enter into an alliance with Sugrîva, king of the monkeys ; and, with the assistance of the monkey-general Hanumân, and Râvana’s own brother Vibhîshana, they prepare to assault Lankâ. (V.) The monkeys, tearing up rocks and trees, construct a passage across the straits— the so-called Adam’s Bridge, still designated Rama’s Bridge in India. (VI.) Having crossed over with his allies, Rama, after many hot encounters and miraculous deeds, slays the demon and captures the stronghold ; whereupon he places Vibhishana on the throne of Lanka. To allay Rama’s misgivings as to any taint she might have incurred through contact with the demon, Sita now undergoes an ordeal by fire ; after which they return to Ayodhya, where, after a triumphal entry, Rama is installed. (VII.) In the last book—probably a later addition—Rama, seeing that the people are not yet satisfied of Sita’s purity, resolves to put her away ; whereupon, in the forest, she falls in with Valiniki himself, and at his hermitage gives birth to two sons. While growing up there, they are taught by the sage the use of the bow, as well as the Vedas, and the Ramayana as far as the capture of Lanka and the royal entry into Ayodhya. Ultimately Rama discovers and recognizes them by their wonderful deeds and their likeness to himself, and takes his wife and sons back with him.

The *Mahâbhârata, @@1 i.e.,* “ the great (poem or feud) of the Bharatas,” on the other hand, is not so much a uni­form epic poem as a miscellaneous collection of epic poetry, consisting of a heterogeneous mass of legendary and didactic matter, worked into and round a central heroic narrative. The authorship of this work is aptly attributed to Vyasa, “the arranger,” the personification of Indian diaskeuasis. Only the bare outline of the leading story can here be given.

In the royal line of Hastinapura (the ancient Delhi)—claiming descent from the moon, and hence called the Lunar race (somavamsa), and counting among its ancestors King Bharata, after whom India is called Bharata-varsha (land of the Bharatas)—the succession lay between two brothers, when Dhritarashtra, the elder, being blind, had to make way for his brother Pandii. After a time the latter retired to the forest to pass the remainder of his life in hunting ; and Dhritarashtra assumed the government, assisted by his uncle Bhishma, the Nestor of the poem. After some years Pandu died, leaving five sons, viz., Yudhishthira. Bhîma, and Arjuna by his chief wife Kunti, and the twins Nakula and Sahadeva by Madrî. The latter having burnt herself along with her dead husband, Kunti returned with the five princes to Hastinapura, and was well received by the king, who offered to have his nephews brought up together with his own sons, of whom he had a hundred, Duryodhana being the eldest. From their great-grandfather Kuril both families are called *Kauravas* ; but for distinction that name is more usually applied to the sons of Dhritarashtra, while their cousins, as the younger line, are named, after their father, *Pândavas.* The rivalry and varying fortunes of these two houses form the main plot of the great epopee. The Pându princes soon proved themselves greatly superior to their cousins ; and Yudhishthira, the eldest of them all, was to be appointed heir-apparent. But, by his son’s advice, the king, good-natured but weak, induced his nephews for a time to retire from court and reside at a house where the unscrupulous Duryodhana meant to destroy them. They escaped, however, and passed some time in the forest with their mother. Here Draupadi, daughter of King Drupada, won by Arjuna in open contest, became the wife of the five brothers. On that occasion they also met their cousin, Kunti’s nephew, the famous Yâdava prince Krishna of Dvârakâ, who ever afterwards remained their faithful friend and confidential adviser. Dhrita­râshtra now resolved to divide the kingdom between the two houses ; whereupon the Pândavas built for themselves the city of Indraprastha (on the site of the modern Delhi). After a time of great prosperity, Yudhishthira, in a game of dice, lost everything to Duryodhana, when it was settled that the Pandavas should retire to the forest for twelve years, but should afterwards be restored to their kingdom if they succeeded in passing an additional year in disguise, without being recognized by anyone. During their forest-life they met with many adventures, among which may be mentioned their encounter with King Jayadratlia of Chedi, who had carried off Draupadi from their hermitage. After the twelfth year has expired they leave the forest, and, assuming various disguises, take service at the court of king Virata of Matsya. Here all goes well for a time till the queen’s brother Kichaka, a great warrior and commander of the royal forces, falls in love with

Draupadi, and is slain by Bhima. The Kauravas, profiting by Kichaka’s death, now invade the Matsyan kingdom, when the Pandavas side with king Virata, and there ensues, on the field of Kurukshetra, a series of fierce battles, ending in the annihilation of the Kauravas. Yudhishthira now at last becomes yuva-raja, and eventually king,—Dhritarashtra having resigned and retired with his wife and Kunti to the forest, where they soon after perish in a conflagration. Learning also the death of Krishna, Yudhishthira himself at last becomes tired of life and resigns his crown; and the five princes, with their faithful wife, and a dog that joins them, set out for Mount Meru, to seek admission to Indra’s heaven. Οn the way one by one drops off, till Yudhishthira alone, with the dog, reaches the gate of heaven; but, the dog being refused admittance, the king declines entering without him, when the dog turns out to be no other than the god of Justice himself, having assumed that form to test Yudhishtliira’s constancy. But, finding neither his wife nor his brothers in heaven, and being told that they are in the nether world to expiate their sins, the king insists on sharing their fate, when this, too, proves a trial, and they are all reunited to enjoy perpetual bliss.

Whether this story is partly based, as Lassen sug­gested, on historical events,—perhaps a destructive war between the neighbouring tribes of the Kurus and Pau- châlas,—or whether, as Dr A. Holtzmann thinks, its prin­cipal features go back to Indo-Germanic times, will pro­bably never be decided. The complete work consists of upwards of 100,000 couplets,—its contents thus being nearly eight times the bulk of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* com­bined. It is divided into eighteen books, and a supple­ment, entitled Harivamsa, or genealogy of the god Hari (Krishna-Vishnu). In the introduction, Vyasa, being about to dictate the poem, is made to say (i. 81) that so far he and some of his disciples knew 8800 couplets; and further on (i. 101) he is said to have composed the collection relating to the Bharatas (bharata-samhita), and called the *Bharatam,,* which, not including the episodes, consisted of 21,000 ślokas. Now, as a matter of fact, the portion relating to the feud of the rival houses constitutes somewhere between a fourth and a fifth of the work; and it is highly probable that this portion once formed a separate poem, called the *Bhârata.* But, whether the former statement is to be understood as implying the existence, at a still earlier time, of a yet shorter version of about one-third of the present extent of the leading narra­tive cannot now be determined. While some of the episodes are so loosely connected with the story as to be readily severed from it, others are so closely interwoven with it that their removal would seriously injure the very texture of the work. This, however, only shows that the original poem must have undergone some kind of revision, or perhaps repeated revisions. That such has indeed taken place, at the hand of Brahmans, for sectarian and caste purposes, cannot be doubted.

The earliest direct information regarding the existence of epic poetry in India is contained in a passage of Dion Chrysostom (c. 80 a.d.), according to which “even among the Indians, they say, Homer’s poetry is sung, having been translated by them into their own dialect and tongue; ” and “ the Indians are well acquainted with the sufferings of Priam, the lamentations and wails of Andro­mache and Hecuba, and the prowess of Achilles and Hector.” Now, although these allusions would suit either poem, they seem on the whole to correspond best to certain incidents in the *Mahâbhârata,* especially as no direct mention is made of a warlike expedition to a remote island for the rescue of an abducted woman, the resem­blance of which to the Trojan expedition would naturally have struck a Greek becoming acquainted with the general outline of the *Râmâyana.* Whence Dion derived his information is not known; but as many leading names of the Mahabharata and even the name of the poem itself @@2 are already mentioned in Panini’s grammatical rules, it is

@@@1 There are several complete editions published in India, the handiest in 4 vols., Calcutta, 1834-9. Numerous episodes from it have been printed and translated by European scholars. There is a French translation, by H. Fauche, of about one half of the work ; but it must be used with caution. An English translation is being brought out at Calcutta by Pratap Chundra Roy.

@@@2 Viz., as an adj., apparently with “ war ” or “poem ” understood.