

**EPOCHS OF INDIAN
HISTORY; ANCIENT INDIA,
2000 B.C.-800 A.D.**

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Epochs of Indian History; Ancient India, 2000 B.C.-800 A.D. by Romesh Chunder Dutt

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

THE present volume is the first of a series of EPOCHS OF INDIAN HISTORY. To write a history of India on the scale of a Freeman, or even of a Macaulay, would, from the multiplicity and diversity of detail, be a task of superhuman magnitude. The story of India during the past four thousand years is the story not of one country but of many countries, not of one nation but of many nations, told not in one language but in many languages, and influenced in turn by the greatest religions of the world. In consequence we find the best historical work in the Indian field is bestowed upon special periods or particular areas. The result is evident in the shorter histories which attempt to cover the whole ground. There is a universal want of balance; the writer insensibly, but inevitably, brings to the front the epoch he has studied in detail, or the district where his experience has been gained. The present Series will endeavour to correct this tendency by assigning each epoch to a writer who has made it a subject of special research; while it will be the task of the Editor to endeavour to preserve continuity on the one hand and to prevent overlapping on the other.

The volume now published summarizes the history of ancient India,—or more properly, of those northern regions that first came under the influence of Aryan civilization—down to the time when the Hindu sovereignties were swept away for ever by Muhammadan invaders from the north. The history of those invaders and of the dynasties they founded will form the subject of another volume. Southern India—the Dravidian Peninsula—long maintained an independent civilization. It never was—it is not yet—more than partially Aryanized; the Moslem occasionally raided through but never remained. On its shores, too, the European explorer first set his foot, and within its territories French and English had their final struggle for Eastern Empire. The history of Drávida, down to the time when the death of Tippu Sultán made it irretrievably a British Province, will thus naturally constitute a third epoch. Between North and South lies the middle land of the Dekhan. It, too, has a history of its own. At first the wilderness of Dandaka, peopled with strange monsters; later the home of the conquering Andhras; subsequently the debatable land whence it was the ambition of every warlike follower of the Prophet to carve for himself a kingdom; and finally the seat of the Hindu empire of the Mahrattas,—its story furnishes a fourth epoch. The end of the Mysore wars, the overthrow of the Mahratta power, and the pensioning of the Moghul kings of Delhi, occurring as they do within a period of twenty years, mark the *definite establishment* of the British Ráj throughout

all India south of the Himalayas; and therefore the history of British India will be the history of India in the nineteenth century.

While it is hoped that the political history of the various epochs will be found sufficient for the student and in accordance with the latest results of research, the first aim of the writers will be to give a history of the Indian people, to follow the varied development of institutions and constitutions, to mark the growth and decay of literature and science, to watch the constant flux of law and religion. It is not perhaps too much to hope that a truer knowledge of the not inglorious past of the races who, in the inscrutable course of events, have come under the dominion of the people of Great Britain, will help to make the bonds between the two nations closer and more enduring than any that the power of the sword alone can forge. Though in the execution the measure of success may vary, the same spirit and purpose will animate the different volumes of the Series.

J. A.

NOTE.

The spelling of proper names is according to the system authorized by the Government of India, except in the case of a few well-known words, as Punjab, where a change from the authorized form would be pedantic. The accent marks a long vowel, and all the vowels are sounded as in the Latin languages.

ANCIENT INDIA.

EPOCH I.—VEDIC AGE.

HINDU SETTLEMENTS ON THE INDUS.
B.C. 2000—1400.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

It has been observed, with much truth, that the early civilization of mankind was determined by natural causes, or, in other words, by the fertilizing power of great rivers and by the influence of a warm and genial climate, conducive alike to the production of crops and to the comfort of man. Other causes have exerted a greater influence in more modern times, and a temperate or cold climate has fostered the more robust civilization of these days; but in the remote past we shall seek in vain for the first glimpses of human civilization except on favoured spots, where Nature helped man by copious and fertilizing inundations, and a warm and genial climate.

Modern researches have shown that between thirty and forty centuries ago, civilization was not the common property of the human race, but was confined almost exclusively to four favoured spots in the Old World. The

L.H.

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valley of the Nile was the seat of a powerful empire, and of a very ancient civilization. The valley of the Euphrates and the Tigris similarly witnessed the civilization of powerful Semitic nations—the Assyrians, and the Babylonians—flourishing within its confines and imparting its light to surrounding regions. The valley of the Hoang Ho and the Yangse Kiang was similarly the home of an ancient Turanian civilization which flourishes to this day after the lapse of thousands of years. And lastly, the valley of the Indus and its tributaries witnessed the earliest form of civilization developed by a section of those Aryan races,* who in the present day rule the world, and carry civilization to the remotest portions of the globe. So universal is the fact of civilization, in these days, that it is difficult to conceive that it was confined to four isolated spots in the world only a hundred generations ago; and that the vast spaces between these favoured and very limited areas were filled by swarms of hunting and pastoral tribes, warring against each other, migrating in hordes with their tents and cattle from place to place, leaving no trace of their movements or their national existence in the records of history, leaving no mark in the annals of human progress, literature, and science.

* Recent anthropological discoveries have proved that the nations which are known as the Aryan races in Europe and in Asia, viz., the Teutons, the Celts, the Slavs, the Italics, the Hellenes, the Persians, the Hindus, &c., are not all actually descended from the same stock, although they speak languages derived from the same ancient tongue, of which the Sanscrit language is the oldest and nearest specimen. It is supposed that the primitive Aryans, dwellers probably of Central Asia and Eastern Europe, spread their conquests on all sides and imposed their language on nations whose descendants still speak modifications of the same tongue. It is convenient to speak of these Aryan-speaking nations of the modern day as Aryan nations. The Hindus claim that they are actually descended from the primitive Aryan stock.

The history of civilization, of the infant civilization of mankind, belongs to these four countries. The light has broadened and expanded as the day has advanced, but mankind will ever look back with interest on the misty dawn of civilization, on the small beginnings of progress and knowledge, for which the enlightened and mighty nations of the modern world are indebted to the early shepherds and cultivators of Egypt and Babylonia, of China and India. To Greece and to Rome belongs the credit of catching the light from the East, and reflecting it with tenfold lustre on the West.

In studying the history of the earliest civilized nations of the world, we are unable to fix dates, or to trace the course of events with the degree of accuracy which marks modern history, or even the history of Rome and Greece. But nevertheless we possess sufficient materials with regard to the earlier nations to ascertain the general course of events, to mark the great results achieved from age to age, and to trace the progress of knowledge, literature, and science, through the successive epochs of their national existence.

If this is true of Egypt, and Babylonia, and China, it is still more so in respect of India. The hieroglyphic records of the Egyptians tell us about ancient kings and pyramid-builders, of dynasties, invasions, and wars. The cuneiform inscriptions of Assyria and Babylon tell us much the same kind of story. And even the ancient records of China tell us more about kings and dynasties than about the progress and civilization of the people.

The ancient Hindu works, with which Europe has become familiar within the last hundred years, are of a different character. They tell us little of kings and dynasties; and even when such lists are available, they are bare lists of names, and have little value in a true historical sense. On the other hand, the copious litera-