

*Trübner's Oriental Series*

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# A HISTORY OF CIVILISATION IN ANCIENT INDIA

VOLUME I



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IN ANCIENT INDIA



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**A HISTORY OF  
CIVILISATION IN ANCIENT  
INDIA**

**BASED ON SANSKRIT  
LITERATURE**

**VOL I**

**ROMESH CHUNDER DUTT**



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A HISTORY  
OF  
CIVILISATION IN ANCIENT INDIA  
BASED ON SANSKRIT LITERATURE

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TO  
MY GENTLE AND LOVING DAUGHTERS,  
*KAMALĀ AND BIMALĀ,*  
WHO HAVE CHEERED MY LABOURS AND BLESSED MY LIFE  
WITH THEIR AFFECTION,  
*DEDICATE THIS WORK*  
WITH A FATHER'S LOVE.





## P R E F A C E.

"IF I were asked," says Professor Max Müller, "what I consider the most important discovery which has been made during the Nineteenth Century with respect to the ancient history of mankind, I should answer by the following short line :—

"Sanskrit, DYAUSH PITAR = Greek, ΖΕΥΣ ΠΑΤΗΡ (ZEUS PATER) = Latin, JUPITER = Old Norse, TYR."

And certainly, the discoveries which have been made by European scholars within the last hundred years, with the help of the old Aryan language preserved in India, form one of the most brilliant chapters in the history of the advancement of human knowledge. It is not my intention to give a sketch of that history here; but a few facts which relate specially to Indian Antiquities may be considered interesting.

It is about a century since Sir William Jones startled the scholars of Europe by his translation of *Sakuntalâ*, "one of the greatest curiosities," as he said in his preface, "that the literature of Asia has yet brought to light," and one of the tenderest and most beautiful creations of human imagination produced in any age or country. The attention of European literary men was roused to the value and beauty of Sanscrit literature; and the greatest literary genius of the modern age has recorded his appreciation of the Hindu dramatic piece

in lines which have been often quoted, in original and in translation :—

“Wouldst thou the life's young blossoms and the fruit of its decline,  
And all by which the soul is pleased, enraptured, feasted, fed,—  
Wouldst thou the earth and heaven itself in one sweet name combine?  
I name thee, O Sakuntalâ, and all at once is said.”—GÖETHE.

Sir William Jones translated Manu, founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and lived to continue his researches into the store-house of Sanscrit literature, and achieved valuable results; but he did not live to find what he sought,—a clue to India's “ancient history without any mixture of fable.” For his enthusiastic labours were mostly confined to the later Sanscrit literature,—the literature of the Post-Buddhist Era; and he paid little heed to the mine of wealth that lay beyond.

Colebrooke followed in the footsteps of Sir William Jones. He was a mathematician, and was the most careful and accurate Sanscrit scholar that England has ever produced. Ancient Sanscrit literature concealed nothing from his eyes. He gave a careful and accurate account of Hindu Philosophy, wrote on Hindu Algebra and Mathematics, and, in 1805, he first made Europeans acquainted with the oldest work of the Hindu and of the Aryan world, viz., the Vedas. Colebrooke, however, failed to grasp the importance of the discovery he had made, and declared that the study of the Vedas “would hardly reward the labour of the reader, much less that of the translator.”

Dr. H. H. Wilson followed in the footsteps of Colebrooke; and although he translated the Rîg Veda Sanhitâ into English, his labours were mostly confined to later

Sanskrit literature. He translated into elegant English the best dramatic works in Sanskrit, as well as the beautiful poem of Kālidāsa, called "Meghadūta." He also translated the Vishnu Purāna, and laboured to adjust the history of the later Hindu period, and settled many points on a satisfactory basis.

In the meantime, a great genius had arisen in France. The history of Oriental scholarship contains no brighter name than that of Burnouf. He traced the connection between the Zend and the Vedic Sanskrit, and framed a Comparative Grammar for his own use before German scholars had written on Comparative Grammar. By such means he deciphered the Zend language and scriptures, elucidated the Rig Veda, and showed its true position in the history of Aryan nations. Versatile as he was profound, he also deciphered the Cuneiform inscriptions of Assyria, and thus earned for himself an undying fame in Europe. And further, in his Introduction to Buddhism, he gave the first philosophical and intelligible account of that great religion. His lessons created a deep sensation in Europe during nearly a quarter of a century (1829-1852), and left a lasting impression on the minds of admiring and enthusiastic pupils in Paris, some of whom, like Roth and Max Müller, have lived to be the profoundest Vedic scholars of our age.

German scholars, in the meantime, had commenced their labours; and when once they began work in this line, they soon excelled and even ousted all other labourers in the field of Indian Antiquities! Rosen, the contemporary and friend of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, published the first Ashtaka of the Rig Veda, with a Latin translation, but his untimely death prevented the further progress of the work.

But the most eminent German scholars of the day set before themselves a higher task; and the industry, perseverance, and genius of men like Bopp, Grimm, and Humboldt, soon achieved a result which ranks as one of the noblest and most brilliant discoveries of the century. They marked and traced the connection among all the Indo-European languages,—the Sanscrit, the Zend, the Greek, the Latin, the Slav, the Tuton, and the Celtic,—they demonstrated all these languages to be the offshoots of the same original stock, and they even discovered the laws under which words were transformed in passing from one language to another. Classical scholars of the day, who believed that all civilisation and culture began with the Greek and the Latin, at first smiled and ridiculed, then stood aghast, and ultimately gave way with considerable chagrin and anger to the irresistible march of Truth!

The desire to elucidate ancient Hindu literature and history deepened among scholars as they became more thoroughly alive to the value of Sanscrit. Roth, one of the profoundest Vedic scholars of the century, produced his edition of Yaska with his most valuable notes, and later on he published, with Whitney, an edition of the Atharva Veda, and completed, with Böehtlingk, the most accurate and comprehensive Sanscrit Dictionary yet written. Lassen published his profound work, *Indische Alterthumskunde*, displaying a deep learning and accurate scholarship which has seldom been excelled. Weber published the White Yajur Veda with its Brâhmana and Sûtras, elucidated many obscure points of Ancient Hindu History in his *Indische Studien*, and gave the first clear and comprehensive account of Sanscrit literature in his *History of Indian Literature*. Benfey published a

most valuable edition of the Sâma Veda, of which an edition, with translation, had been published by Stevenson and Wilson before. And Muir collected the most suggestive and historically-valuable texts from Sanscrit literature, in five volumes, which are a monument of his industry and learning.

And lastly, Professor Max Müller mapped out the whole of the ancient Sanscrit literature chronologically in 1859.

More valuable to Hindus than this great work—more valuable than the learned Professor's numerous works and contributions on Language, Religion, and Mythology, is his magnificent edition of the Rig Veda Sanhitâ, with Sâyana's Commentary. The work was hailed in India with gratitude and joy; it opened to Hindu students generally the great and ancient volume, which had hitherto remained sealed with seven seals to all but a very few scholars; and it awakened in them a historical interest in the past,—a desire to inquire into their ancient history and ancient faith from original sources.

Jones and Colebrooke and Wilson had worthy successors in India, but none more distinguished than James Prinsep. The inscriptions of Asoka on pillars and rocks all over India had remained unintelligible for over a thousand years, and had defied the skill of Sir William Jones and his successors. James Prinsep, then Secretary to the Asiatic Society, deciphered these inscriptions, and a flood of light was thus thrown on Buddhist antiquities and post-Buddhist history. Prinsep was also the first to deal in a scholar-like way with the coins of the post-Buddhist kings found all over Western India. He has been followed by able scholars. Dr. Haug edited and translated the Aitareya Brâhmana, and elucidated the

history of the Parsis; Dr. Burnell wrote on South Indian Paleography; Dr. Bühner has ably dealt with the ancient legal literature; and Dr. Thibaut has, in late years, discovered Ancient Hindu Geometry.

Among my countrymen, the great reformers, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Dayanand Sarasvati, turned their attention to ancient Sanscrit literature. The first translated a number of Upanishads into English, and the latter published a translation of the Rig Veda Samhitā in Hindi. Sir Raja Radha Kanta Dev cultivated Sanscrit learning, and published a comprehensive and excellent dictionary entitled the Sabdakalpadruma. Dr. Bhao Daji and Professor Bhandarkar, Dr. K. M. Banerjea and Dr. Rajendra Lala Mitra have, by their varied and valuable contributions, taken their fair share of work in the field of antiquities. My esteemed friend, Pandit Satyavrata Sāmasramin has published an excellent edition of the Sāma Veda with Sāyana's Commentary, and an edition of the White Yajur Veda with Mahādhara's Commentary, and is now engaged in a learned edition of Yaska's Nirukta. And lastly, my learned friend, Mr. Anand Ram Borooah,\* of the Bengal Civil Service, has published a handy and excellent English-Sanscrit Dictionary, and is now engaged in a Sanscrit Grammar of formidable size and erudition!

General Cunningham's labours in archæology and in the elucidation of ancient Indian Geography are invaluable; and Burgess and Fergusson have treated on Indian

\* Since the above lines were written, the author has received the sad intelligence of the death of the talented scholar. His untimely death is a loss to Sanscrit scholarship in this country, which will not be easily remedied. To the present writer, the sorrow is of a personal nature, as he enjoyed the friendship of the deceased for twenty years and more,—since the old College days in this country and in England.

Architecture. Fergusson's work on the subject is accepted as the standard work.

In Europe, Dr. Fausbøll may be said to be the founder of Pāli scholarship, and edited the Dhammapada so far back as 1855, and has since edited the Jātaka Tales. Dr. Oldenberg has edited the Vinaya texts; and these scholars, as well as Rhys Davids and Max Müller, have now given us an English translation of the most important portions of the Buddhist Scriptures in the invaluable series of Sacred Books of the East.

I wish to say a word about this series, because I am in a special degree indebted to it. Professor Max Müller, who has, by his life-long labours, done more than any living scholar to elucidate ancient Hindu literature and history, has now conceived the noble idea of enabling English readers to go to the fountain-source, and consult Oriental works in a series of faithful translations. More than thirty volumes, translated from the Sanscrit, Chinese, Zend, Pahlavi, Pāli, Arabic, &c., have already been published, and more volumes are expected. I take this opportunity to own my great indebtedness to the volumes of this series which relate to Indian History. I have freely quoted from them,—allowing myself the liberty of a verbal alteration here and there; and I have seldom thought it necessary to consult those original Sanscrit works which have been translated in this faithful and valuable series.

And this brings me to the subject of the present work, about which I wish to say a few words. I have often asked myself: Is it possible, with the help that is now available, to write, in a handy work, a clear, historical account of the civilisation of Ancient India, based on ancient Sanscrit literature, and written in a sufficiently



popular manner to be acceptable to the general reader? I never doubted the possibility of such a work; but I have often wished—even when engaged in this task—that it had been undertaken by an abler scholar, and by one who could devote his attention and time more exclusively to it than I could possibly do.

Scholars who have devoted their lifetime to the study of Indian Antiquities, and who have brought out rich ores from that inexhaustible mine, seem however to have little time or little inclination to coin the metal for the every-day use of the general public. That unambitious task must, therefore, devolve on humbler labourers.

That there is need for such a popular work will not be denied. The Hindu student's knowledge of Indian History practically begins with the date of the Mahomedan Conquest,—the Hindu period is almost a blank to him. The school-boy who knows all about the twelve invasions of Mahmud, knows little of the first invasions and wars of the Aryans, who conquered and settled in the Punjab three thousand years before the Sultan of Ghazni. He has read of Shahab-ud-din Muhammad Ghori's conquest of Delhi and Kanouj, but has scarcely any historical knowledge of the ancient kingdoms of the Kurus and the Panchâlas in the same tract of country. He knows what emperor reigned in Delhi when Sivaji lived and fought, but scarcely knows of the king who ruled in Magadha when Gautama Buddha lived and preached. He is familiar with the history of Ahmadnagar, Bijapur, and Golkonda, but has scarcely heard of the Andhras, the Guptas, and the Chalukyas. He knows exactly the date of Nadir Shah's invasion of India, but scarcely knows, within five centuries, the date when the Sakas invaded India, and were repelled by

Vikramāditya the Great. He knows more of the dates of Ferdusi and Ferishta than of Āryabhatta or Bhavabhūti, and can tell who built the Taj Mahal without having the faintest notion when the topes of Sanchi, the caves of Karli and Ajanta, the temples of Ellora, Bhuvanēsvara, and Jāgannātha were built.

And yet, such things should not be. For the Hindu student the history of the Hindu Period should not be a blank, nor a confused jumble of historic and legendary names, religious parables, and Epic and Puranic myths. No study has so potent an influence in forming a nation's mind and a nation's character as a critical and careful study of its past history. And it is by such study alone that an unreasoning and superstitious worship of the past is replaced by a legitimate and manly admiration.

It almost seems an irony of fate that the past should be considered a blank in a country where ancient sages have handed down traditions and elaborate compositions through thousands of years, and where, generation after generation, they have preserved the heritage by a feat of memory which is considered a miracle in modern days! In vain must the thousands of ancient Hindu students and scholars have toiled to preserve these works, if the works give us no clue to a general outline History of Ancient India. And in vain, too, must eminent European scholars and antiquarians have worked during the last hundred years, if it be still impossible to put together the results of their learned researches in the shape of a connected history which will be intelligible to the general reader and the ordinary student.

Happily this is no longer impossible. And although many portions of Indian History are still obscure,

although many questions of detail are still subjects of controversy, to construct a general history of the Hindu Period is no longer a hopeless task. And, however unfit I feel myself to accomplish this task, I, nevertheless, venture to make a commencement, in the hope that abler scholars will pardon my shortcomings, rectify my inevitable errors, and perform skilfully and well what I may do clumsily or leave undone.

In undertaking this great work, I must, once for all, disclaim any intention to make any new discoveries, or to extend in any way the limits of Oriental scholarship and research. My limited knowledge of the subject precludes the possibility of such a pretension being advanced, and the limits of the present work make it impossible that any such results should be achieved. I have simply tried to string together, in a methodical order, the results of the labours of abler scholars, in order to produce a readable work for the general reader. If, in the fulfilment of this design, I have been sometimes betrayed into conjectures and suppositions, I can only ask my readers to accept them as such,—not as historical discoveries.

Ten years ago I collected and arranged the materials then available to me, with a view to write a little school-book in my own vernacular; and the little work has since been accepted as a text-book in many schools in Bengal. Since that time I have continued my work in this line, as far as my time permitted; and when, three years ago, I was enabled by the generosity of the Government of Bengal to place a complete Bengali translation of the Rig Veda Sanhitā before my countrymen, I felt more than ever impelled to rearrange the historical materials furnished by our ancient literature

in a permanent form. in pursuance of this object, I published some papers, from time to time, in the *Calcutta Review*; and these papers, together with all other materials which I have collected, have been embodied and arranged in the present work.

The method on which this work has been written is very simple. My principal object has been to furnish the general reader with a practical and handy work on the Ancient History of India,—not to compose an elaborate work of discussions on Indian Antiquities. To study clearness and conciseness on a subject like this was not, however, an easy task. Every chapter in the present work deals with matters about which long researches have been made, and various opinions have been recorded. It would have afforded some satisfaction to me to have given the reader the history of every controversy, the account of every antiquarian discovery, and the *pros* and *cons* of every opinion advanced. But I could not yield to this temptation without increasing the work to three or four times its present humble size, and thus sacrificing the very object with which it is written. To carry out my primary object, I have avoided every needless controversy and discussion, and I have tried to explain as clearly, concisely, and distinctly as I was able, each succeeding phase of Hindu civilisation and Hindu life in ancient times.

But, while conciseness has been the main object of the present work, I have also endeavoured to tell my story so that it may leave some distinct memories on my readers after they have closed the work. For this reason, I have avoided details as far as possible, and tried to develop, fully and clearly, the leading facts and features of each succeeding age. Repetition has not been avoided, where

such repetition seemed necessary to impress on my readers the cardinal facts—the salient features of the story of Hindu civilisation.

The very copious extracts which I have given (in translation) from the Sanscrit works may, at first sight, seem to be inconsistent with my desire for conciseness. Such extracts, however, have been advisedly given. In the first place, on a subject where there is so much room for difference in opinion, it is of the highest importance to furnish the reader with the text on which my conclusions are based, to enable him to form his own judgment, and to rectify my mistakes if my conclusions are erroneous. In the second place, it is a gain in the cause of historical knowledge to familiarize the reader with the texts of our ancient authors. It is scarcely to be hoped that the busy student will spend much of his time in reading the ancient and abstruse works in the original or even in learned translations, and the historian who seeks to familiarize his readers with some portions at least of these ancient works, adds in so far to the accurate knowledge of his readers on this subject. And lastly, it has been well said, that thought is language, and language is thought. And if it be the intention of the historian to convey an idea of ancient thought,—of what the ancient Hindus felt and believed,—he cannot do this better than by quoting the words by which that ancient people expressed themselves. Such brief extracts very often give the modern reader a far more realistic and intimate knowledge of ancient Hindu society and manners and ways of thinking than any account that I could give at twice the length. And it is because I have desired the modern reader to enter into the spirit and the inner life of the ancient Hindus, that I have tried to bring the old composers of hymns and sūtras

face to face with the reader, and allowed them to speak for themselves. Such an intimate grasp of the inner life and feelings of the ancients is the very kernel of true historical knowledge, and I have felt it a hopeless task to impart this knowledge more accurately or more concisely than in the words of the ancients. It is for this reason mainly, and consistently with my anxiety to be concise, that I have quoted copiously from ancient works.

In conclusion, I have to crave the indulgence of the reader for the many deficiencies which he will, no doubt, find in the present work, written in moments stolen from official work, and in places where a decent library was never available. Such claim to indulgence is seldom admitted, and the reader very pertinently inquires why a writer should ever undertake a work for which he was not in every way fully equipped. Nevertheless, I mention these circumstances, as they may explain, if they cannot justify, the shortcomings of the work. The time of the present writer is not his own, and the charge of a Bengal District with an area of over six thousand square miles and a population of over three millions, leaves little leisure for other work. To arrange my materials, under these circumstances, has been an arduous work, and I can only ask the indulgent consideration of my readers for any errors and defects which may have crept into this work.

R. C. DUTT.

MYMENSING DISTRICT, BENGAL,

13th August 1888.



## CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

PREFACE . . . . .	PAGE vii
INTRODUCTION.—EPOCHS AND DATES . . . . .	1

### BOOK I.

#### VEDIC PERIOD, B.C. 2000 TO 1400.

CHAP.		
	I. THE INDO-ARYANS: THEIR LITERATURE . . . . .	26
	II. AGRICULTURE, PASTURE, AND COMMERCE . . . . .	34
	III. FOOD, CLOTHING, AND THE ARTS OF PEACE . . . . .	41
	IV. WARS AND DISSENSIONS . . . . .	48
	V. SOCIAL LIFE . . . . .	60
	VI. VEDIC RELIGION . . . . .	75
	VII. VEDIC RISHIS . . . . .	98

### BOOK II.

#### EPIC PERIOD, B.C. 1400 TO 1000.

I. LITERATURE OF THE PERIOD . . . . .	107
II. KURUS AND PANCHĀLAS . . . . .	120
III. VIDEHES, KOSALAS, AND KĀSĪS . . . . .	131
IV. ARYANS AND NON-ARYANS . . . . .	144
V. CASTE . . . . .	151
VI. SOCIAL LIFE . . . . .	162
VII. LAW, ASTRONOMY, AND LEARNING . . . . .	173
VIII. SACRIFICIAL RITES OF THE BRĀHMANAS . . . . .	180
IX. RELIGIOUS DOCTRINES OF THE UPANISHADS . . . . .	190



*BOOK III.*

## RATIONALISTIC PERIOD, B.C. 1000 TO 320.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. LITERATURE OF THE PERIOD . . . . .	199
II. EXPANSION OF THE HINDUS . . . . .	210
III. ADMINISTRATION, AGRICULTURE, AND ARTS . . . . .	221
IV. LAWS . . . . .	231
V. CASTE . . . . .	245
VI. SOCIAL LIFE . . . . .	254
VII. GEOMETRY AND GRAMMAR . . . . .	269
VIII. SĀṆKHYA AND YOGA . . . . .	276
IX. NYĀYA AND VAISESIKA . . . . .	289
X. PŪRVA MĪMĀNSĀ AND VEDĀNTA . . . . .	296
XI. BUDDHIST SACRED LITERATURE . . . . .	305
XII. LIFE OF GAUTAMA BUDDHA . . . . .	320
XIII. DOCTRINES OF GAUTAMA BUDDHA . . . . .	342
XIV. MORAL PRECEPTS OF GAUTAMA BUDDHA . . . . .	358
XV. HISTORY OF BUDDHISM . . . . .	368
XVI. HISTORY OF JAINAISM . . . . .	381

# CIVILISATION IN ANCIENT INDIA.

## INTRODUCTION.

### *EPOCHS AND DATES.*

THE History of Ancient India is a history of thirty centuries of human culture and progress. It divides itself into several distinct periods, each of which, for length of years, will compare with the entire history of many a modern people.

Other nations claim an equal or even a higher antiquity than the Hindus. Egyptian scholars have claimed a date over four thousand years B.C. for the foundation of the first Egyptian dynasty of kings. Assyrian scholars have claimed a date over three thousand years B.C. for Saragon I., who united Sumir and Accad under the Semetic rule ; and they claim a still earlier date for the native Turanian civilisation of Accad which preceded the Semetic conquest of Chaldea. The Chinese claim to have an authentic history of dynasties and facts from about 2400 B.C. For India, modern scholars have not claimed an earlier date than 2000 B.C. for the hymns of the Rig Veda, although Hindu civilisation must have been centuries or thousands of years old when these hymns were composed.

But there is a difference between the records of the Hindus and the records of other nations. The hieroglyphic records of the ancient Egyptians yield little information beyond the names of kings and pyramid-builders, and accounts of dynasties and wars. The cuneiform

inscriptions of Assyria and Babylon tell us much the same story. And even ancient Chinese records shed little light on the gradual progress of human culture and civilisation.

Ancient Hindu works are of a different character. If they are defective in some respects, as they undoubtedly are, they are defective as accounts of dynasties, of wars, of so-called historical incidents. On the other hand, they give us a full, connected, and clear account of the advancement of civilisation, of the progress of the human mind, such as we shall seek for in vain among the records of any other equally ancient nation. The literature of each period is a perfect picture—a photograph, if we may so call it—of the Hindu civilisation of that period. And the works of successive periods form a complete history of ancient Hindu civilisation for three thousand years, so full, so clear, that he who runs may read.

Inscriptions on stone and tablets, and writings on papyri are recorded with a design to commemorate passing events. The songs and hymns and religious effusions of a people are an unconscious and true reflection of its civilisation and its thought. The earliest effusions of the Hindus were not recorded in writing,—they are, therefore, full and unrestricted,—they are a natural and true expression of the nation's thoughts and feelings. They were preserved, not on stone, but in the faithful memory of the people, who handed down the great heritage from century to century with a scrupulous exactitude which, in modern days, would be considered a miracle.

Scholars who have studied the Vedic hymns historically are aware that the materials they afford for constructing a history of civilisation are fuller and truer than any accounts which could have been recorded on stone or papyri. And those who have pursued Hindu literature through the different periods of ancient Hindu history, are equally aware that they form a complete and comprehensive story of the progress and gradual modifications

of Hindu civilisation, thought, and religion through three thousand years. And the philosophical historian of human civilisation need not be a Hindu to think that the Hindus have preserved the fullest, the clearest, and the truest materials for his work.

We wish not to be misunderstood. We have made the foregoing remarks simply with a view to remove the very common and very erroneous impression that Ancient India has no history worth studying, no connected and reliable chronicle of the past which would be interesting or instructive to the modern reader.

Ancient India has a connected story to tell, and so far from being uninteresting, its special feature is its intense attractiveness. We read in that ancient story how a gifted Aryan people, separated by circumstances from the outside world, worked out their civilisation amidst natural and climatic conditions which were peculiarly favourable. We note their intellectual discoveries age after age; we watch their religious progress and developments through successive centuries; we mark their political career, as they gradually expand over India, and found new kingdoms and dynasties; we observe their struggles against priestly domination, their successes and their failures; we study with interest their great social and religious revolutions and their far-reaching consequences. And this great story of a nation's intellectual life—more thrilling in its interest than any tale which Shaharzadi told—is nowhere broken and nowhere disconnected. The great causes which led to great social and religious changes are manifest to the reader, and he follows the gradual development of ancient Hindu civilisation through thirty centuries, from 2000 B.C. to 1000 years after Christ.

The very shortcomings of Hindu civilisation, as compared with the younger civilisation of Greece or Rome, have their lessons for the modern reader. The story of our successes is not more instructive than the story of our failures. The hymns of Visvâmitra, the philosophy

of Kapila, and the poetry of Kālidāsa have no higher lessons for the modern reader than the decadence of our political life and the ascendancy of priests. The story of the religious rising of the people under the leadership of Gautama Buddha and Asoka is not more instructive than the absence of any efforts after popular freedom. And the great heights to which the genius of Brāhmins and Kshatriyas soared in the infancy of the world's intellectual life are not more suggestive and not more instructive than the absence of genius in the people at large in their ordinary pursuits and trades,—in mechanical inventions and maritime discoveries, in sculpture, architecture, and arts, in manifestations of popular life and the assertion of popular power.

The history of the intellectual and religious life of the ancient Hindus is matchless in its continuity, its fulness, and its philosophical truth. But the historian who only paints the current of that intellectual life performs half his duty. There is another and a sadder portion of Hindu history,—and it is necessary that this portion of the story, too, should be faithfully told.

We have said before that the history of Ancient India divides itself into several distinct and long periods or epochs. Each of these periods has a distinct literature, and each has a civilisation peculiar to it, which modified itself into the civilisation of the next period under the operation of great political and social causes. It is desirable that we should, at the outset, give a brief account of these historical epochs and the great historical events by which they are marked. Such an outline-account of the different periods will make our readers acquainted with the plan and scope of this work, and will probably help them to grasp more effectually the details of each period when we come to treat them more fully. We begin with the earliest period, viz., that of Aryan settlements in the Punjab. The hymns of the Rig Veda furnish us with the materials for a history of this period.

## FIRST EPOCH.

In this priceless volume, the Rig Veda, we find the Hindu Aryans as conquerors and settlers on the banks of the Indus and its five branches; and India beyond the Sutlej was almost unknown to them. They were a conquering race, full of the self-assertion and vigour of a young national life, with a strong love of action and a capacity for active enjoyments. They were, in this respect, far removed from the contemplative and passive Hindus of later days; they rejoiced in wealth and cattle and pasture-fields; and they carved out, with their strong right arm, new possessions and realms from the aborigines of the soil, who vainly struggled to maintain their own against the invincible conquerors. Thus, the period was one of wars and conquests against the aborigines; and the Aryan victors triumphantly boast of their conquests in their hymns, and implore their gods to bestow on them wealth and new possessions, and to destroy the barbarians. Whatever was bright and cheerful and glorious in the aspects of nature struck the Aryans with admiration and gladness, and such manifestations of nature were worshipped and invoked as gods.

It is needless to say that the entire body of Aryans was then a united community, and the only distinction of castes was between the Aryans and the aborigines. Even the distinction between professions was not very marked; and the sturdy lord of many acres, who ploughed his fields and owned large herds in times of peace, went out to defend his village or plunder the aborigines in times of war, and often composed spirited hymns to the martial gods in his hours of devotion. There were no temples and no idols; each patriarch of a family lighted the sacrificial fire in his own hearth, and offered milk and rice offerings, or animals, or libations of the Soma juice to the fire, and invoked the "bright" gods for

blessings and health and wealth for himself and his children. Chiefs of tribes were kings, and had professional priests to perform sacrifices and utter hymns for them; but there was no priestly caste, and no royal caste. The people were free, enjoying the freedom which belongs to vigorous pastoral and agricultural tribes.

What is the date of this period of Aryan settlements in the Punjab as pictured in the Rig Veda? We think we agree with the general opinion on the subject when we fix 2000 to 1400 B.C. for this first period of Hindu history. And, for the sake of convenience, we will call this period the *Vedic Period*.

## SECOND EPOCH.

When once the Hindu Aryans had come as far as the Sutlej, they did not lose much time in crossing that river and pouring down in numbers in the valley of the Ganges. We have rare mention of the Ganges and the Jumna in the Rig Veda, showing that they were not yet generally known to the Hindus in the first or Vedic Period, although adventurous colonists must have issued out of the Punjab and settled in the shores of those distant rivers. Such settlements must have multiplied in the second period, until, in the course of some centuries, the entire valley of the Ganges, as far down as modern Tirhut, were the seats of powerful kingdoms and nationalities, who cultivated science and literature in their schools of learning, and developed new forms of religion and of civilisation widely different from those of the Vedic Period.

Among the nations who flourished in the Gangetic valley, the most renowned have left their names in the epic literature of India. The Kurus had their kingdom round about modern Delhi. The Panchâlas settled further to the south-east, round about modern Kanauj. The Kosalas occupied the spacious country between the

Ganges and the Gunduck, which includes modern Oudh ; the Vidhas lived beyond the Gunduck, in what is now known as Tirhut ; and the Kâsis settled down round about modern Benares. These were the most renowned nations of the second period, though other less powerful nationalities also flourished and extended their kingdoms from time to time.

When the first Kurus and Panchâlas settled in the Doab, they gave indications of a vigorous national life, and their internecine wars form the subject of the first National Epic of India, the *Mahâbhârata*. And, although this work, in its present shape, is the production of a later age—or rather of later ages—yet, even in its present form, it preserves indications of that rude and sturdy vigour and warlike jealousies which characterised the early conquerors of the Gangetic valley. The Hindus did not, however, live many centuries in the soft climate of this valley before losing their vigour and manliness, as they gained in learning and civilisation. As they drifted down the river they manifested less and less of the vigour of conquering races. The royal courts of the Videhas and the Kâsis were learned and enlightened, but contemporary literature does not bear witness to their warlike qualities. The Kosalas, too, were a polished nation, but the traditions of that nation, preserved in the second National Epic of India, the *Râmâyana* (in its present form, a production of later ages), show more devotion to social and domestic duties, obedience to priests, and regard for religious forms, than the sturdy valour and the fiery jealousies of the *Mahâbhârata*.

This gradual enervation of the Hindus was the cause of the most important results in religious and social rules. Religion changed its spirit. The manly but simple hymns with which the sturdy conquerors of the Punjab had invoked nature-gods scarcely commended themselves to the more effete and more ceremonious Hindus of the Gangetic valley. The hymns were still



repeated, but lost their meaning and sense, and vast ceremonials and observances took the place of simple forms. The priestly class increased in number and in influence, until they formed a hereditary caste of their own. The kings and warriors of the Gangetic valley lived in more splendid courts, and had more gorgeous surroundings than the simple agricultural warriors of the Punjab, and soon separated themselves from the people and formed a caste of their own. The mass of the people—the Vaisyas or Visas of the Riga Veda—became more feeble than their forefathers in the Punjab, and wore, without a protest, the chains which priests and warriors—the Brāhmans and the Kshatriyas—threw around them. And as subjection means demoralisation, the people in Hindu kingdoms never afterwards became what the people in ancient and modern Europe have striven to be. And lastly, the aborigines who were subjugated and had adopted the Aryan civilisation formed the low caste of Sûdras, and were declared unfit to perform the Aryan religious rites or to acquire religious knowledge.

Such was the origin of the Caste-system in India, in the second period of Hindu history. The system arose out of weakness and lifelessness among the people, and, to a certain extent, it has perpetuated that weakness ever after.

It will be observed that this Second Period was a period of the submission of the people under the Brāhmans and the Kshatriyas, and of the submission of the Kshatriyas themselves under the Brāhmans. At the close of the period, however, there appears to have been a reaction, and the proud Kshatriyas at last tried to prove their equality with the Brāhmans in learning and religious culture. Wearied with the unmeaning rituals and ceremonials prescribed by priests, the Kshatriyas started new speculations and bold inquiries after the truth. The effort was unavailing. The priests remained supreme. But the vigorous speculations which the

Kshatriyas started form the only redeeming portion of the inane and lifeless literature of this period. And these speculations remained as a heritage of the nation, and formed the nucleus of the Hindu philosophical systems and religious revolutions of a later day.

It was in this period of Aryan expansion in the Gangetic valley that the Rig Veda and the three other Vedas—Sâman, Yajus, and Atharvan—were finally arranged and compiled. Then followed another class of compositions known as the Brâhmanas, and devoted to sacrificial rites; and these inane and verbose compositions reflect the enervation of the people and the dogmatic pretensions of the priests of the age. The custom of retirement from the world into forest life, which was unknown in the earlier ages, sprang up, and the last portions of the Brâhmanas are Âranyakas devoted to forest rites. And lastly, the bold speculations started by Kshatriyas are known as the Upanishads, and form the last portions of the literature of this period, and close the so-called *Revealed Literature* of India.

Scholars have generally held that a period of at least four or five centuries was required for the great social and political changes of this epoch. Within this period the valley of the Ganges, as far as Tirhoot, was cleared, colonised, and Hinduised, and formed into sites of powerful kingdoms. Religious observances were vastly elaborated; social rules were changed; the caste-system was formed; the supremacy of priests was established and confirmed, and ultimately questioned by the Kshatriyas; and lastly, within this age, a varied and voluminous literature was recorded. The Period may, therefore, be supposed to have extended approximately from 1400 to 1000 B.C.

One or two facts may be cited here which confirm these dates. The central historical fact of this period was a great war between the Kurus and the Panchâlas, which forms the subject of the Mahâbhârata, and of

which we shall have something to say further on. The central literary fact of this period was the compilation of the Vedas. Tradition and the Epic itself inform us that the compiler of the Vedas was a contemporary of the war; but we may accept or reject this as we like. We will examine these two facts separately.

First, with regard to the compilation of the Vedas. Tradition has it that when the Vedas were compiled, the position of the solstitial points was observed and recorded to mark the date. The Jyotisha in which this observation is now found is a late work, not earlier than the third century before Christ, but the observation was certainly made at an ancient date, and Bentley and Archdeacon Pratt—both able mathematicians—have gone over the calculation and found that it was made in 1181 B.C.

Much has been written of late against the value of this discovery in Europe, America, and India, but we have found nothing in these discussions which goes against the genuineness of the astronomical observation. We are inclined to believe that the observation marks approximately the true date of the final compilation of the Vedas; and as the work of compilation occupied numerous teachers for generations together, we may suppose that the Vedas were compiled during the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C. And this date falls within the period which we have assigned for the Second Epoch.

Next, with regard to the Kuru-Panchâla War. The annals of different kingdoms in India allude to this ancient war, and some of these annals are not unreliable. The founder of Buddhism lived in the sixth century B.C., and we learn from the annals of Magadha that thirty-five kings reigned between the Kuru-Panchâla War and the time of Buddha. Allowing twenty years to each reign, this would place the war in the thirteenth century B.C.

Again, we know from coins that Kanishka ruled in Kashmîra in the first century A.D., and his successor Abhimanyu probably reigned towards the close of that

century. The historian of Kashmira informs us that fifty-two kings reigned for 1266 years from the time of the Kuru-Panchâla War to the time of Abhimanyu, and this would place the war in the twelfth century B.C.

We do not ask the reader to accept any of the particular dates given above. It is almost impossible to fix any precise date in the History of India before Alexander the Great visited the land; and we may well hesitate, even when astronomical calculations point to a particular year, or historical lists point to a particular century. All that we ask, and all that we are entitled to ask, is that the reader will now find it possible to accept the fact that the Vedas were finally compiled and the Kuru-Panchâla War was fought sometime about the thirteenth century or the twelfth century B.C.

And, if the Kuru-Panchâla War was fought in the thirteenth century B.C. (*i.e.*, about a century before the Trojan War), it is impossible to fix a date later than 1400 B.C. for the commencement of the Second Epoch of which we are speaking. For at the time of the Kuru-Panchâla War, the tracts of country round modern Delhi and Kanouj were the seats of powerful nations who had developed a civilisation and literature of their own. And two centuries must be allowed between the date when the Aryans issued out of the Punjab and the date when these results had been achieved in the Gangetic valley.

To accept 1400 B.C. as the date when the Aryans issued out of the Punjab, is to confirm the dates we have given (2000 to 1400 B.C.) for the First Epoch, the Vedic Period.

Again, many of the Brâhmanas contain internal evidence that they were composed at the time or after the time of the Kurus and the Panchâlas. We may, therefore, suppose these to have been composed in the thirteenth and twelfth centuries B.C. And the Upanishads, which mark the close of Brâhmana literature, were composed

about the eleventh century B.C. Janaka, the king of the Videhas, gave a start to the Upanishads; we may, therefore, suppose the Videhas and the Kosalas to have flourished about 1200 to 1000 B.C., as the Kûrus and the Pançhâlas flourished about 1400 to 1200 B.C.

For the sake of convenience we will call this second period the *Epic Period*. It was the period when the nations described in the national epics of India lived and fought; when the Kurus and the Panchâlas, the Kôsâlas and the Videhas, held sway along the valley of the Ganges.

### THIRD EPOCH.

The Third Epoch is, perhaps, the most brilliant period of Hindu history. It was in this period that the Aryans issued out of the Gangetic valley, spread themselves far and wide, and introduced Hindu civilisation and founded Hindu kingdoms as far as the southernmost limits of India. Magadha or South Behar, which was already known to the Hindus in the Epic Period, was completely Hinduised in the Third Epoch; and the young and powerful kingdom founded here soon eclipsed all the ancient kingdoms of the Gangetic valley. Buddhism spread from Magadha to surrounding kingdoms, and Chandragupta, the contemporary of Alexander the Great, brought the whole of Northern India, from the Punjab to Behar, under the rule of Magadha. With this great political event, viz., the consolidation of all Northern India under one great empire, the Third Epoch ends and the Fourth Epoch begins.

Aryan colonists penetrated to Bengal and introduced Hindu religion and civilisation among the aborigines. The kingdoms founded in the south won greater distinction. The Andhras founded a powerful kingdom in the Deccan, and developed great schools of learning. Further south, the Aryans came in contact with the old Dravidian civilisation. The more perfect Hindu

civilisation prevailed, and the Dravidians were Hinduised and founded kingdoms which became distinguished for learning and power. The three sister-kingdoms of the Cholas, the Cheras, and the Pandyas made their mark before the third century B.C., and Kāñchī (Conjeveram), the capital of the Cholas, distinguished itself as the seat of Hindu learning at a later day.

In the west the Saurāshtras (including Gujrat and the Maharatta country) received Hindu civilisation; while, beyond a strip of the sea, Ceylon was discovered, and formed a great resort of Hindu traders.

The practical and enterprising spirit of the age shows itself in literature as well as in territorial conquests. The whole of the verbose teachings and rites of the Brāhmanas and Āranyakas were condensed into Sūtras or aphorisms so as to form handy manuals for the sacrifice. Other Sūtras were framed for laying down the rules of domestic rites and social conduct. Sūtra schools sprang all over India, in the north and in the south, and works multiplied. And besides these religious works, phonetics, metre, grammar, and lexicons were studied, and Yāska wrote his Nirukta, and Pānini his Vyākaraṇa early in this period. And the construction of sacrificial altars according to fixed rules gave rise to geometry, which was first discovered in India.

And, lastly, the lessons of the Upanishads were not lost. The bold speculations started in these works were pursued, until Kapila started the Sāṅkhya philosophy—the first closely-reasoned system of mental philosophy known in the world. Other systems of philosophy were started by other thinkers, but the Sāṅkhya philosophy was destined to have the greatest influence on the future of India; for Gautama Buddha was born in the sixth century B.C., and he added to the cold logic of the Sāṅkhya philosophy a world-embracing sympathy and love for mankind which has made his religion the religion of a third of the human race.

We have no difficulty in fixing the dates of this epoch. Chandragupta, the contemporary of Alexander the Great, united Northern India in 320 B.C. We may, therefore, date the Third Epoch from 1000 B.C. to 320 B.C. For the sake of convenience, we will call it the *Philosophical* or *Rationalistic Period*.

The great political, literary, and religious incidents of the period require the wide space of seven centuries that we have allotted to the epoch; and all the facts that we know confirm these dates. The dates which Dr. Bühler has given to the Sûtras of Gautama, Baudhâyana, Vasishtha, and Âpastamba fall within the limits given above. Dr. Thibaut assigns the eighth century to the Sulva Sûtras or geometry. Writers on Sânkhya philosophy assign the seventh century to Kapila's philosophy, and Gautama Buddha lived, as we know, in the sixth century.

These dates, which have been ascertained with tolerable certainty, confirm the dates which we have accepted for the previous or the Epic Period. For, if the philosophy of Kapila, which was a distant and matured result of the Upanishads, was started in the seventh century, the Upanishads themselves must have been composed several centuries earlier. And we are presumably correct in assigning B.C. 1000 for the Upanishads,—the works which closed the Epic Period.

#### FOURTH EPOCH.

The epoch begins with the brilliant reign of Chandragupta. His grandson Asoka the Great made Buddhism the state religion of India, settled the Buddhist Scriptures in the great council of Patna, and published his edicts of humanity on stone pillars and on rocks. He prohibited the slaughter of animals, provided medical aid to men and cattle all over his empire, proclaimed the duties of citizens and

members of families, and directed Buddhist missionaries to proceed to the ends of the earth, to mix with the rich and the poor, and to proclaim the truth. His inscriptions show that he made treaties with Antiochus of Syria, Ptolemy of Egypt, Antigonus of Macedon, Magas of Cyrene, and Alexander of Epiros, and sent missionaries to these kingdoms to preach the Buddhist religion. "Both here and in foreign countries," says Asoka, "everywhere the people follow the doctrine of the religion of the Beloved of the Gods, wheresoever it reacheth." "Buddhist missionaries," says a Christian writer,\* "preached in Syria two centuries before the teaching of Christ (which has so many moral points in common) was heard in Northern Palestine. So true is it that every great historical change has had its forerunner."

The Maurya dynasty, which commenced with Asoka's grandfather Chandragupta about 320 B.C., did not last very long after the time of Asoka. It was followed by two short-lived dynasties, the Sunga and the Kânva (183 to 26 B.C.), and then the great Andhras, who had founded a powerful empire in the South, conquered Magadha and were masters of Northern India for four centuries and a half, B.C. 26 to A.D. 430. They were generally Buddhists, but respected Brâhmans and orthodox Hindus; and throughout the Buddhist Epoch, the two religions flourished in India side by side, and persecution was almost unknown. The Andhras were followed by the great Gupta emperors, who were supreme in India till about 500 A.D., and then their power was overthrown. The Guptas were generally orthodox Hindus, but favoured Buddhism also, and made grants to Buddhist churches and monasteries.

In the meantime Western India was the scene of continual foreign invasions. The Greeks of Bactria, expelled by Turanian invaders, entered India in the second and first centuries before Christ, founded kingdoms, introduced

\* Mahaffy, "Alexander's Empire," chapter xiii.



Greek civilisation and knowledge, and had varied fortunes in different parts of India for centuries after. They are said to have penetrated as far as Orissa. The Turanians of the Yu-Chi tribe next invaded India, and gave a powerful dynasty to Kashmîra; and Kanishka the Yu-Chi king of Kashmîra had an extensive empire in the first century A.D., which stretched from Kabul and Kashgar and Yarkand to Guzrat and Agra. He was a Buddhist, and held a great council of the Northern Buddhists in Kashmîra. The Cambodjians and other tribes of Kabul then poured into India, and were in their turn followed by the locust-hordes of the Huns, who spread over Western India in the fifth century A.D. India had no rest from foreign invasions for several centuries after the time of Asoka the Great; but the invaders, as they finally settled down in India, adopted the Buddhist religion, and formed a part of the people.

Buddhism gradually declined during the centuries after the Christian Era, much in the same way as the Hinduism of the Rig Veda had gradually declined in the Epic Period when the Hindus had settled down in the Gangetic valley. Buddhist monks formed a vast and unmanageable body of priesthood, owning vast acres of land attached to each monastery, and depending on the resources of the people; and Buddhist ceremonials and forms bordered more and more on Buddha-worship and idolatry. Many of these forms and ceremonials, which were dear to the common people, were adopted by the Hinduism of the day, and thus a new form of Hinduism asserted itself by the sixth century after Christ. An effete form of Buddhism lingered on for some centuries in some parts of India after this, until it was stamped out by the Mahomedan conquerors of India.

We find an uninterrupted series of Buddhist rock-cut caves, chaityas or churches, and vihâras or monasteries, all over India, dating from the time of Asoka to the fifth century A.D.; but there are scarcely

any specimens of Buddhist architecture of a later date. Temple-building and Hindu architecture flourished from the sixth century A.D. to long after the Mahomedan conquest.

The most valuable portions of Buddhist literature left to us are the scriptures as finally settled in the Council of Patna by Asoka, and sent by him all over India and India. These scriptures, preserved in the Pâli language beyond in Ceylon, form our best materials for the history of early Buddhism, while later forms of this literature have been found in Nepal, in Thibet, in China, in Japan, and in all Northern Buddhist countries.

We have said that Buddhism had a marked effect on Hinduism. Buddhism had questioned the sacredness of the Vedas, and modern or Puranic Hinduism, though nominally revering the Vedas, shows a complete estrangement and emancipation from those ancient works. Hindu astronomy, mathematics, laws, and philosophical speculations had sprung from the Vedas and the Vedic sacrifices, and belonged to different Vedic schools. But Hindu science and learning of the post-Buddhist age have no reliance on the Vedas and do not belong to any Vedic school. Puranic Hinduism is not a religion of Vedic sacrifices, but of the worship of images and gods unknown to the Vedas.

The Code of Manu represents Hindu thought and manners of the Buddhist Epoch. It is based on the ancient Dharmasûtras or social laws of the Philosophical Period; but while the Dharmasûtras belong to different Vedic schools, Manu's Sanhitâ knows of no Vedic schools and professes to be the law for all Aryans. On the other hand Manu adheres to the Vedic sacrifices, eschews image-worship, and does not know of the Trinity of Puranic Hinduism. Thus Manu marks the transition stage from Vedic Hinduism to Puranic Hinduism.

For reasons which will appear from the foregoing remarks, we date the fourth or *Buddhist Period* from 320 B.C. to 500 A.D.