

THE SECT OF MAHÁRÁJAS.

HISTORY
OF THE
SECT OF MAHÁRÁJAS,
OR VALLABHÁCHÁRYAS,
IN
WESTERN INDIA.

by
Karsandas Mulji

“HAVE NO FELLOWSHIP WITH THE UNFRUITFUL WORKS OF DARKNESS, BUT RATHER
REPROVE (OR EXPOSE) THEM.”—EPIHESIANS V. 2.



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PREFACE.

It is still a general complaint that comparatively little is known of the religious, moral, and social state of the Hindus. This ignorance of their actual condition results not so much from a want of research and observation, as from the limits imposed on inquiries respecting the people of India, conducted by distinguished scholars on the one hand, and by popular writers on the other. . Their creed and customs are supposed by many to be not only of an immeasurable antiquity, but of a well-nigh unchangeable fixedness. The Orientalist, attracted by the singular philological and mythological curiosities which are discovered in the Vedas, the oldest of Sanskrit works, breathes so much their ancient spirit, and sympathizes so much with the pretensions ages ago urged in their behalf, that he believes they must, to the present day, have no small share of their ancient authority and respect. The popular observer looks merely to

the surface of Hindu society, forgetful that the jealousy and secrecy of caste conceal to a great extent the mainspring and action of Hindu life. Even intelligent natives themselves look little beyond their own immediate sphere, having no care or interest in the affairs of their neighbours. Hinduism is consequently imagined to be very much an abiding and universal system of faith and manners, without reference to the great changes which it has undergone in the course of time, and the great diversity of the forms which it has assumed over the wide extent of this great and diversified country. The fact is that, within a certain range, Hinduism has been ever on the move. The Vedic songs recognized, if not very clearly, the existence of the great Creator and Governor of the Universe. They contained many fresh and beautiful allusions to the phenomena of nature, and many striking personifications of the forces and agencies intermediately regulating these phenomena. The lively spirit of these primitive songs had well-nigh entirely disappeared at the time of the composition of the Bráhmaṇas (or Brahmanical Directories), when reverential worship was to a great extent laid aside for the art of the magician and conjurer, dealing with the gods through *mantras*, charms, and complicated cere-

monial manipulations. The Philosophical Schools, originating in the revolt of the inquiring mind of the country from the puerilities and inanities thus manifested, formed a new era, in which atheistic and pantheistic speculation became predominant. These Schools prepared the way for the Buddhist Revolution, which gave social and religious liberty to all its adherents, in opposition to the Caste system, which had begun to be fostered by the Brahmans shortly after the entrance of the Áryas into India; and which almost completely altered the national creed. The revival of Brahmanism by the craft of its partisans, and the persecution resorted to by its kingly adherents, after a thousand years' depression, was not effected in its pristine form. Its strength lay in its religious orders; and its great champions, such as Śankarácharya, and his associates and successors, assumed an importance never before conceded to mere individuals of the priesthood. They became the oracles and pontiffs of the country; but they did not long maintain an undivided sway among its various tribes. The people of India had their favourite gods in the extensive pantheon of Brahmanism, and, particularly, in its now established triads. The aggregation of legends connected with individual gods, gave

scope to the popular choice; and the spirit of sectarianism became rampant among them. The devotees of the different gods were the leaders in this movement, and everywhere they had a large following. One sect was for the supremacy of Vishnu; another for that of the deified king Krishna, set forth as an avatára of Vishnu; a third for that of Śiva; and a fourth for that of his consort (the *Devī*, or goddess, emphatically so called), or of the female energies in general.

In all these changes—for an elucidation of which in their main features the reader is referred to Professor H. H. Wilson's valuable Sketch of the Religious Sects of the Hindus—the moral restraints of Hinduism, such as they were in its earlier days, have nearly perished. Krishna's conversion into the god of love and lust, and the worship of the *Śaktis*, or female energies, have introduced a moral plague into India, the ravages of which are both appalling and astounding. The readers of this History of the Maháráj or Vallabháchárya Sect, and of the various documents included in its Appendix, will find this assertion but too amply vindicated. It is put forth simply in the interests of truth and purity. Its author does not apologize for its revelations, which have all been

tested by the keen and impartial investigations of a Court presided over by British judges; but he expresses the hope that they will not be lost, either upon the European or Indian public. The lessons which they teach are so obvious, that it is not necessary to draw them in this place.

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