

ORIGINAL SANSKRIT TEXTS

ON THE
ORIGIN AND HISTORY
OF
THE PEOPLE OF INDIA,
THEIR RELIGION AND INSTITUTIONS,

COLLECTED, TRANSLATED, AND ILLUSTRATED,

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COMPARISON OF THE VEDIC WITH THE LATER REPRESENTATIONS OF THE
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of a later age. But it is not certain that any portion of this passage formed part of the Rāmāyaṇa, as it originally existed. I extract the following remarks from Lassen's "Indian Antiquities," (vol. i. p. 488, 1st edition; i. 586, 2nd edition), in regard to the interpolations which he supposes to have been made in the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata :

"It is true that in the Epic poems Rāma and Kṛishna appear as incarnations of Vishṇu, but they at the same time come before us as human heroes, and these two characters (the divine and the human) are so far from being inseparably blended together, that both of these heroes are for the most part exhibited in no other light than other highly gifted men,—acting according to human motives and taking no advantage of their divine superiority. It is only in certain sections which have been added for the purpose of enforcing their divine character that they take the character of Vishṇu. It is impossible to read either of these two poems with attention, without being reminded of the later interpolation of such sections as ascribe a divine character to the heroes, and of the unskillful manner in which these passages are often introduced, and without observing how loosely they are connected with the rest of the narrative, and how unnecessary they are for its progress."¹⁶⁷

In p. 489 (1st edition, p. 587 2nd edition) note, he remarks more

¹⁶⁷ In the Preface to his Vishṇu Purāṇa, p. ix., 4to. ed. (=p. xv. of Dr. Hall's ed.), Professor Wilson had previously made some observations of the same tenor: "But the ascription to individual and personal deities of the attributes of the one universal and spiritual Supreme Being, is an indication of a later date than the Vedas certainly, and apparently also than the Rāmāyaṇa, where Rāma, although an incarnation of Vishṇu, commonly appears in his human character alone. There is something of the kind in the Mahābhārata in respect to Kṛishna, especially in the philosophical episode known as the Bhagavad Gītā. In other places the divine nature of Kṛishna is less decidedly affirmed; in some it is disputed or denied; and in most of the situations in which he is exhibited in action, it is as a prince and warrior, not as a divinity. He exercises no superhuman faculties in the defence of himself, or his friends, or in the defeat and destruction of his foes. The Mahābhārata, however, is evidently a work of various periods, and requires to be read throughout carefully and critically before its weight as an authority can be accurately appreciated." Professor Goldstücker, too, observes in the Preface to his Mānava Kalpa Sūtra, p. xxxi.: "It is of course impossible for me to treat here, as it were incidentally, not merely of the question concerning the age of the Mahābhārata, but the relative ages of the various portions of this work, since it must be evident to every one who has read it, that it is, in its present shape, a collection of literary products belonging to widely distant periods of Hindu literature."

particularly: "As regards the Rāmāyaṇa, Mr. von Schlegel has often observed to me that the chapters in which Rāma is conceived of as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, might be entirely omitted without injuring the connexion of the story. In fact, at the point where the incarnation of Viṣṇu in the four sons of Dasaratha is described (Rām. i. 14 ff.), the proper great sacrifice is already concluded, and the priests have all been presented with gifts at its close, when the new sacrifice is commenced, at which the gods appear, then withdraw, and now for the first time propose to Viṣṇu to become incarnate. If this had been an original portion of the story, the gods would certainly have considered the matter sooner, and the ceremonial of sacrifice would have proceeded without interruption. In the same book, ch. 74, 75, a scene with the earlier [or Paraśu-] Rāma is suddenly interpolated, in order that he may be made to declare the new Rāma to be Viṣṇu."

An examination of the earlier portions of the Rāmāyaṇa seems to confirm the opinion of Lassen that the 14th and following sections which describe the miraculous births of Rāma and his brothers as incarnations of Viṣṇu, are additions interpolated at a later date in the original poem. It appears from various passages which I shall cite from the 8th and following sections, that the aśvamedha or horse-sacrifice, a rite of great importance and dignity, was instituted for the express purpose of procuring progeny for Daśaratha. But if this be so, what necessity was there for celebrating the fresh ceremony, alluded to at the beginning of section 14 as a "putrīyā ishṭi," for the same purpose? The passages to which I allude are the following:

Rām. i. 8, 1 ff. (=Bombay ed. i. 8, 1; Gorresio's ed. i. 8, 1).—*Tasya tv evam-prabhāvasya dhārmikasya mahātmanaḥ | sūtārtham tapyamānasya nāsīd vaṁśa-karaḥ sutaḥ | tasya chintayato buddhir utpanneyam mahā-mateḥ | sūtārtham vāji-medhena kimarthaṁ na yajāmy aham | suniśchitām matiṁ kṛtvā yashṭavye vasudhādhipaḥ* | "But a son to prolong his race was not born to this king so mighty, and righteous, and great, though he performed intense austerity for that purpose. As this wise man reflected, the idea arose in his mind, 'why do I not celebrate a horse-sacrifice to obtain a son?' Having then formed this fixed opinion that he ought to sacrifice, the king, etc."

Again, in sect. 11, 1 (=Bombay ed. i. 12, 1; Gorresio's ed. i. 11, 1), it is said: *Atha kāle vyatikrānte śīṣire tadanantaram | vasanta-samayo*