastamba, " Sacred Books of tko East," vol. ii., p. 138
Though the Sraddha is prescribed in

!

also "Sraddliakalpa," p. 890.

the " Gobhiliya Grihya-sutras," IV. 4, 2-3, it is not described there,
but in a separate treatise, the Sraddha-kalpa.

ceremony which is designated by the word /S'raddha." /S'raddha has assumed many * meanings, and Manu, f for instance, uses it almost synonymously with pitrfyay^a. But its original meaning seems to have been " that which is given with sraddha or faith, i.e. charity bestowed on deserving persons, and, more particularly, on Bralithis

The gift was called sraddha, but the act itself called by the same name.

The word is best explained by Narayana in his commentary on the " Araddha is that Grfhya-sutras of Asvalayana (IV. marcas. also

was

7),

which is given in faith to Brahmans for the sake of the Fathers.

Such charitable gifts flowed most naturally and abundantly at the time of a man's death, or whenever his memory was revived by happy or unhappy events in a family, and hence £raddlia has become the general name for ever so many sacred acts commemorative of the departed.

We hear of /SVaddhas not only at funerals,

but at joyous events

also,

when presents were bestowed

in the name of the family, and therefore in the name of

the ancestors also, on all who had a right to that distinction. It is a mistake therefore to look upon Si'addhas simply

as offerings of water or cakes to the Fathers.

An offer-

* As meaning the food, sraddha occurs in sraddhabhu^r and similar

As meaning the sacrificial act, it is explained, yatraitafo Mraddhaya, diyate tad eva karma sraddhasabdabhidheyam. Pretam words.

pitrimis fca nirdisya

bhojyam yat priyam atmana h sraddhaya diyate

Mraddham parikirtitam.

" Gobhiliya Grihya-sutras," p.

yatra

tafc

892.

We also read sraddhanvita/i sraddham kurvita, "let a man perform the sraddha with faith;" "Gobhiliya

Grihya-sutras,"' p.

1053.

f

t

Manu III. 82.

Pi trill uddisya yad diyate brfihmanebhya/t sraddhaya ham.

tafc AAradd

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ing to the Fathers was, no doubt, a symbolic part of each Araddha, but its more important character was charity

bestowed in memory of the Fathers.

This, in time, gave rise to much abuse, like the alms bestowed on the Church during the Middle Ages.

But

in the beginning the motive was excellent.

It was

simply a wish to benefit others, arising from the conviction, felt more strongly in the presence of

death than at

any other time, that as we can carry nothing out of this world, we ought to do as

much good as possible in the

At Araddhas the Brah-

world with our worldly goods.

manas were said to represent the sacrificial fire into which the gifts should be thrown.* If we translate here Brahmanas by priests, we can easily understand

why there should have been in later times

But

a feeling against Araddhas.

intellectually,

is

so strong

a very

bad

The Bralnnanas were, socially

rendering of Brahma/ia.

and

priest

a class

of

men

of

high breeding.

They were a recognized and, no doubt, a most essential element in the ancient society of India.

As they lived for others, and were excluded from most of the lucrative

was a social, and it soon became a

by the

community at large. Great care was taken that the recipients of such bounty as was bestowed at Araddhas should be strangers, neither friends nor enemies, and in no way related to the family.

Thus Apastamba

says f "The food eaten (at a Araddha) by persons pursuits of

life, it

religious duty, that they should be supported

:

related to

the giver

is

a gift

offered to

reaches neither the Manes nor the Gods."

tried to curry favor

goblins.

by bestowing Araddhika gifts, was

called by an opprobrious name, a Araddha-mitra. ^

*

Apastamba II. 16, 3, Brahmanas tv fikavaniyarthe.

f L. c. p. 142.

It

A man who

t

Manu III. 138, 140.

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Without denying therefore that

25?

in later times the

system of Araddhas may have degenerated, I think we can perceive that it sprang from a pure source, and,

what for our present purpose is even more important, from an intelligible source.

Let us now return to the passage in the Grfhyasutras of Asvalayana, where we met for the first time with the

name of Araddha.*
the

the sake of

It was the Araddha to be given for

Departed, after his ashes had been

collected in an urn

This Araddha is called

and buried.

we should say,

personal.

It was

meant for one person only, not for the three ancestors, nor for all the ancestors.

Its object was in fact to raise the departed to the rank of a Pit ri, and this had to be achieved by 'Araddha offerings continued during a whole This at least is the general, and, most likely, the year.

Apastamba says that the Araddha for a original rule.

deceased relative should be performed every day during the year, and that after that a monthly Araddha only should be performed or none at all, that is, no more

ekoddishhijf or, as

personal Araddha,:): because the departed shares hence-

P ar v ana sraddhas §

Aankhayana

says the same, namely that the personal Araddha lasts

" the Fourth" is dropped, i.e.

for a year, and that then

the great-grandfather was dropped, the grandfather became the great-grandfather, the father the grandfather,

forth in the

regular

-

.

||

* " Asv. Grihya-sutras" IV. 5, 8.

" Gobhiliya

I It is described as a vikriti of tlio Parvana-sraddha in
Grihya-sutras," p. 1011.

J

One of the differences between the acts before and after the

Sapindikarana

is

noted

by Salankayana

rv/udarbliai/i pitrikriya Sapindikaranad

bhavet.

§

,

– Sapindikaranam yavad

p. 930.

" Gobhiliya Grihya-sutras," p. 1023.

,

||

" Gobhiliya Grihya-sutras,"

:

urdhvam dvigunair vidhivad

Grihya-sutras, " ed. Oldenberg, p. 83,

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while

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the lately Departed occupied the father's place
among the three principal Pit ris.*

This was called the

Sapmt/ikarana, i.e. the elevating of the departed to the
rank of an ancestor.

There

are

here,

elsewhere,

as

many

exceptions.

months instead of a year, or even
a Tripaksha, f i.e. three half-months
and lastly, any
auspicious event (vr/ddlii) may become the occasion of
Gobhila allows

six

;

the SapmcZikarawa. %

The full number of /S'raddhas necessary for the Sapiwna is sometimes given as
sixteen, viz., the first, then

<Za:

one in each of the twelve months, then two semestral
ones, and lastly the Sapin<Zana.

But here too much
variety is allowed, though, if the SapmtZana takes place

before the end of the year,

the

number

of

sixteen

/S'raddhas has still to be made up.§

When the /Sraddha is offered on account of an auspicious event, such as a birth or a marriage, the fathers

invoked are not the father,

grandfather,

and great-

grandfather, who are sometimes called asrumukha, with tearful faces, but the ancestors before them, and they

are called nandimukha, or joyful, f

Colebrooke, T to whom we owe an excellent description of what a /Sraddha is in modern times, took evi" The first set of funeral ceremonies is evidently the same view.

" is adapted to effect, by means of monies," he writes, tion of

*

A pratyabdikam ekoddishli/am on the anniversary of the deceased

is mentioned by Gobkiliya,

f

1.

c.

p. 1011.

" Gobkiliya Grihya-sutras, " p. 1039.

J "iS'ankh. Grihya,"p. 83

;

" Gobk. Grihya,"p. 1024.

According to

some authorities the ekoddish/a is called nava, new, during ten days and purana, old, afterward.

navamisra, mixed, for six months

"Gobkiliya Grihya-sutras, " p. 1020.

;

;

§

" Gobkiliya," 1. c. p. 1032.

" Life and Essays," ii, p. 195,

fl

" Gobkiliya," 1. c. p. 1047,

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oblations, the re-embodiment of the soul of the deceased,
after burning his
second set
is
corpse.

The apparent scope of
to raise his shade
the
from this world, where

would else, according to the notions of the Hindus,
among demons and evil spirits, up to
heaven, and then deify him, as it were, among the
manes of departed ancestors. For this end, a Araddha
should regularly be offered to the deceased on the day
twelve other xSVaddhas
after the mourning expires
singly to the deceased in twelve successive months
similar obsequies at the end of the third fortnight, and
and the
also in the sixth month, and in the twelfth
oblation called Sapindana on the first anniversary of his
decease.* At this SapiwZana xSraddha, which is the last
it

continue to roam

;

;

;

of

ekoddish^a

the

offered to the

sraddhas,

four funeral cakes

consecrated to the deceased being divided into
portions and

are

deceased and his three ancestors, that

mixed with the other three

cakes.

three

The

portion retained is often offered to the deceased, and the act of union and fellowship becomes complete.

When this system of xSraddhas had once been started, it seems to have spread very rapidly.

We soon hear of

the monthly Araddlia, not only in memory of one person

but as part of the Pit/'«yay«a, and

as

obligatory, not only on householders (agnimat), but

on

lately deceased,

* Colebrooke adds that in most provinces the periods for these sixteen ceremonies, and for the concluding obsequies entitled Sapindana, are anticipated, and the whole third day

;

is

completed on the second or

after which they are again performed at the proper times,

but in honor of the whole set of progenitors instead of the deceased singly.

It is this which Dr. Donner, in his learned paper on the " Pindapitriyajfta" (p. 11), takes as the general rule.

f

See this subject most exhaustively treated, particularly in

bearings on the law of

inheritance,

" Tagore Law Lectures for 1880," p. 93,

in

its

Rajkumar Sarvadhikari's

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also, and, not only on the three upper
but even, without hymns, on Andrus,* and as to
he performed, not only on the day of New-Moon, but
on other days also,f whenever there was an opportunity.

other persons

castes,

Gobhila seems to look upon the Pinr/apitr fyayAi as itself
and the commentator holds that, even if
Araddha
there are no piwf/as or cakes, the Brahmans ought still
This Sraddha, however, is distinguished
to be fed.
a

,

from the other, the true Sraddha, called Anvaliarya,
which follows it,§ and which is properly known by the
name of Parvawa /Sraddha.
The same difficulties which confront us when we try
to form a clear conception of the character of the various
ancestral ceremonies, were felt by the Brahmans themselves, as may be seen from the
long discussions in the
commentary on the Araddha-kalpa and from the abusive
language used by Aandrakanta Tarkalankara against
Raghunandana. The question with them assumes the
form of what is pradhana (primary) and what is ariga
(secondary) in these sacrifices, and the final result arrived
||

at is that sometimes the offering of cakes is pradhana, as

in the Pm^apitWyagwa, sometimes the feeding of Brah-

mans only, as in the Ritya-sraddha, sometimes both, as
in the SapmAkarami.

We may safely say, therefore, that not a day passed in
the

life of

the ancient people of India on which they

* " Gobkiliya Grikya-sutras," p. 892.
t

See p. 666, and p. 1008.

f

L. c. p. 897.

Grikyakara/t piadapitriyajnasya sradd-

katvam aka.

But the commentators add

§ Gokkila IV. 4, 3, itarad anvakaryam.

anagner amavasyasraddkam, nanvakaryam. According to Gokkila
tkere ought to be the Vaisvadeva offering and the Bali offering at the
end of each Parvana-sraddha ; see "Gokkiliya Grikyasutras," p.
1005, but no Vaisvadeva at an ekoddish/a sraddha, l. c. p. 1020.

" Nirnayasindhu," p. 270,

L. c. pp. 1005-1010

|

;

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were not reminded of their ancestors, both near and distant, and showed their respect for them, partly by symbolic offerings to the Manes, partly by charitable These gifts to deserving persons, chiefly Brahmins. offertories varied from the simplest, such as milk and fruits,

to the costliest, such as

feasts

given to those

gold and jewels.

The

who were invited to officiate or

assist at a Araddha seem in some cases to have been very sumptuous,* and what is very important, the eating of meat, which in later times was strictly forbidden in many sects, must, when the Sutras were written, have been fully recognized at these feasts, even to the killing and eating of a cow.f

This shows that these Araddhas, though possibly of later date than the Pit/'iyay^as, belong nevertheless to a very early phase of Indian life. And though much may have been changed in the outward form of these ancient ancestral sacrifices, their original solemn character has remained unchanged. Even at present, when the wor-

ship of the ancient Devas is ridiculed by many who still

take part in

it,

the worship of the ancestors and the

offering of Araddhas have maintained much of their old

They have sometimes been compared
" communion" in the Christian Church, and it is

sacred character.
to the

certainly true that

many natives speak of their funeral

and ancestral ceremonies with a hushed voice and with real reverence.

They alone seem still to impart to their
life on earth a deeper significance and a higher prospect.
I could go even a step further and express my belief,
* See Burnell, " The Law of Partition," p. 31.

Kalau tavad gavalambho mamsadanam fca sraddhe nishiddhani,
Gobhilena tu madhyamashiakaySim vastukarmani fca gavalambho
Gobliiliya Grihya-sutra.
vihitafc, m&msafcaros fcanvashiakyasraddlie
ed. " Aandrakanta Tarkalankara, Vignapti," p. 8.
•(
;

m

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VII.

that the absence of such services for the dead and of

commemorations is a real loss in our own
Almost every religion recognizes them as

ancestral
religion.

tokens of a loving

memory offered to

a father, to a

many counmother, or even to a child, and though
tries they may have proved a source of superstition,
in

there runs through them all a deep well of living human

ought never to be allowed to perish. The
Church had to sanction the ancient
prayers for the Souls of the Departed, and in more
southern countries the services on All Saints' and on
faith that

early

Christian

All Souls'

Day continue

to satisfy

a

craving of the

human heart which must be satisfied in every religion.*

We, in the North, shrink from these open manifestations of grief, but our hearts
know often a deeper bitter-

ness ; nay, there would seem to be a higher truth than

we at first imagine in the belief of the ancients that the
no rest, unless they
by daily prayers, or, better still, by daily
acts of goodness in remembrance of them.f

souls of our beloved ones leave us

are appeased

* It may be seriously doubted whether prayers to the dead or for the dead satisfy any craving of the

human heart. With us in " the

North," a shrinking from " open manifestations of grief" has nothing

Those who refuse to engage in
whatever to do with the matter.

such worship believe and teach that the dead are not gods and cannot be helped by our prayers. Reason, not feeling, prevents such worship.

f

Am. Pubs.

A deeper idea than affection inspired this custom.

man was always such, living or dead

;

Every kinsand hence the service of the

dead was sacred and essential. The Sraddhas were adopted as the performance of such offices. There were twelve forms of this service

1. The daily offering to ancestors.

2. The sraddha for a person lately

deceased, and not yet included with the pitris. 3. The sraddha

:

4. The offering made on occasions of

The sraddha performed when the recently-departed has

been incorporated among the Pitris. 6. The sraddha performed on a

offered for a specific object.

rejoicing.

5.

But there is still another Beyond that found expression
Besides the Devas or
Gods, and besides the Pitre's or Fathers, there was a
third world, without which the ancient religion of India
could not have become what we see it in the Yeda.
That third Beyond was what the poets of the Yeda call
the Ii t a, and which I believe meant originally no more
than "the straight line." It is applied to the straight
in the ancient religion of India.

line of the sun in its daily course, to the straight line
followed by day and night, to the straight line that
regulates the seasons, to the straight line which, in spite
of

many momentary deviations, was discovered to run
through the whole realm of nature.

We call that TYta,

that straight, direct, or right line, when

we apply it in

a more general sense, the Law of Nature ; and when we

apply it to the moral world, we try to express the same

by speaking of the Moral Laio, the law on
which our life is founded, the eternal Law of Right and
Reason, or, it may be, " that which makes for righteousness" both within us and
without.*

And thus, as a thoughtful look on nature led to the
first perception of bright gods, and in the end of a God
of light, as love of our parents was transfigured into
idea again

parvan-day, i.e., new moon, the eighth

day, fourteenth day, and

The sraddha performed in a house of assembly for the
benefit of learned men. 8. Expiatory. 9. Part of some other ceremony. 10. Offered
for the sake of the Devas.

11. Performed before going on a journey.

12. Sraddha for the sake of wealth.

The

sraddhas may be performed in one's own house, or in some secluded
and pure place. The number performed each year by those who can
afford it varies considerably but ninety-six appears to be the more
common. The most fervent are the twelve new-moon rites four
Vuga and fourteen Manu rites twelve corresponding to the passages
of the sun into the zodiacal mansions, etc.— A. W.

* See "Hibbert Lectures," new ed. pp. 243-255.
full moon.

7.

;

;

;

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piety and a belief in immortality, a recognition of the straight lines in the

world without, and in the world

within, was raised into the highest faith, a faith in a law that underlies everything, a law in which we may trust,

whatever befall, a law which speaks within us with the divine voice of conscience, and tells us "this is Wta, '

" this is right," " this is true," whatever the statutes of our ancestors, or even the voices of our bright gods, may say to the contrary.*

These three Beyonds

are the

three revelations

of

antiquity ; and it is due almost entirely to the discovery

of the Yeda that we, in this nineteenth century of ours, have been allowed to watch again these early phases of thought and religion, which had passed away long before the beginnings of other literatures, f In the Yeda an ancient city has been laid bare before our eyes which, in the history of all other religions, is filled up with rubbish, and built over by new architects.

Some of the

earliest and most instructive scenes of our distant childhood have risen once more above the horizon of our

* The same concept

is

found in the Platonio Dialogue between

The philosopher asks the diviner to tell

what is holy and what impiety. " That which is pleasing to the gods is holy, and that which is not pleasing to them is impious" promptly

" Is the

replies the mantis, " To be holy is to be just," said Sokrates

thing holy because they love it, or do they love it because it is holy ?"

Enthyphron hurried away in alarm. He had acknowledged unwittingly that holiness or justice was supreme above all gods

and this

highest concept, this highest faith, he dared not entertain. A. W.

f In Chinese we find that the same three aspects of religion and

their intimate relationship were recognized, as, for instance, when
Honor the sky (worship of
Confucius says to the Prince of Sung
Devas), reverence the Manes (worship of Pitris)
if you do this, sun
and moon will keep their appointed time (Kita)." Happel, " AltchiSokrates and
Euthyphron.

;

;

—

*

,

:

;

nesische Heichsreligion, " p. 11.

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2G5

memory which, until thirty or forty years ago, seemed to have vanished forever.

Only a few words more to indicate at least how this religious growth in India contained at the same time the germs of Indian philosophy. Philosophy in India is, what it ought to be, not the denial, but the fulfilment of religion

name

;

it

is

the highest religion, and the oldest

of the oldest system of philosophy in

Y edanta, that

is,

India

is

the end, the goal, the highest object

of the Veda.

Let us return once more to that ancient theologian who lived in the fifth century b.o., and who told us that, even

before his time,

all

the gods had been discovered to he

but three gods, the gods of the Earth the gods of the

,

Air and the gods of the Sky invoked under various names.

The same writer tells us that in reality there is but one God, but he does not call him the Lord, or the

,

,

Highest God, the Creator, Ruler, and Preserver of

things, but he calls him

Atman, the Self.

all

The one

Atman or Self, he says, is praised in many ways owing to the greatness of the godhead.
to say

And then he goes on

“ The other gods are but so many members of

:

the one Atman, Self, and thus

it

has been said that the

poets compose their praises according to the multiplicity of the natures of the beings whom they praise.”
It is true, no doubt, that this

is

the language of a

philosophical theologian, not of an ancient poet.

Yet

these philosophical reflections belong to the fifth century

before our era, if not to an earlier date
and the first
germs of such thoughts may be discovered in some of
the Vedic hymns also.

I have quoted already from the

;

hymns such

*

passages as *

– They speak of Mitra,

Kig-Veda I. 164, 46; “ Hibbert Lectures,” p. 311.

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Varuna, Agni then he is the heavenly bird Garutmat
that which is and is one the poets call in various ways ;
they speak of Yama, Agni, Matarisvan."
In another hymn, in which the sun is likened to a
;

bird, we read

:

" Wise poets represent by their words
the bird who is one, in many ways."*

All this is still tinged with mythology

;

but there are

other passages from which a purer light beams upon us,
as when one poet asks : f

" Who saw him when he was first born, when he who
has no bones bore him who has bones ?

Where was the

breath, the blood, the Self of the world ?

Who went to

ask this from any that knew it ?"

Here, too, the expression is still helpless, but though

weak, the

very willing.

The ex-

the flesh

is

pression,

" He who has bones" is meant for that which

spirit is

has assumed consistency and form, the Visible, as op-

posed to that which has no bones, no body, no form, the

and self of the world "

are but so many attempts at finding names and concepts
for what is by necessity inconceivable, and therefore
unnamable.

In the second period of Yedic literature, in the so-called Brahmanas, and more
particularly in what is
called the Upanisliads, or the Vedanta portion, these
thoughts advance to perfect clearness and definiteness.
Here the development of religious thought, which took
Invisible, while " breath, blood,

its

beginning in the hymns, attains to

its

fulfilment.

The circle becomes complete. Instead of comprehending the One by many names, the
many names are now
comprehended to be the One. The old names are

*

* Rig- Veda X. 114,5 ;

f Rig- Veda I. 164, 4.

" Hibbert Lectures," p. 313.

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openly discarded even such titles as Prayapati, lord of
creatures, Visvakarman, maker of all things, Dhat/'f,
;

creator,

used

is

The name now
are put aside as inadequate.
an expression of nothing but the purest and

—it is Atman, the Self, far more
Ego — the Self of all things, the Self of

highest subjectiveness
abstract than our
all

the old mythological gods

—for they were not mere

names, but names intended for something
Self in

which each

individual self

—

lastly,

the

must find rest, must

come to himself, must find his own true Self.
You may remember that I spoke to you in my first
boy who insisted on being sacrificed by his
he came to Yama, the ruler of
the departed, was granted three boons, and who then
lecture of a

father, and who, when

requested, as his third boon, that

Yama should tell him

what became of man after death.

That dialogue forms
part of one of the Upanishads, it belongs to the Vedanta,
the
Veda.
end
of
Veda, the
the
highest aim of the
I shall read you a few extracts from it.

Yama, the King of the Departed, says
" Men who are fools, dwelling in ignorance, though
wise in their own sight, and puffed up with vain
:

knowledge, go round and round, staggering to and fro,
like blind led by the blind.

" The future never rises before the eyes of the careless child,
deluded by the delusions of wealth.
This is
there is no other
thus he falls

the world, he thinks

;

;

again and again under my sway (the sway of death).

" The wise, who by means of meditating on his Self,
recognizes the Old (the old man within) who

is

difficult

to see, who has entered into darkness, who is hidden in
the cave,

who dwells in the abyss, as God, he indeed

leaves joy and sorrow far behind.

" That Self, the Knower, is not born, it dies not

;

it

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came from nothing, it never became anything. The
Old man is unborn, from everlasting to everlasting he
is not killed, though the body be killed.

" That Self is smaller than small, greater than great
;

A

hidden in the heart of the creature.
man who has no
more desires and no more griefs, sees the majesty of the
Self by the grace of the creator.

" Though

sitting still, he walks far
though lying
down, he goes everywhere. Who save myself is able to
know that God, who rejoices, and rejoices not ?

" That Self cannot be gained by the Yeda nor by
the understanding, nor by much learning.

He whom
the Self chooses, by him alone the Self can be gained.

" The Self chooses him as his own. But he who has
not first turned away from his wickedness, who is not
calm and subdued, or whose mind is not at rest, he can
never obtain the Self, even by knowledge.

" No mortal lives by the breath that goes up and by
We live by another, in
the breath that goes down.

;

;

whom both repose.

" Well then, I shall tell thee this mystery, the eternal

word (Brahman), and what happens to the Self, after
reaching death.

Some are born again, as living beings,

others enter

and stones, according to their work, and
according to their knowledge.

" But he, the Highest Person, who wakes in us while
we are asleep, shaping one lovely sight after another,
he indeed is called the Light, he is called Brahman, he

All worlds are founded
alone is called the Immortal.
on it, and no one goes beyond.
This is that.

u As* the one fire, after it has entered the world,
into

stocks

though one,

becomes

burns, thus the

different

One Self

according to wha.t

within

all

things,

it

becomes

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different, according to

whatever

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enters, but

it

it

exists

also apart.

" As the sun, the eye of the world,

not con-

is

taminated by the external impurities seen by the eye,
thus the One Self within all things is never contaminated

by the sufferings of the world, being himself apart.

" There is one eternal thinker, thinking non-eternal
thoughts he, though one, fulfils the desires of many.
The wise who perceive Him within their Self, to them
;

belongs eternal life, eternal peace.*

" Whatever there is, the whole world, when gone

That

forth (from Brahman), trembles in his breath.

Brahman is a great terror, like a drawn sword. Those
who know it, become immortal.

" He (Brahman) cannot be reached by speech, by

mind, or by the eye. He cannot be apprehended, except by him who says, he is.

" When all desires that dwell in the heart cease, then
the mortal becomes immortal, and obtains Brahman.

" When all the fetters of the heart here on earth are
broken, when

all

that binds us to this life

then the mortal becomes immortal
ends.

is

undone,

— here my teaching

, ,

This is what is called Yedanta, the Yeda-end, the end
of the Yeda, and this is the religion or the philosophy,

whichever you

like to call

about 500

to the present

b.c.

it,

that has lived on

day.

from

If the people of

India can be said to have now any system of religion at

—apart from their ancestral sacrifices and their Yrad-

all-

—

and apart from mere caste-observances it is to
be found in the Yedanta philosophy, the leading tenets
dhas,

f'

* To <5? ippdvj/iua 7ov
Sesame," p. 63.

Kvevy.aroQ far)

nal

elprjvr).

See also Buskin,

LECTURE

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VII.

of which are known to

some extent in every village.*

That great revival of religion, which was inaugurated some fifty years ago by Ram-Mohun Roy, and is now known as the Brahma-Samay, under the leadership of my noble friend Keshub Chunder Sen, was chiefly founded on the Upanishads, and was Vedantic in spirit. There is, in fact, an unbroken continuity between the most modern and the most ancient phases of Hindu thought, extending over more than three thousand years.

To the present day

India

acknowledges no higher

authority in matters of religion,

ceremonial,

and law than the Veda, and so long

customs,

as India is India,

nothing will extinguish that ancient spirit of Vedantism breathed by every Hindu from his earliest and pervades in various forms the prayers even of the idolater, the speculations of the philosopher, and

which

is

youth,

the proverbs of the beggar.

—

For purely practical reasons therefore I mean for the very practical object of knowing something of the secret springs which determine the character, the thoughts and deeds of the lowest as well as of the highest among the

people in India

—an acquaintance with their

religion,

which is founded on the Yeda, and with their philosophy, which is founded on the Yedanta, is highly desirable.
It is easy to make

light of this, and to ask, as some
even in Europe, What has rehave
asked,
statesmen

In
ligion, or what has philosophy, to do with politics ?
India, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, and
notwithstanding the indifference on religious matters so

4

often paraded before the world by the Indians themselves, religion, and philosophy
too, are great powers

* Major Jacob, " Manual of Hindu Pantheism," Preface,

VEDA AND VEDANTA.

still.

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Read the account that has lately been published
two first-

of two native statesmen, the administrators of
class

SaurashAa, Junagadh, and Bhavnagar,

states in

Gokulaji and Gaurisankara,* and you will see whether
the Vedanta

still

is

power in

a moral and a political

India or not.

But I claim even more for the Vedanta, and I recom-
mend

its

study,

not

only to the candidates for the

Indian Civil Service, but to
ophy.

all

true students of philos-

It will bring before them a view of life, different

from all other view's of life which are placed before us
in the History of Philosophy.

You saw how behind all
the Devas or gods, the authors of the ITpanishads discovered the
icated

Atman or Self.

Of that

things only, that

three

and that it
were negative

enjoys eternal
:

it

bliss.

it is not this, it is

is,

Self they pred-

that

it

perceives,

All other predicates
not that

—

it is

beyond

anything that we can conceive or name.

But that Self, that Highest Self, the Paramatman,

* " Life and Letters of Gokulaji Sampattirama Zala and his views
of the Vedanta, by Manassukharama Suryarama Tripa/Ai."

Bombay,

1881.

As a young man Gokulaji, the son of a good family, learned Persian
and Sanskrit. His chief interest in life, in the midst of a most sucA little
insight, we are

cessful political career, was the "Vedanta."

told, into this knowledge turned his heart to higher objects, promising him freedom
from grief, and blessedness, the highest aim of all.

This was the turning-point of his inner life. When the celebrated
Vedanti anchorite, Rama Bava, visited Junagadh, Gokulaji became his
pupil. When another anchorite, Paramahansa Sa/cAidananda, passed
through Junagadh on a pilgrimage to Girnar, Gokulaji was regularly
initiated in the secrets of the Vedanta.

He soon became highly proficient in it, and through the whole course of his life,
whether in

power or in disgrace, his belief in the doctrines of the Vedanta supported him, and
made him, in the opinion of English statesmen, the

model of what a native statesman ought to be.

LECTURE

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VII.

could be discovered after a severe moral and intellectual

and those who had not yet discovered it
were allowed to worship lower gods, and to employ
discipline only,

poetical names to satisfy their human wants.
Those who knew the other gods to be but names or

more

'personae or masks, in the true sense of the

persons

word

—

pratikas,

as

they

call

them

in Sanskrit

—knew

also that those who

worshipped these names or persons,
worshipped in truth the Highest Self, though ignorantly.
This is a most characteristic feature in the religious
Even in the Bhagavadgita, a rather
history of India.

popular and exoteric exposition of Vedantic doctrines,
the Supreme Lord or Bhagavat himself is introduced as
saying " Even those who worship idols, worship me." *
But that was not all. As behind the names of Agni,
Indra, and Prayapati, and behind all the mythology of
:

nature, the ancient sages of India

had discovered the

Atman— let us call it the objective Self — they perceived
also behind the veil of the body, behind the senses, behind

the mind, and behind our reason (in fact behind the my* Professor Kuenen discovers a similar idea in the -words placed in the mouth of Jehovah by the prophet Malachi, i. 14 " For I am a great King, and my name is feared among the heathen." " The ref:

erence," he says, " is distinctly to the adoration already offered to

Yahweh by the people, whenever they serve their own gods with true reverence and honest zeal. * Even in Deuteronomy the adoration of these other gods by the nations is represented as a dispensation of Yahweh. Malachi goes a step further, and accepts their worship as a tribute which in reality falls to Yahweh to Him, the Only True. Thus the opposition between Yahweh and the other gods, and afterward between the one true God and the imaginary gods, makes room

—

here for*the still higher conception that the adoration of Yahweh is " Hibbert Lectures," p. the essence and the truth of all religion." 181

.

* There is, we believe, not the slightest authority for reading Malachi in this way ;

any reader of the Old Testament is competent to judge for himself.— Am. Pubs.

YEDA AND VEDANTA.
thology of the soul, which

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we often call psychology),
another Atman, or the subjective Self.

That Self too
was to be discovered by a severe moral and intellectual
discipline only, and those who wished to find it, who
wished to know, not themselves, but their Self, had to
cut far deeper than the senses, or the mind, or the
All these too were Devas,
reason, or the ordinary Ego.
bright apparitions mere names yet names meant for
something.
Much that was most dear, that had seemed
for a time their very self, had to be surrendered, before
they could find the Self of Selves, the Old Man, the

—

—

Looker-on, a subject independent of all personality, an
existence independent of all life.

When that point had been reached, then the highest
knowledge began to dawn, the Self within (the Pratyagatman) was drawn toward the
Highest Self (the Paramatman), it found its true self in the Highest Self, and
the oneness of the subjective with the

was recognized as underlying

dream of religion

—

all

objective Self

reality,

as

the

dim

as the pure light of philosophy.

This fundamental idea is worked out with systematic
completeness in the Vedanta philosophy, and no one

who can appreciate the lessons contained in Berkeley's
philosophy, will read the Upanishads and the Bralima-

and their commentaries without feeling a richer
and a wiser man.

I admit that it requires patience, discrimination, and
a certain amount of self-denial before we can discover
the grains of solid gold in the dark mines of Eastern
philosophy.

It is far easier and far more amusing for
shallow critics to point out what is absurd and ridiculous
in the religion and philosophy of the ancient world than
for the earnest student to discover truth and wisdom
under strange disguises. Some progress, however, has
sutras,

LECTURE

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YII.

been made, even during the short span of life that we can remember.

The Sacred Books of the East are no longer a mere butt for the invectives of missionaries or the sarcasms of philosophers. They have at last been rec-

ognized as historical documents, ay, as the most ancient documents in the history of the human mind, and as palaeontological records of an evolution that begins to elicit wider and deeper sympathies than the nebular formation of the planet on which we dwell for a season,

or the organic development of that chrysalis which we call man.

you think that I exaggerate, let me read you

If

in

conclusion what one of the greatest philosophical critics*

– and certainly not a man given to admiring the thoughts of others

– says of the Vedanta, and more particularly of

Schopenhauer writes

“ In the whole world there is no study so beneficial

the Upanishads.

:

and so elevating as that of the Upanishads.
the solace of my life

I

It has been

– will be the solace of my death.”
it

have thus tried, so far

as

it

was possible in one

course of lectures, to give you some idea of ancient India, of

of

its

its

ancient literature, and, more particularly,
ancient religion.

My object was, not merely to

names and facts before you, these you can find in many published books, but, if possible, to make you see

place

and feel the general human interests that are involved in
* The author's enthusiasm has carried him beyond bounds.

The
weight to be given to Schopenhauer's opinion touching any religious
"The subject may be measured by the following quotation
:

piest moment of life is the completest forgetfulness of self in sleep,

and the wretchedest is the most wakeful and conscious." Am. Pubs.
"Sacred Books of the East," vol. i, "The Upanishads," translated by M. M. Introduction, p. lxi.
;

VEDA AND VEDANTA.

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that ancient chapter of the history of the human race.
I wished that the Veda

and its religion and philosophy

should not only seem to you curious or strange, hut that

you should feel that there was in them something that
concerns ourselves, something of our

own intellectual

growth, some recollections, as it were, of our own childhood, or at least of the
childhood of our

own race.

I

feel convinced that, placed as we are here in this life, we
have lessons to learn from the Veda, quite as important
as the lessons we learn at school from Homer and Virgil,
and lessons from the Vedanta quite as instructive as the

systems of Plato or Spinoza.

I do not mean to say that everybody who wishes to
know how the human race came to be what it is, how
language came to be what it is, how religion came to be
what it is, how manners, customs, laws, and forms of
government came to be what they are, how we ourselves
came to be what we are, must learn Sanskrit, and must

study Vedic Sanskrit.

But

I

do believe that not

to

know what a study of Sanskrit, and particularly a study
of the

Veda, has already done

for

illuminating the

darkest passages in the history of the

human mind, of

that mind on which we ourselves are feeding and living,
is
a misfortune, or, at all events, a loss, just as I should
count
it
a
loss
to
have passed through
knowing something, however
little,
of
life
without
the geological
formation of the earth, or of the sun, and the moon, and
the stars
—and of the thought, or the
that govern their movements.
will, or
the law,

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