

**SELECTIONS FROM
THE
MAHĀBHĀRATA**

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Selections from the Mahābhārata by Francis Johnson

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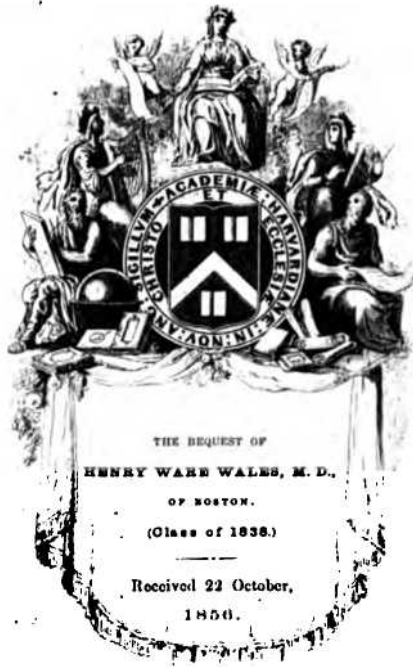
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FRANCIS JOHNSON

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FROM THE

MAHÁBHÁRATA.

EDITED BY

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THE Vocabulary annexed to the following Selections from the *Mahābhārata* has been compiled upon a plan similar to that adopted in the *Mitra-lābha*; and will, it is hoped, be found adequate to remove every obstacle which might retard the progress of the Sanskrit Student.

Although the style of the *Mahābhārata* is, for the most part, sufficiently perspicuous, seldom offering examples of long and intricate compounds; still, it may not be out of place, to apprise the Student, that numerous deviations from the ordinary rules of grammar are to be met with in the course of this immense poem. Even within the limited compass of the following Extracts, several anomalies of this kind occur; such as, the omission of *visarga*; the coalition of two words which the rules of *sandhi* forbid to combine; the use of the second form of the indeclinable past participle, although the verb be not preceded by a particle; and the elision of the augment of the preterite, or its insertion between two prepositions.

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With a solitary exception or two, the metre is either the common *sloka* of sixteen syllables, or that called *Indra-vajra*; for an account of which, the Student may consult the Appendix to *Mitra-lābha*.

The Preface, which furnishes a general outline of the subject-matter of this great poem, and the Annotations which are interspersed throughout the following pages, are both from the able pen of Professor WILSON; and will doubtless be acknowledged greatly to enhance, if not solely to constitute, the merit of the work.

F. J.

1st January, 1842.

PREFACE.

THE Mahábhárata and Rámáyana were designated by Sir WILLIAM JONES, the two epic poems of the Hindus. The appropriateness of the epithet has been denied by some of those ultra-admirers of Virgil and Homer, who will allow the dignity of the *Epos* to be claimed by none but the objects of their idolatry: and, in the restricted sense in which a poem is entitled *epic*, agreeably to the definition of Aristotle, it may indeed be matter of question, if the term be strictly applicable to the Hindu Poems. Although, however, it might not be impossible to vindicate their pretensions to such a title, yet it is not worth while to defend them. It matters little what they are called; and they will not lose their value, as interesting narratives of important events, as storehouses of historical traditions and mythological legends, as records of the ancient social and political condition of India, and as pictures of national manners, if, instead of *epic*, they be denominated *heroic* poems.

The Mahábhárata, then, is a heroic poem in eighteen 'Parvas,' Cantos or Books; which are said to contain 100,000 'slokas' or stanzas. The printed edition contains 107,389 slokas; but this comprises the supplement called Hari-vansa, the stanzas of which are 16,374, and which is certainly not a part of the original Mahábhárata. There is reason to believe that the primary authentic poem was of a still more limited extent than it would reach even after the deduction; for it is said, in the first book, that, exclusive of its

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episodes, the poem consisted of 24,000 slokas. Some of the episodes are equivocal additions; others spring naturally out of the business of the story; and many of them are, no doubt, of considerable antiquity.

The author of the poem is said to be KRISHNA DWAIPÁYANA, the 'Vyása' or arranger of the Vedas, and the actual father of the two princes PÁNDU and DHRITARÁSHTRA, whose progeny are the principal characters of the fable. He taught the work to his pupil VAISAMPÁYANA, who recited it at a great sacrifice celebrated by JANAMEJAYA, the great-grandson of ARJUNA, one of the heroes of the poem. As we have it, it is said to have been repeated by SAUTI the son of LOMAHARSHANA to the Rishis, or sages, assembled on occasion of a religious solemnity in the Naimisha Forest.

The subject of the Mahábhárata is a war for regal supremacy in India, between the sons of two brothers, PÁNDU and DHRITARÁSHTRA. The sons of the former were five in number; YUDHISHTHIRA, BHIMA, and ARJUNA, by one of his wives, PRITHÁ; and NAKULA and SAHADEVA by his other wife, MÁDRÍ. DHRITARÁSHTRA had as numerous a family as King Priam: but they were all sons, with the addition of a single daughter. Of the hundred sons, DURYODHANA was the eldest, and the foremost in hate and hostility to his cousins.

Although the elder of the two princes, PÁNDU, 'the Pale' (as the name denotes), was rendered by his pallor (which may be suspected of intimating a leprous taint), incapable of succession. He was obliged, therefore, to relinquish his claim to his brother; and retired to the Himálaya mountains, where his sons were born, and where he died. Upon his death, his sons, yet in their boyhood, were brought to Hastinápura by the religious associates of PÁNDU's exile, and were introduced to DHRITARÁSHTRA as his nephews.