

**THE BIRTH OF THE WAR-
GOD, A POEM, TR.
FROM THE SANSKRIT
INTO ENGLISH VERSE**

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The birth of the war-god, a poem, tr. from the Sanskrit into English verse by Kalidasa & Ralph T. H. Griffith

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KALIDASA & RALPH T. H. GRIFFITH

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THE
BIRTH OF THE WAR-GOD.

A POEM BY KÁLIDÁSA.

Translated from the Sanskrit into English Verse,

BY

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"SPECIMENS OF OLD INDIAN POETRY."



Under the Patronage of the Oriental Translation Fund.

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P R E F A C E.

OF the history of KÁLIDĀSA, to whom by general assent the KUMÁRA SAMBHAVA, or BIRTH OF THE WAR-GOD, is attributed, we know but little with any certainty; we can only gather from a memorial-verse which enumerates their names, that he was one of the 'Nine Precious Stones' that shone at the Court of VIKRAMÁDITYA, King of OUJEIN, in the half-century immediately preceding the Christian era. As the examination of arguments for and against the correctness of this date is not likely to interest general readers, I must request them to rest satisfied with the belief that about the time when VIRGIL and HORACE were shedding an undying lustre upon the reign of AUGUSTUS, our poet KÁLIDĀSA lived, loved, and sang, giving and taking honour, at the polished court of the no less munificent patron of Sanskrit literature, at the period of its highest perfection.

Little as we know of Indian poetry, here and

a

there an English reader may be found, who is not entirely unacquainted with the name or works of the author of the beautiful dramas of *SAKONTALÁ* and *THE HERO AND THE NYMPH*, the former of which has long enjoyed an European celebrity in the translation of *SIR WILLIAM JONES*, and the latter is one of the most charming of *PROFESSOR WILSON*'s specimens of the Hindú Theatre; here and there even in England may be found a lover of the graceful, tender, picturesque, and fanciful, who knows something, and would gladly know more, of the sweet poet of the *CLOUD MESSENGER*, and *THE SEASONS*; whilst in Germany, he has been deeply studied in the original, and enthusiastically admired in translation,—not the Orientalist merely, but the poet, the critic, the natural philosopher,—a *GOETHE*, a *SCHLEGEL*, a *HUMBOLDT*, having agreed, on account of his tenderness of feeling and his rich creative imagination, to set *KÁLIDÁSA* very high among the glorious company of the Sons of Song.*

That the Poem which is now for the first time

* Goethe says :

Willst du die Blüthe des frühen, die Früchte des späteren Jahres,
 Willst du was reizt und entzückt, willst du was sättigt und nährt,
 Willst du den Himmel, die Erde, mit einem Namen begreifen ;
 Nenn' ich Sakontalá, Dich, und so ist Alles gesagt.

See also Schlegel's *Dramatic Literature*, Lect. II., and Humboldt's *Kosmos*, Vol. II. p. 40, and note.

offered to the general reader, in an English dress, will not diminish this reputation is the translator's earnest hope, yet my admiration of the grace and beauty that pervade so much of the work must not allow me to deny that occasionally, even in the noble Sanskrit, if we judge him by an European standard, KĀLIDĀSA is bald and prosaic. Nor is this a defence of the Translator at the expense of the Poet—fully am I conscious how far I am from being able adequately to reproduce the fanciful creation of the sweet singer of OÙJEIN; that numerous beauties of thought and expression I may have past by, mistaken, marred; that in many of the more elaborate descriptions, my own versification is 'harsh as the jarring of a tuneless chord' compared with the melody of KĀLIDĀSA'S rhythm, to rival whose sweetness and purity of language, so admirably adapted to the soft repose and celestial, rosy hue of his pictures, would have tried all the fertility of resource, the artistic skill, and the exquisite ear of the author of LALLA ROOPĪ himself. I do not think this Poem deserves, and I am sure it will not obtain, that admiration which the Author's masterpieces already made known at once commanded; at all events, if the work itself is not inferior, it has not enjoyed the good fortune of having a JONES or WILSON for Translator.

It may be as well to inform the reader, before he wonder at the mis-nomer, that the **BIRTH OF THE WAR-GOD** was either left unfinished by its author, or time has robbed us of the conclusion; the latter is the more probable supposition, tradition informing us that the poem originally consisted of twenty-two cantos, of which only seven now remain.

I have derived great assistance in the work of translation from the Calcutta printed edition of the poem in the Library of the East-India House; but although the Sanskrit commentaries accompanying the text are sometimes of the greatest use in unravelling the author's meaning, they can scarcely claim infallibility; and, not unfrequently, are so matter-of-fact and prosaic, that I have not scrupled to think, or rather to feel, for myself. It is, however, PROFESSOR STENZLER's edition, published under the auspices of the Oriental Translation Fund (a society that has liberally encouraged my own undertaking), that I have chiefly used; valuable as this work is (and I will not disown my great obligations to it), it is much to be regretted that the extracts from the native commentators are so scanty, and the annotations so few and brief.

And now, one word as to the manner in which I have endeavoured to perform my task:—though

there is much, I think, that might be struck out, to the advantage of the poem, this I have in no instance ventured to do, my aim having been to give the English reader as faithful a cast of the original as my own power and the nature of things would permit, and, without attempting to give word for word or line for line, to produce upon the imagination impressions similar to those which one who studies the work in Sanskrit would experience.

I will not seek to anticipate the critics, nor to deprecate their animadversions, by pointing out the beauties of the Poet, or particularizing the defects of him and his Translator; that the former will be appreciated, and the latter kindly dealt with, late experience makes me confident; so that now, in the words of the Manager in the Prelude to the HERO AND THE NYMPH, "I have only to request the audience that they will listen to this work of KÁLIDÁSA with attention and kindness, in consideration of its subject and respect for the Author."

ADDERLEY LIBRARY,
Marlborough College, April, 1853.

PRELIMINARY NOTE.

PRONUNCIATION.

As a general rule, the Sanskrit vowels are to be sounded like those of the Italian alphabet, except the short or unaccented *a*, which has the sound of that letter in the word *America*: “*pauṣīt*,” a learned man, being pronounced *pauṣīt*.

<i>ā</i> , long or accented ...	like <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> .
<i>e</i>	like <i>e</i> in <i>they</i> .
<i>i</i> , short or unaccented, like <i>i</i> in <i>pick</i> .	
<i>ī</i> , long or accented ...	like <i>i</i> in <i>pique</i> .
<i>o</i>	like <i>o</i> in <i>go</i> .
<i>u</i> , short or unaccented, like <i>u</i> in <i>full</i> .	
<i>ū</i> , long or accented ...	like <i>u</i> in <i>rule</i> .

The diphthongs *ai* and *au* are pronounced severally like *i* in *rise* and *ou* in *our*.

The consonants are sounded as in English. In the aspirates, however, the sound of *k* is kept distinct; *dh*, *th*, *ph*, *bh*, &c. being pronounced as in *red-hot*, *pent-house*, *up-hill*, *abhor*, &c. *G* is always hard, whatever vowel follows.

IN HIMĀLAYA the accent is on the *second* syllable.