

## INTRODUCTION.

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### BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE INDIAN LITERATURE.

It seems desirable to give here such a sketch of the history of Indian literature as shall show the relation to one another of the different periods and forms of the language treated in the following grammar, and the position of the works there quoted.

The name "Sanskrit" (*saṁskṛta*, 1087 d, *adorned, elaborated, perfected*), which is popularly applied to the whole ancient and sacred language of India, belongs more properly only to that dialect which, regulated and established by the labors of the native grammarians, has led for the last two thousand years or more an artificial life, like that of the Latin during most of the same period in Europe, as the written and spoken means of communication of the learned and priestly caste; and which even at the present day fills that office. It is thus distinguished, on the one hand, from the later and derived dialects — as the Prākṛit, forms of language which have datable monuments from as early as the third century before Christ, and which are represented by inscriptions and coins, by the speech of the uneducated characters in the Sanskrit dramas (see below), and by a limited literature; the Pāli, a Prakritic dialect which became the sacred language of Buddhism in Farther India, and is

still in service there as such; and yet later and more altered tongues forming the transition to the languages of modern India. And, on the other hand, it is distinguished, but very much less sharply and widely, from the older dialects or forms of speech presented in the canonical literature, the Veda and Brāhmaṇa.

This fact, of the fixation by learned treatment of an authorized mode of expression, which should thenceforth be used according to rule in the intercourse of the educated, is the cardinal one in Indian linguistic history; and as the native grammatical literature has determined the form of the language, so it has also to a large extent determined the grammatical treatment of the language by European scholars.

Much in the history of the learned movement is still obscure, and opinions are at variance even as to points of prime consequence. Only the concluding works in the development of the grammatical science have been preserved to us; and though they are evidently the perfected fruits of a long series of learned labors, the records of the latter are lost beyond recovery. The time and the place of the creation of Sanskrit are unknown; and as to its occasion, we have only our inferences and conjectures to rely upon. It seems, however, altogether likely that the grammatical sense of the ancient Hindus was awakened in great measure by their study of the traditional sacred texts, and by their comparison of its different language with that of contemporary use. It is certain that the grammatical study of those texts (*çākhās*, lit'ly *branches*), phonetic and other, was zealously and effectively followed in the Brahmanic schools; this is attested by our possession of a number of phonetico-grammatical treatises, *prātiçākhyas* (*prati çākhām belonging to each several text*), each having for subject one principal Vedic text, and noting all its peculiarities of form; these, both by the depth and exactness of their own researches and by the number of authorities which they quote, speak plainly of a lively scientific activity continued during a long time. What part, on the other hand, the notice of differ-

ences between the correct speech of the learned and the altered dialects of the vulgar may have borne in the same movement is not easy to determine; but it is not customary that a language has its proper usages fixed by rule until the danger is distinctly felt of its undergoing corruption.

The labors of the general school of Sanskrit grammar reached a climax in the grammarian Paṇini, whose text-book, containing the facts of the language cast into the highly artful and difficult form of about four thousand algebraic-formula-like rules (in the statement and arrangement of which brevity alone is had in view, at the cost of distinctness and unambiguity), became for all after time the authoritative, almost sacred, norm of correct speech. Respecting his period, nothing really definite and trustworthy is known; but he is with much probability held to have lived some time (two to four centuries) before the Christian era. He has had commentators in abundance, and has undergone at their hands some measure of amendment and completion; but he has not been overthrown or superseded. The chief and most authoritative commentary on his work is that called the *Māhābhāṣya* *great comment*, by Paṭanjali.

A language, even if not a vernacular one, which is in tolerably wide and constant use for writing and speaking, is, of course, kept in life principally by direct tradition, by communication from teacher to scholar and the study and imitation of existing texts, and not by the learning of grammatical rules; yet the existence of grammatical authority, and especially of a single one, deemed infallible and of prescriptive value, could not fail to exert a strong regulative influence, leading to the avoidance more and more of what was, even if lingering in use, inconsistent with his teachings, and also, in the constant reproduction of texts, to the gradual effacement of whatever they might contain that was unapproved. Thus the whole more modern literature of India has been Paninized, so to speak, pressed into the mould prepared by him and his school. What are the limits of the artificiality of this process is not yet known.



The attention of special students of the Hindu grammar (and the subject is so intricate and difficult that the number is exceedingly small of those who have mastered it sufficiently to have a competent opinion on such general matters) has been hitherto mainly directed toward determining what the Sanskrit according to Pāṇini really is, toward explaining the language from the grammar. And, naturally enough, in India, or wherever else the leading object is to learn to speak and write the language correctly — that is, as authorized by the grammarians — that is the proper course to pursue. This, however, is not the way really to understand the language. The time must soon come, or it has come already, when the endeavor shall be instead to explain the grammar from the language: to test in all details, so far as shall be found possible, the reason of Pāṇini's rules (which contain not a little that seems problematical, or even sometimes perverse); to determine what and how much genuine usage he had everywhere as foundation, and what traces may be left in the literature of usages possessing an inherently authorized character, though unratified by him.

By the term "classical" or "later" language, then, as constantly used below in the grammar, is meant the language of those literary monuments which are written in conformity with the rules of the native grammar: virtually, the whole proper Sanskrit literature. For although parts of this are doubtless earlier than Pāṇini, it is impossible to tell just what parts, or how far they have escaped in their style the leveling influence of the grammar. The whole, too, may be called so far an artificial literature as it is written in a phonetic form (see grammar, 101a) which never can have been a truly vernacular and living one. Nearly all of it is metrical: not poetic works only, but narratives, histories (so far as anything deserving that name can be said to exist), and scientific treatises of every variety, are done into verse; a prose and a prose literature hardly has an existence (the principal exceptions, aside from the voluminous commentaries, are a few stories, as the *Daçakumāracarita* and the *Vāsavadattā*). Of linguistic history there is next to nothing

in it all; but only a history of style, and this for the most part showing a gradual depravation, an increase of artificiality and an intensification of certain more undesirable features of the language — such as the use of passive constructions and of participles instead of verbs, and the substitution of compounds for sentences.

This being the condition of the later literature, it is of so much the higher consequence that there is an earlier literature, to which the suspicion of artificiality does not attach, or attaches at least only in a minimal degree, which has a truly vernacular character, and abounds in prose as well as verse.

The results of the very earliest literary productiveness of the Indian people are the hymns with which, when they had only crossed the threshold of the country, and when their geographical horizon was still limited to the river-basin of the Indus with its tributaries, they praised their gods, the deified powers of nature, and accompanied the rites of their comparatively simple worship. At what period these were made and sung cannot be determined with any approach to accuracy: it may have been as early as 2000 B. C. They were long handed down by oral tradition, preserved by the care, and increased by the additions and imitations, of succeeding generations; the mass was ever growing, and, with the change of habits and beliefs and religious practices, was becoming variously applied — sung in chosen extracts, mixed with other material into liturgies, adapted with more or less of distortion to help the needs of a ceremonial which was coming to be of immense elaboration and intricacy. And, at some time in the course of this history, there was made for preservation a great collection of the hymn-material, mainly its oldest and most genuine part, to the extent of over a thousand hymns and ten thousand verses, arranged according to traditional authorship and to subject and length and metre of hymn: this collection is the **Rig-Veda** *Veda of verses* (ꣳꣳ) or of *hymns*. Other collections were made also out of the same general mass of traditional material: doubtless later, although the inter-



relations of this period are as yet too unclear to allow of our speaking with entire confidence as to anything concerning them. Thus, the **Sāma-Veda** *Veda of chants* (*sāman*), containing only about a sixth as much, its verses nearly all found in the Rig-Veda also, but appearing here with numerous differences of reading: these were passages put together for chanting at the soma-sacrifices. Again, collections called by the comprehensive name of **Yajur-Veda** *Veda of sacrificial formulas* (*yajus*): these contained not verses alone, but also numerous prose utterances, mingled with the former, in the order in which they were practically employed in the ceremonies; they were strictly liturgical collections. Of these, there are in existence several texts, which have their mutual differences: the **Vājasaneyi-Saṁhitā** (in two slightly discordant versions, **Mādhyandina** and **Kāṇva**), sometimes also called the White Yajur-Veda; and the various and considerably differing texts of the Black Yajur-Veda, namely the **Tāittirīya-Saṁhitā**, the **Māitrāyaṇī-Saṁhitā**, the **Kapishthala-Saṁhitā**, and the **Kāṭhaka** (the two last not yet published). Finally, another historical collection, like the Rig-Veda, but made up mainly of later and less accepted material, and called (among other less current names) the **Atharva-Veda** *Veda of the Atharvans* (a legendary priestly family); it is somewhat more than half as bulky as the Rig-Veda, and contains a certain amount of material corresponding to that of the latter, and also a number of brief prose passages. To this last collection is very generally refused in the orthodox literature the name of Veda; but for us it is the most interesting of all, after the Rig-Veda, because it contains the largest amount of hymn-material (or *mantra*, as it is called, in distinction from the prose *brāhmaṇa*), and in a language which, though distinctly less antique than that of the other, is nevertheless truly Vedic. Two versions of it are extant, one of them in only a single known manuscript.

A not insignificant body of like material, and of various period (although doubtless in the main belonging to the latest time of Vedic productiveness, and in part perhaps

the imitative work of a yet more modern time), is scattered through the texts to be later described, the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Sūtras*. To assemble and sift and compare it is now one of the pressing needs of Vedic study.

The fundamental divisions of the Vedic literature here mentioned have all had their various schools of sectaries, each of these with a text of its own, showing some differences from those of the other schools: but those mentioned above are all that are now known to be in existence; and the chance of the discovery of others grows every year smaller.

The labor of the schools in the conservation of their sacred texts was extraordinary, and has been crowned with such success that the text of each school, whatever may be its differences from those of other schools, is virtually without various readings, preserved with all its peculiarities of dialect, and its smallest and most exceptional traits of phonetic form, pure and unobscured. It is not the place here to describe the means by which, in addition to the religious care of the sectaries, this accuracy was secured: forms of text, lists of peculiarities and treatises upon them, and so on. When this kind of care began in the case of each text, and what of original character may have been effaced before it, or lost in spite of it, cannot be told. But it is certain that the Vedic records furnish, on the whole, a wonderfully accurate and trustworthy picture of a form of ancient Indian language (as well as ancient Indian beliefs and institutions) which was a natural and undistorted one, and which goes back a good way behind the classical Sanskrit. Its differences from the latter the following treatise endeavors to show in detail.

Along with the verses and sacrificial formulas and phrases in the text of the Black Yajur-Veda are given long prose sections, in which the ceremonies are described, their meaning and the reason of the details and the accompanying utterances are discussed and explained, illustrative legends are reported or fabricated, and various speculations, etymological and other, are indulged in. Such matter comes



to be called *brāhmaṇa* (apparently *relating to the brahman or worship*). In the White Yajur-Veda, it is separated into a work by itself, beside the *saṁhitā* or text of verses and formulas, and is called the *Çatapatha-Brāhmaṇa Brāhmaṇa of a hundred ways*. Other similar collections are found, belonging to various other schools of Vedic study, and they bear the common name of *Brāhmaṇa*, with the name of the school, or some other distinctive title, prefixed. Thus, the *Aitareya* and *Kāuṣītaki-Brāhmaṇas*, belonging to the schools of the Rig-Veda, the *Pañcaviṅça* and *Ṣaḍviṅça-Brāhmaṇas* and other minor works, to the Sāma-Veda; the *Gopatha-Brāhmaṇa*, to the Atharva-Veda; and a *Jāiminīya-* or *Tala-vakāra-Brāhmaṇa*, to the Sāma-Veda, has recently (Burnell) been discovered in India; the *Tāittirīya-Brāhmaṇa* is a collection of mingled *mantra* and *brāhmaṇa*, like the *saṁhitā* of the same name, but supplementary and later. These works are likewise regarded as canonical by the schools, and are learned by their sectaries with the same extreme care which is devoted to the *saṁhitās*, and their condition of textual preservation is of a kindred excellence. To a certain extent, there is among them the possession of common material: a fact the bearings of which are not yet fully understood.

Notwithstanding the inanity of no small part of their contents, the *Brāhmaṇas* are of a high order of interest in their bearings on the history of Indian institutions; and philologically they are not less important, since they represent a form of language in most respects intermediate between the classical and that of the Vedas, and offer specimens on a large scale of a prose style, and of one which is in the main a natural and freely developed one — the oldest and most primitive Indo-European prose.

Beside the *Brāhmaṇas* are sometimes found later appendices, of a similar character, called *Āraṇyakas* (*forest-sections*): as the *Aitareya-Āraṇyaka*, *Tāittirīya-Āraṇyaka*, *Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka*, and so on. And from some of these, or even from the *Brāhmaṇas*, are extracted the earliest *Upa-niṣads* (*sittings, lectures on sacred subjects*) — which,



however, are continued and added to down to a comparatively modern time. The Upanishads are one of the lines by which the Brāhmaṇa literature passes over into the later theological literature.

Another line of transition is shown in the Sūtras (*lines, rules*). The works thus named are analogous with the Brāhmaṇas in that they belong to the schools of Vedic study and are named from them, and that they deal with the religious ceremonies: treating them, however, in the way of prescription, not of dogmatic explanation. They, too, contain some mantra or hymn-material, not found to occur elsewhere. In part (ṛgveda or kalpa-sūtras), they take up the great sacrificial ceremonies, with which the Brāhmaṇas have to do; in part (gṛhya-sūtras), they teach the minor duties of a pious householder; in some cases (sāmāyācārika-sūtras) they lay down the general obligations of one whose life is in accordance with prescribed duty. And out of the last two, or especially the last, come by natural development the law-books (dharma-śāstras), which make a conspicuous figure in the later literature: the oldest and most noted of them being that called by the name of **Manu** (an outgrowth, it is believed by many, of the Mānava Vedic school); to which are added that of Yājñavalkya, and many others.

Respecting the chronology of this development, or the date of any class of writings, still more of any individual work, the less that is said the better. All dates given in Indian literary history are pins set up to be bowled down again. Every important work has undergone so many more or less transforming changes before reaching the form in which it comes to us, that the question of original construction is complicated with that of final redaction. It is so with the law-book of Manu, just mentioned, which has well-founded claims to being regarded as one of the very oldest works of the proper Sanskrit literature, if not the oldest (it has been variously assigned, to periods from six centuries before Christ to four after Christ). It is so, again, in a still more striking degree, with the great legendary

epic of the **Mahābhārata**. The ground-work of this is doubtless of very early date; but it has served as a text into which materials of various character and period have been inwoven, until it has become a heterogeneous mass, a kind of cyclopedia for the warrior-caste, hard to separate into its constituent parts. The story of **Nala**, and the philosophical poem **Bhagavad-Gītā**, are two of the most noted of its episodes. The **Rāmāyaṇa**, the other most famous epic, is a work of another kind: though also worked over and more or less altered in its transmission to our time, it is the production, in the main, of a single author (**Vālmiki**); and it is generally believed to be in part allegorical, representing the introduction of Aryan culture and dominion into Southern India. By its side stand a number of minor epics, of various authorship and period, as the **Raghuvaṇṣa** (ascribed to the dramatist **Kālidāsa**), the **Māghakāvya**, the **Bhaṭṭikāvya** (the last, written chiefly with the grammatical intent of illustrating by use as many as possible of the numerous formations which, through taught by the grammarians, find no place in the literature).

The **Purāṇas**, a large class of works mostly of immense extent, are best mentioned in connection with the epics. They are pseudo-historical and prophetic in character, of modern date, and of inferior value. Real history finds no place in Sanskrit literature, nor is there any conscious historical element in any of the works composing it.

Lyric poetry is represented by many works, some of which, as the **Meghadūta** and **Gītagovinda**, are of no mean order of merit.

The drama is a still more noteworthy and important branch. The first indications of dramatical inclination and capacity on the part of the Hindus are seen in certain hymns of the **Veda**, where a mythological or legendary situation is conceived dramatically, and set forth in the form of a dialogue — well-known examples are the dialogue of **Saramā** and the **Paṇis**, that of **Yama** and his sister **Yamī**, that of **Vasishtha** and the rivers, that of **Agni** and the other gods — but there are no extant intermediaries between these



and the standard drama. The beginnings of the latter date from a period when in actual life the higher and educated characters used Sanskrit, and the lower and uneducated used the popular dialects derived from it, the Prakrits; and their dialogue reflects this condition of things. Then, however, learning (not to call it pedantry) intervened, and stereotyped the new element; a Prakrit grammar grew up beside the Sanskrit grammar, according to the rules of which Prakrit could be made indefinitely on a substrate of Sanskrit; and none of the existing dramas need to date from the time of vernacular use of Prakrit, while most or all of them are undoubtedly much later. Among the dramatic authors, Kālidāsa is incomparably the chief, and his *Çakuntalā* as distinctly his masterpiece. His date has been a matter of much inquiry and controversy; it is doubtless some centuries later than our era. The only other work deserving to be mentioned along with Kālidāsa's is the *Mṛcchakaṭī* of Çūdraka, also of questionable period, but believed to be the oldest of the extant dramas.

A partly dramatic character belongs also to the fable, in which animals are represented as acting and speaking. The most noted works in this department are the *Pañcatantra*, which through Persian and Semitic versions has made its way all over the world, and contributes a considerable quota to the fable-literature of every European language, and, partly founded on it, the comparatively recent and popular *Hitopadeça* (*salutary instruction*).

Two of the leading departments of Sanskrit scientific literature, the legal and the grammatical, have been already sufficiently noticed; of those remaining, the most important by far is the philosophical. The beginnings of philosophical speculation are seen already in some of the later hymns of the Veda, more abundantly in the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Āraṇyakas*, and then especially in the *Upanishads*. The evolution and historic relation of the systems of philosophy, and the age of their text-books, are matters on which much obscurity still rests. There are six systems of primary rank, and reckoned as orthodox, although really standing in no

accordance with approved religious doctrines. All of them seek the same end, the emancipation of the soul from the necessity of continuing its existence in a succession of bodies, and its unification with the All-soul; but they differ in regard to the means by which they seek to attain this end.

The astronomical science of the Hindus is a reflection of that of Greece, and its literature is of recent date; but as mathematicians, in arithmetic and geometry, they have shown more independence. Their medical science, although its beginnings go back even to the Veda, in the use of medicinal plants with accompanying incantations, is of little account, and its proper literature by no means ancient.

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