

INDIAN CIVILIZATION AND ITS ANTIQUITY.

BY

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PREFACE.

The world was created, according to the old Testament, about 4000 years before the birth of Christ. The earlier of the orientalist, some of whom took to the study of Sanskrit with commendable zeal and industry, set to themselves the arduous task of compiling political and literary histories of India. In so doing, they were confronted with a mass of materials found in the Indian chronicles, called the Puranas, which claim for the Indians a civilization which commenced thousands and thousands of years before the birth of Christ. It is a claim which these orientalist found it unable to support, in as much as they could not conceive of the existence of the world prior to 4000 B. C. The composition of the Vedas of the Hindus was therefore placed by these scholars between 1500 and 500 B. C., the authenticity of the Puranas was rejected, and the Ramayana and the Mahabharata were treated as mere epics without any historical foundation at all. Advance of knowledge in recent times has served to remove from the minds of present-day scholars the implicit faith in the biblical dogma referred to above. Yet, it is an almost universal belief with the educated people of modern times that the world was created only a few thousand years ago, and that the oldest civilization cannot date farther back than, say, 15 thousand years before Christ. This assumption would seem to be most absurd to those who have entered into the spirit of the ancient Indian culture, unbiased by any judgment passed by modern scholars on the antiquity of such a culture. The idea of the absolute creation of the Universe, out of nothing, at a particular point of time, is more than an ordinary human being can conceive, in as much as it involves an

attribution to God of such human characteristics as desire, want, and striving for the attainment of an wished for object, and thus reduces him to the level of an imperfect and human being. We are, therefore, justified in assuming without entering upon a philosophical discussion of the subject, that the world is eternal with God and creation means nothing more than the re-construction and re-moulding of matter, which, to a certain extent, takes place every moment. If the world is eternal—and it cannot be otherwise—what justification there is for the assumption that the civilization of which we can have only a glimpse, through records of a few thousand years only, is the only civilization known to the world? Is it not quite reasonable to assume that an infinite number of movements of civilization came upon and passed away from the face of the earth? We have, of course, no history of these civilizations, and naturally so. Can history have a record of what takes place during an infinite number of years? Modern people have compiled a history for the last few centuries only. Let them proceed in their present method of compilation for a few thousand years more, and they would find the task to be hopeless. It is physically impossible for a human being to go through a history which contains a detailed survey of all that takes place during, say, ten thousand years, not to speak of a longer period. We may, therefore, safely assume that the idea of keeping a chronological and detailed history of the world must be given up after, say, fifteen thousand years, if not earlier. What would our historians do then? They would, in all probability, cull out of the past history some of the most important facts and arrange them in a method which was followed by the authors of the Indian Puranas. The Puranas are nothing but records of kings, sages, and important events that took place, in some cases, many thousands of years apart from one another. These records have been retained in the

Puranas only on account of their moral, social, and religious significance. The ancient Indians realised the futility of keeping a detailed history of the world which is eternal, and of their own civilization, which, we have every reason to believe, was the most ancient known to the modern world, and had therefore to record ancient events of especial importance in a way which differs from the method followed by the modern historians. That being so, we cannot discard the authenticity of the Puranas and consider them as a collection of mythical legends and anecdotes only.

We look upon the Puranas as having a historic basis. They are, with the Vedas and the Tantras, the most ancient literature of the Indians that have been preserved, after countless acts of destruction of books and libraries by ignorant people. The comparative modernness of the language in which the Puranas and the Tantras were written does not justify the conclusion that they are of comparatively modern origin, in as much as the language of the Tantras and the Puranas have been, for obvious reasons, revised from time to time, and new facts introduced into this group of literature.

According to the Puranas, the world is eternal, creation being taken to mean periodical reconstruction after dissolution. The age of the present Kalpa, *i.e.*, of the world from the time of its last reconstruction to the current year is 1955, 885027 years. This is a figure which is based upon a tradition, as transmitted from generation to generation, through our science, history, and scriptures.

It is not expected that the majority of the modern scholars would accept these views, at any rate, the present generation of them ; but this much can be asserted without the least hesitation that Indian civilization is much older than hitherto it has been considered to be. I propose to furnish the educated public with materials warranting a revision of the ideas hitherto entertained by them with

regard to the antiquity of the Indian civilization. I have touched upon the subject broadly in this paper, under four different headings, *vis.*, (1) Phallism and the spread of Indian culture, (2) Gipsies and the spread of Indian culture, (3) Indian chemistry and its antiquity, and (4) Words borrowed from Sanskrit. Each of these would justify my views that our estimate about the antiquity of Indian civilization is to be revised in the light of a huge mass of materials to be found in Indian books which have not yet been studied at all by modern scholars. As for instance, I may point out that books on astrology and chemistry, the Puranas, and the Tantras have not been studied properly and intensively. It is high time that these books should be studied carefully and their contents utilised with a view to build up a history of ancient Indian culture and civilization. It is a pity that no Indian University has hitherto made any arrangement for the teaching of such subjects as Indian chemistry and medicine, Indian astronomy and astrology, the Tantras, and the Puranas. These are subjects which are more suited to the spirit and genius of the Indians than are some of the subjects on which our educated countrymen have been wasting their time and energy without any appreciable benefit, moral or material, to themselves or to their country.

As regards the extent to which I have availed myself of the works of others, and the portions of the thesis which I claim as original, I have clearly indicated them in their proper places. The following is a rough list of books showing the sources on which I depended mainly for materials for my thesis ;—

1. Encyclopoedia of Ethics and Religion.
2. Encyclopoedia Britanica.
3. Works of Chaucer, Spencer, and other mediaeval English authors.

4. Books on Philology.
5. Some of the Puranas and the Tantras.
6. Books on Indian astronomy and astrology.
7. Books on Indian Medicines.
8. All the available books and manuscripts on inorganic chemistry and alchemy of the Hindus, some of which have not yet been published.
9. History of Hindu chemistry by Dr. P. C. Roy.
10. Chemistry in Iraq and Persia in the 10th century A. D. by H. E. Stapleton M.A. B.Sc. (Oxon).
11. Phallism in ancient worship by H. M. Westroppe and P. S. Wate.
12. Natural History of Language by T. G. Tucker.
13. Life of Paracelsus by Swainson.
14. Life of Paracelsus by Hartmann.
15. Ancient History of the Near East, by H. R. Hall.
16. *Virgin of the World* by Dr. Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland.
17. Works of Robert Boyle.

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The 7th March, 1928.

} BHUDEB MOOKERJI.

ERRATA.

			PAGE.	LINE.
Read	"when"	for "whem"	... 4	13
"	समजु	for समन्त 51	6
"	"11th"	for "14th" 73	8
"	"9th"	for "15th" 73	12
"	"evident"	for "evidenced"	... 75	8

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Chemists of the organic school—charaka, susbruta, and their predecessors
Chemists of the metallic school
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Chandra Sena
Ravana
Rama Chandra
Mandavya
Shambhu
Nagarjuna
Nitya-natha
Govinda
Bagbhat, the Junior
Ananta Deva Suri
Rasa-jala-nidhi
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Reasons why Ar-Razi was indebted to the Indians for his knowledge of metallic chemistry
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