

PREFACE

Inception and Progress of the Book.—The origination of the present work was due to Professor T. W. Rhys Davids at the time when, several years ago, he was appointed general editor of the Indian Text Series to be published under the auspices of the Secretary of State for India. He then asked me to contribute a work supplying the historical material, as represented by proper names, to be found in the earliest period of Indian literature antecedent to the rise of Buddhism towards the close of the sixth century B.C. Since the subject came within the range of my special studies and moreover appeared to be one of considerable importance, I agreed to the proposal. But I did so with hesitation, because my leisure for a long time to come was already mortgaged by two works which involved much labour and on which I was already engaged. I soon came to the conclusion that till those works—the *Byhaddevatā* and the *Vedic Grammar*—were out of my hands, I could spare no time for the third book, the mere preparation, to say nothing of the publication, of which would thus have to be postponed for several years. Another hindrance would be caused by the tour of study and research in India which I contemplated making at the earliest opportunity. With the prospect of these long delays before me, I was tempted to throw up a task that seemed to have been rashly undertaken. At the same time, I was reluctant either to abandon or to put off indefinitely what I had once begun. It also seemed a pity to relinquish an enterprise which, if properly carried out, promised to be very useful.