

**THE INDO-ARYANS:
THEIR HISTORY,
CREED AND PRACTICE**

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The Indo-Aryans: Their History, Creed and Practice by Ramachandra Ghosha

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RAMACHANDRA GHOSHA

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TO

THE REV. K. M. BANERJEA, LL. D.,

HON. M. B. A. S., F. U. C.,

HONORARY CHAPLAIN TO THE BISHOP OF CALCUTTA,
WHO OCCUPIES A CONSPICUOUS POSITION AMONG THE EMINENT
SCHOLARS OF THE DAY, AND WHO HAS PLACED THE
STUDENT OF VAIDIK LITERATURE UNDER DEEP AND LASTING
OBLIGATION BY HIS RECENT SUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT TO
ESTABLISH THE RELATION BETWEEN THE RIG-VEDA
AND THE ASSYRIAN INSCRIPTIONS,

THIS VOLUME

IS DEDICATED AS A SINCERE MARK OF PROFOUND REGARD
AND DEEP GRATITUDE,

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE.

THE precise object of the following pages is to present to the reader certain facts regarding the history, creed and practice of the Indo-Aryans, as far as these can be obtained from a study of ancient Sanskrit Literature. In taking up such extensive and complicated subjects I had to work up the materials which I had collected for many years ; and these materials often so much embarrassed me by their copiousness and diversity that I had little hope of benefiting from them. There is, indeed, a dense mist of prejudice and preconceived opinions which always impede such investigations. But it should be frankly stated that great advances have since been made in the field of Sanskrit research, though much remains as uncertain and unsettled as before. The laborers in the field have now greatly increased ; and their researches reflect lasting honor upon them. I need not give their names here when I have referred to them so frequently in the text and in the foot-notes ; but I should only acknowledge with deep gratitude that I have greatly availed myself of their writings.

The Vedas are the gigantic labors of the Hindû mind. They have already attracted the attention of some of the best scholars of Europe and America. They are guidebooks in all researches into the civilization of the ancient Hindûs, on which history cannot throw the least light ; though it must be admitted that the information to be gleaned from them is very scanty. Indeed, India never produced a Xenophon or a Thucydides ;

but nevertheless history can be built up from the materials which lie buried in those ancient documents, by simply distinguishing facts from the shoals of mystical legends and mythological drapery which are found to envelop them. The age in which the Vedas and their appendages were composed, has exercised the blandest influence upon all succeeding periods of Indian history ; every later branch of literature is closely connected with the Vaidik traditions ; the religious and moral ideas have been derived from them ; the later mythology has also developed out of them ; and the Hindû life, in all its aspects, has been moulded by old traditional precepts.

Though the researches of occidental savans into the Vedas are alike profound and accurate, they carry us into a labyrinth of heterogeneous materials, which to digest and at last to present in a readable shape is indeed a hard task. The general deductions and opinions of one Sanskritist in the West are in some cases not found to tally with those of his brother Sanskritist. Thus in many cases they, far from helping us to attain the truth, often throw great doubts and confusion on many an important and salient point. I have, therefore, generally avoided raising issues with them whenever I happened to find myself to differ widely from any one of them on such controverted points, and have only tried to arrive at a definite conclusion whenever that was possible. To claim to have certainly arrived at a literary truth is highly presumptuous in a country such as we live in, where the spirit of Niebuhr has not as yet been attained.

At all events their contributions towards ancient Sanskrit Literature have elucidated many knotty problems ; which could never have been solved by the Indian Pandits, who hardly possess a scientific turn of mind ; and have at last brought to our knowledge an immense store of information of vital importance which had been so long hid from us by the dishonorable attempts of the Brahmans, who debarred all but themselves from reading the Vedas. It is, however, a curious commentary on the vicissitudes of human affairs that the proud descendants of the holy Rishis should consume their midnight

oil on the banks of the Ganges, over their sacred books, published for the first time on the banks of the Neckar and the Thames, by those, whom they look upon as Mīchhas.

My warmest thanks are due to my esteemed friend the Hon'ble Pyārimohana Mukhopādhyāya, of Uttarapara, for kindly placing at my disposal various books and manuscripts a reference to which was necessary in preparing these pages for publication.

R. G.

CALCUTTA, *May*, 1881.