

the specious ground that the passage in the Pancatantra, as it stands now, might be an interpolation. Bentley's objection seems to me utterly nugatory, and, well analysed, amounts to this, that the interpolation of passages is a physical possibility, which is true enough, but of no use in argument. It is not enough to say that a passage may be an interpolation; any passage in any book, which is in disagreeable conflict with one's crotchets, may then be called an interpolation. One has to give at least plausible arguments that there is something suspicious about it. Bentley has failed to do so, and wisely, for the passage in the Pancatantra has nothing suspicious about it. If one wishes to be sceptical, one had better doubt the whole story about the translation into Pehlevi by the command of Shah Nushirván. It is many degrees less improbable that a poet, like Firdúsi, invents or modifies a story than that an appropriate, almost necessary, passage is to be held spurious.* In short, I think Colebrooke was perfectly right in placing the composition of the Pancatantra in the first half of the 6th century.

The results of the foregoing disquisitions may be summed up as follows: the first half of the 6th century, say 500—550 A. D., is in reality the most illustrious period of Sanskrit literature; at that time the *nine gems* flourished under the patronage of an art-loving prince, and contemporaneous with them, probably in the Dekkan, lived the author of the Pancatantra. The prince is either Bhoja, or Vikramáditya, or both names have to be considered as denoting the same person.—And now we have to return to our author and his works.

The whole of the astronomical and astrological science of the Hindus, as fixed at the time of Varáha-mihira, and indeed long

* The same Bentley could be childishly credulous, when it suited his purpose. So he gravely asserts that the Egyptians ascribed the origin of their astronomical science to Abraham, but that Abraham is nothing else but an involuntary or more likely a wilful corruption of Brahma!