



never strong enough to set up a lasting power. The other states seized upon every chance of asserting their own independence; and the hegemony which individual princes were able to establish seldom out-lived more than a few generations. CHAPTER VII.

Every state had its own prince, its own feudatory chieftains, and its own separate constitution. The demesne of the prince occupied the centre of his dominion; whilst the fiefs of his several chieftains were distributed around. The royal demesne had a tendency to diminish with the grant of new fiefs; but at times it had a tendency to expand with new acquisitions arising from lapses or forfeitures. Originally the princes and their respective chieftains formed a military aristocracy. Each prince had probably in ancient times his own special band of companions, sworn to live or die in his defence. It seems probable that in Rajpootana, as in Europe, the close personal tie between the prince and his followers was superseded by a feudal relation between lord and vassal. Traces of the original institution were to be found at a comparatively recent period amongst the Rajpoot principalities of the Peninsula.³⁹ Each prince had also his own council of chieftains, in which all questions were discussed, whether of local or imperial interest. The Ranas of Meywar were nominally the sovereign lords of all. On grand occasions, when the general peace or welfare were concerned, the Rana convened a great assembly of all the princes and chieftains of Rajast'han. Accordingly, as every subject had been pre-

Rajpoot consti-
tutions.

³⁹ See especially Marco Polo's account of the five kings of the Tamil country, which will be brought under review in chap. viii.



CHAPTER VII. viously discussed in the local councils, every prince and chieftain of the separate states attended the Rana's assembly, fully prepared to take his part in the imperial council.

Civil adminis-
tration.

It would, however, appear that, in the progress of political development, the Rana of Meywar seems to have called in the aid of a civil power to neutralize the encroachments of military feudatories. Tod alludes to the "good times" of Meywar, in which the Rana was aided by a council of four ministers of the crown and their deputies; and promulgated all the legislative enactments in which the general rights and wants of the community were involved. In this civil administration neither the feudatory princes, nor their respective chieftains, had any share or concern.⁴⁰ Tod is unable to furnish any explicit information upon the development of this system of civil government. The wars between the Mahrattas and Rajpoots, which prevailed during the greater part of the eighteenth century and the earlier part of the nineteenth, had reduced the old Rajpoot constitutions to a state of comparative chaos.

Civil adminis-
tration of Ava
or upper Bur-
ma.

Fortunately the existing constitution of the kingdom of Ava, or upper Burma, will be found to throw considerable light upon the subject.⁴¹ The sovereigns of Burma claim with some show of reason to be of Rajpoot descent. Their usages and ideas are in general accordance with those of the ancient Kshatriyas. But the power of the old military

⁴⁰ Tod's *Rajast'han*, vol. i. Feudal System in *Rajast'han*, chap. ii.

⁴¹ The statements as regards the existing constitution of the kingdom of Ava are chiefly based upon certain notes which were taken by the author during a semi-political mission to Mandalay and Bhamo in the year 1870. They are, however, in general accordance with the information supplied by F. Sangermano, "Description of the Burmese Empire." Rome, 1833.



feudatories has been crushed out by the growth of an official and non-hereditary nobility. The consequence has been, that the Burmese constitution has neither an aristocratic element nor a popular one. It consists of mere civil and military officials, whose title and position entirely depend upon the will of the sovereign. It is thus a bureaucracy of the worst form, for it is altogether wanting in that hereditary influence and national spirit, which are necessary to impart stability and consistency to the imperial rule.

The central authority at Mandalay, the present capital of Burma, directs and controls the entire administration of the kingdom. It consists of two great councils, namely,—

1st. The supreme council and high court of appeal, known as the Hlot-dau.

2nd. The privy or palace council, known as the Byadeit.

The Hlot-dau, or supreme council of Ava, corresponds to the royal council of four ministers of the crown, and their deputies, which is mentioned by Colonel Tod. It may therefore be accepted as a modern development of the royal council which existed under the old Ranas of Meywar. It exercises all the powers of a senate, a high court, and a cabinet. Its functions are legislative, judicial, and executive. As a senate, it possesses a constitutional power of *veto* to any act or order of the king. As a high court of civil and criminal justice, it tries all important cases, and is the highest court of appeal. As a cabinet, it exercises all the powers of government; and every order of the king is issued by the Hlot-dau in the name of the ministers of whom the



CHAPTER VII. court is composed. The court consists of the four Woongyees, or great ministers, and the four Woon-douks, or assistant ministers. The crown prince is ex-officio president of the council; but a still higher throne is set apart for the king, on which his majesty occasionally takes his seat.

The Byadeit,
or privy council.

The Byadeit, or palace council, is still more closely associated with the king, and it is doubtful whether it ever existed in Meywar. It consists of four ministers of the interior, who are the private advisers of the king, and take charge of the treasury, and all receipts and disbursements.

Substitution of
officialism for
feudalism.

The Hlot-dau, or supreme council, and the Byadeit, or privy council, thus form the two governing departments of the administration of Ava. Like the courts of the Normans and Plantagenets, both departments invariably accompany the king whenever he makes a progress within his own dominions. But in upper Burma, the old feudal element, which still prevails in Rajpootana, has entirely passed away. The two councils are composed of subservient smooth-tongued officials, whose ideas and aspirations are all centred in the king. They are the shadow without the substance of a constitution. They, however, serve to give a seeming permanence to the government of the kingdom, and perhaps hold it together, in the same way that officialism and routine held together the Byzantine empire for generations after its life-blood had ebbed away.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE BRAHMANICAL REVIVAL, A.D. 600—1600.

THE seventeenth century ushers in the history of modern India. In the Punjab and Hindustan the Mussulmans had founded the Mogul empire, and established its ascendancy from the mountains of Bactria and Cashmere to the delta of the Ganges. In the Dekhan the lesser Mussulman sovereignties had overthrown the last of the old Hindú empires, and were engaged in wars amongst themselves, or in extending their arms into the southern Peninsula. Meantime a new power appeared in the Eastern seas, which was destined to hold an imperial sway over the whole Indian continent. In 1600 the East-India Company obtained its first charter from Queen Elizabeth. In 1605 the emperor Akber died at Agra, and was succeeded by his son Jehángír, the grandfather of Aurangzíb. In 1613 the English built their first factory at Surat, and concluded their first treaty with emperor Jehángír. In 1639 they founded Madras; in 1661 they obtained Bombay; and in 1678 they settled at Calcutta. These factories grew into cities, and became the centres of trade; they are now the capitals of the Anglo-Indian empire.

CHAP. VIII.

India from the seventh to the seventeenth centuries.



CHAP. VIII.

Stagnation in
Hindú develop-
ment.

The early English adventurers appeared in India exactly ten centuries after the pilgrimage of Hiouen-Thsang. In England it is comparatively easy to realize the vast interval which elapsed between the seventh century and the seventeenth. The wars of the early English, their townships and gemots, had been succeeded by the manufacturing cities, the parliaments, and the political and religious activity of the Elizabethan era. But in India the interval is scarcely appreciable; in all essentials the people were the same in the seventeenth century as in the seventh. Buddhism had been overthrown, but the religion of the Jains remained. Islam again had planted mosques and schools throughout Hindustan and the Dekhan; but it could not modify the general idolatry.¹ The social and religious life of the great bulk of the Hindú population underwent no perceptible changes. In the days of Alexander and Megasthenes, the masses worshipped the sun and the rivers, sacrificed to Vishnu and Siva, paid reverence to naked Yogis, and burnt living widows with their dead husbands. Ten centuries later Hiouen-Thsang beheld similar scenes; and ten centuries later still the early English adventurers were gazing upon the same mysterious world.

Expulsion of
Buddhism.

The most important event in the history of the interval is the expulsion of the Buddhist monks from India. Of the revolution which subverted

¹ The annals of Mussulman India are chiefly valuable for the illustrations they furnish of the political and religious life of the Mussulmans themselves. They throw little or no light upon the civilization of Hindustan; and but little on that of the Dekhan and Peninsula. They may be said to commence in A.D. 665, twenty years after the departure of Hiouen-Thsang, when the Arabs conquered Scinde. But it was not until 1001 that Mahmúd of Cabul invaded Hindustan; and it was not until 1205, or two centuries after Mahmúd, that Kootub-ud-din, the first Mussulman sovereign of India, was crowned king at Lahore.



Buddhism very little is known. No tradition of any value has been preserved. But still it is not difficult to arrive at the fact. In the seventh century, when Hiouen-Thsang visited Benares, the city was already more Brahmanical than Buddhist. It was the centre of the worship of Iswara or Siva, and swarmed with naked fanatics, who rubbed themselves with ashes, and practised religious austerities. Magnificent temples were built of stones richly carved, and wood choicely painted; whilst a brass colossal statue of the god, nearly a hundred feet high, filled the Chinese pilgrim with respectful awe. The centre of Buddhism was at Sárnáth in the immediate neighbourhood. This was the old deer-forest in which Gótama Buddha had first turned the wheel of the law. On this holy spot a vihára had been erected in the life-time of the apostle; and when Hiouen-Thsang visited the locality, stupas and viháras were to be seen in all directions. Here also had been founded one of those magnificent colleges or Sanghárámas, which were so famous in Buddhist India. But the Sangháráma at Sárnáth was not a flourishing institution in the seventh century. It only contained fifteen hundred Srámans, and they were all followers of the little Vehicle. In the present day Sárnáth is in ruins. Two great towers are still standing, and traces of the old college are still to be found; whilst relics and images of great variety have been discovered within the mounds. The ashes and charred remains sufficiently indicate that the whole was destroyed in some sudden conflagration; and as Buddhist pagodas have been converted into Brahmanical temples, suspicion points to a sudden outbreak instigated by the Bráhmans. Possibly



CHAP. VIII. some bitter disputation had been brought to a violent close; and a nest of infuriated fanatics had poured out of Benares to destroy the heretics and atheists of Sárnáth as enemies of the gods. Possibly, also, the popular veneration and respect for the holy men had been blunted by charges, such as those which a woman brought against Gótama, and which were freely levelled against the English clergy prior to the destruction of the monasteries. At present, however, the story lies beneath the mounds; Sárnáth was sacked and burned at the instigation of the Bráhmans.²

² A legend of Divodás, a king of Benares, has been related in several Purānas, which may possibly refer to this revolution. Siva is said to have been desirous of occupying Benares, and sent Nikumbha to persuade the prince to embrace Buddhism. Accordingly Divodás became a follower of Buddha, and was expelled from Benares, and founded another city on the banks of the Gomati.—Vishnu Purāna, Wilson's translation, edited by Hall, vol. iv., pp. 33, 40.

General Cunningham, who conducted many excavations around Sárnáth in 1835-36, writes as follows:—"From the fifth to the seventh century the decline of Buddhism was gradual and gentle. But from the eighth century the fall was rapid and violent. New dynasties arose who knew not Sákya Muni; and the Tuars of Delhi, the Rahtors of Kanouj, and the Chándels of Mahoba, succeeded to the vast empire of Silāditya. The rise of all these families has been traced to the eighth century; and both coins and inscriptions remain to attest their Brahmanical belief. But Buddhism continued to linger in Benares, Malwa, and Guzerat; and was not finally extinguished until the eleventh or the twelfth century, when the last votaries of Buddha were expelled from the continent of India. Numbers of images, concealed by the departing monks, are found buried near Sárnáth; and heaps of ashes still lie scattered amidst the ruins to show that the monasteries were destroyed by fire."

Major Kittoe, who in 1851 carried on more extensive excavations in the same neighbourhood, confirmed the conclusions of General Cunningham. He wrote:—"All has been sacked and burned; priests, temples, idols, all together; for in some places bones, iron, wood, and stone are found in huge masses; and this has happened more than once."—Cunningham's *Bhilsa Topes*, chapter xii. See also *Archæological Reports*.

Probably it was at this time, or at some earlier period, that Kanouj abandoned Buddhism and embraced the religion of the Bráhmans. The fact is dimly indicated in the legend of Viswámitra, the son of the king of Gadhi or Kanouj, who is said to have been originally a Kshatriya, and subsequently to have become a Bráhman. See *History*, vol. ii., *Rāmáyana*, chap. iv. Kanouj was subsequently the centre of orthodox Brahmanism, and supplied Brahmanical teachers to Bengal, whose descendants are still known as Kulin Bráhmans.



The appearance of the Jains is another revolution of which no record has been preserved. The religion of the Jains had for its object the liberation of the soul from the trammels of existence. It did not, however, accept the doctrine of annihilation or Nirvána, but assigned a spiritual life to the liberated soul in some undefinable mansion of the blessed. It taught certain precepts of strict morality which would seem to identify it with that school of Buddhism which was known as the little Vehicle.³ The Jains worshipped saints who had effected their deliverance from the universe, rather than deities who ruled the universe, and the names of their twenty-four saints or Tirthankaras, commencing with Adináth and ending with Parisnáth and Mahá-víra, are held in the profoundest veneration. The Jains were divided like the Buddhists into monks and laymen. Originally some of the sects abandoned all clothing, like the gymno-sophists of old; but the Jain monks in general are not only clothed, but distinguished as the "white-robed." Their shrines are stately and mysterious buildings of marble, generally standing in remote and secluded situ-

CHAP. VIII.
Jains of western
India.

³ The eight deadly sins of the Jains are somewhat puerile; they were as follows.—(1) Eating at night. (2) Slaying an animal. (3) Eating the fruit of trees that give milk. (4) Tasting honey or flesh. (5) Taking the wealth of others. (6) Committing adultery. (7) Eating flowers, butter, or cheese. (8) Worshipping the gods of other religions.—*Asiatic Journal*, vol. xvii., 1824; vol. xvi., 1834.

It is difficult to say how far the Jains were connected with the little Vehicle. It has already been seen that Síláditya, king of Kanouj and Magadha, was a follower of the great Vehicle, and held a famous public disputation between the two Vehicles. A legend has been preserved in the Mahátma, or sacred chronicle of the mountain Satruniya, that the Buddhists held a public disputation with the Jains and gained the victory, whereupon Síláditya became a Buddhist; but that subsequently the Jains defeated the Buddhists, whereupon Síláditya became a Jain. See Forbes's *Ras Mala*, vol. i.



CHAP. VIII.

ations. Many are to be found in Rajpootana, especially on Mount Abú; but perhaps the most celebrated are those which have been built on the holy mountain of Satruniya in the Guzerat peninsula, over against the city of Palitana.⁴ The Bráhmans expelled the Buddhists, but they could not wholly expel the Jains; and to this day the Jains form an interesting element in the Hindú population, especially in western India.

Triumph of Siva
at Benares:
phallic form of
Iswara.

The overthrow of Buddhism at Sárnáth must have sent a thrill through the religious world of India. From time immemorial Benares had been the great centre of religious thought; the resort of all new teachers who aspired to be the founders of sects; the final court of appeal from all conflicting schools, such as those of Mithila, Gour, and Dravira. The destruction at Sárnáth was the triumph of the worshippers of Siva. This deity, the Dionysos of the Greeks, was perhaps the most ancient and most mystic in the Brahmanical pantheon. Iswara or Siva was the first cause, the

⁴ The holy mountain of Satruniya in the south-east of Kattiawar is sacred to Adináth, the first of the twenty-four Tirthankaras, who is said to have emigrated from Ayodhyá at some remote period. On the summit of the mountain is a colossal image of Adináth, hewn out of the solid rock. The mountain itself rises nearly two thousand feet above the plains. Upon these lonely heights the marble shrines of the Jains, with their stately enclosures, half-palace, half-fortress, have been constructed in the upper air, far removed from the ordinary tread of mortals, like the mansions of another world. In the dark recesses of each temple there is one or more images of Adináth, or some other Tirthankara. The alabaster features, wearing an expression of listless repose, are rendered dimly visible by the faint light which is shed by silver lamps. The air is perfumed with incense, and the female votaries, glittering in scarlet and gold, move round in circles barefooted over the polished floors, chaunting their monotonous but not unmelodious hymns. The mountain is one of the first places of Jain pilgrimage; the bridal hall of those who would marry everlasting rest. Many legends are told of fabled kings, who by their austerities and religious services on this sacred ground have thrown off the intolerable load of sin, and attained the blessing of liberation.—Forbes's *Ras Mala*, vol. i., chap. iii.



germ of all things. The linga was the symbol of Siva, and the representative of the supreme being. There was a corresponding symbol of the female sex. These two symbols were the material forms of that creative force, or supreme spirit, which was involved in the conception of Brahma. In the work of creation Iswara, or the germ, expanded into an egg, and evolved within itself the five elements,—earth, water, air, fire, and ether. The egg then separated into two parts, a higher and a lower. The higher portion became the heaven above; the lower portion became the earth beneath. It subsequently formed the universe of all created being: of gods, men, and animals; of mountains, plains, rivers, and seas. When it reached its full expansion it began slowly to diminish. The number of deaths exceeded the number of births. In this way it was gradually reduced to a single germ, which might be symbolized as a dew drop, but might be more exactly described as the centre point of the circle.⁵ Thus universe after universe was created and passed away, after a similar fashion to that already indicated in the myth of a day and night of Brahma.

Ultimately these symbols were personified into a god and goddess; or rather a god and goddess were associated with the symbols. The worship of the male deity exhibited every stage of development. Sometimes it found expression in a pure and elevated adoration of the supreme being as Iswara, in which the worshipper sought to render his body and soul pure and holy in the sight of the creator. Sometimes it degenerated into a wretched asceticism, which

Conception of
Siva and Durgā.

⁵ Faria y Sousa, vol. ii., page 377.



CHAP. VIII.

cultivated a distaste for existence by pondering over the lower instincts and necessities of animal being, and quenched the fire of the passions by a depraved familiarity with the ashes and bones of the dead, and every species of filth and corruption. The worship of the female deity exhibited a similar variety of phases. Sometimes under the names of Durgá, Bhávani, or Párvati, she was adored as the divine ideal of the daughter, wife, or mother. Sometimes, as Bhadrá-Kálí, she was regarded as the patron deity of Thugs and prostitutes. She was also personified as Kálí, the black goddess, the terrible barbarian queen, who revelled in strong wine and flesh meat, in disgusting obscenity, and the blood of human sacrifices. The grosser forms of the worship of Siva and Durgá degenerated into the so-called Tantric religion, which once prevailed throughout a large portion of India, but which there is reason to believe has nearly disappeared from the land. In the Siva cult novices were exposed to every possible allurements, and expected to remain unmoved. In the Kálí cult nudity was worshipped in Bacchanalian orgies which cannot be described.

Sankha Achárya, the apostle of Siva, about A.D. 900.

The triumph of Siva over Buddha is to some extent illustrated by the life and career of Sankha Achárya, who may be termed the apostle of the Saiva religion in its more spiritual form. He was a native of Malabar, and belonged to the tribe of Nambúri Bráhmans. He flourished about the eighth or ninth century of the Christian era. He led the life of a wandering mendicant, and engaged in successful controversies with the Buddhists and Jains. According to local legend, Jain kings were reigning at Kalyan in the Dekhan, and Conjeveram



in the Peninsula, who blasphemed the gods of the Bráhmans and endeavoured to subvert the Brahmanical faith. Accordingly Siva became incarnate as Sankha Achárya, in order to abolish the Jain religion and regulate and reform the Bráhmans. His sect is known as the Smárta, and largely prevails throughout the Peninsula. Its members are distinguished by three horizontal white stripes along their foreheads. Some are called Lingayets; their sect is known as the Jangam. They carry little images of the linga, as the representative of the supreme being, in small silver boxes hanging from the arm.⁶ They bury their dead without burning. They live only on rice, vegetables, and cakes of various grains; and entirely abstain from flesh meat and wine.

CHAP. VIII.

The revival of the worship of Vishnu, the Herakles of the Greeks, seems to have commenced at a later date. Its followers were known as Vaishnavas in opposition to the Saivas or followers of Siva. Its chief apostles were Rámanuja Achárya who flour-

Ramanuja Achárya, the apostle of Vishnu, about A.D. 1200.

⁶ A variety of authorities might be quoted for the statements in the text, including Faria y Sousa, Abbé Dubois, Buchanan, Wilks, and the Mackenzie MSS., of which the author has a large folio volume of extracts and abstracts, compiled by himself more than ten years ago. The vitality of the Smárta religion is proved by the fact that the great Guru Sankha Achárya has been succeeded down to the present day by a line of Gurus, who have been either adopted by the preceding Guru whilst alive, or elected by the disciples after his decease. A successor or representative of the apostle was still living in 1871. His name was Narsingh Achárya. He is called by his disciples the Jagat Guru, or teacher of the world. He is the venerated pontiff of all Hindús holding the Smárta faith. He is a celibate, lives on milk, and is acquainted with Sanskrit, Kanarese, Tamil, and Telugu. He wears a tiara covered with pearls and jewels. In 1871 he was seventy-five years of age, and had adopted a successor. He travels in great state in a special palanquin with an elephant in attendance; and on such occasions is accompanied by a large cortége of Bráhmans and disciples. All the Hindú inhabitants of a town, the Raja not excepted, turn out on his approach to receive him with suitable reverence.—Bowring's Eastern Experiences, page 139. London, 1872.



CHAP. VIII. ished at Conjeveram,⁷ and Rámánand who flourished at Benares. Rámánuja may be referred to the twelfth century. He distinguished himself as the opponent of both Jains and Saivas; and was especially famous for casting out evil spirits and devils. Like Sankha Achárya, he appears to have undertaken missionary circuits over the whole of the Peninsula, fixing his head-quarters at Sriringham, opposite the town of Trichinopoly. His particular sect is known as the Ayengar Vaishnavas, and is distinguished from the Smárta by a vertical mark like a trident, which is painted on the forehead just above the nose.⁸ They abhor Siva, and call him the chief of the Rákshasas, and worship only the Vishnu group of deities. Rámánand of Benares was a disciple who had seceded from Rámánuja. He taught the worship of Vishnu through his incarnations as Ráma and Krishna; and especially sought to abolish caste. But before indicating the various phases in the religion of Vishnu, it will be necessary to glance at the origin and growth of the conception of that deity.

Conception of
Vishnu and
Lakshmi.

Vishnu was originally a personification of the Sun-god as a human hero more or less divine; the celestial ancestor of the Surya-vansa, or "children of the sun." This idea developed into that of deity; the bright god who imparted life and light to the universe; the supreme soul that illuminated the

⁷ Conjeveram, properly Kauchipura, or the golden city, was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Chola. It is situated about forty-eight miles to the south-west of Madras.

⁸ The sectarian mark of the Vaishnavas is called the foot of Vishnu, which is represented by the trident. The sectarian of the Saivas is called the eye of Siva, and is generally in the centre of the forehead, in the middle of the three lines. Siva is fabled to have a third eye there.



universe. In this way the conception of Vishnu CHAP. VIII. assimilated itself to that of Brahma. But still the popular idea of his humanity, of God loving man, could never be eradicated from the popular mind. The worshipper ceased to identify Vishnu with the material sun. The god was supposed to dwell in the heaven of Vaikuntha far away in the blue ether; or in the fabled sea of milk which surrounded the universe;⁹ but still taking a deep interest in the universe and its inhabitants, human and divine. A female divinity was given to him as a wife, the divine Lakshmi; the goddess of good fortune, wealth, and prosperity; the deified embodiment of all that is good and beautiful, pure and affectionate, in an ideal woman, whether as a daughter, a wife, or a mother. Lakshmi was the sea-born goddess; she had risen out of the ocean, like another Aphrodite, to become the bride of Vishnu.

The conception of Vishnu and Lakshmi, dwelling far away as a supreme spirit or spirits in the sea of milk, was too remote for popular sympathy. There was not even a symbol existing, like the linga, that would associate the god with humanity. Accordingly Vishnu was supposed to become incarnate from time to time, for the deliverance of the world from the oppression of giants or demons, the Daityas or Rákshasas of remote antiquity. These incarnations

Ten Avatáras of Vishnu.

⁹ In Hindú geography the universe is a vast circle, consisting of alternate continents and seas formed into concentric rings. Jambu-dwípa, or the earth, is the centre; and the centre-point of the earth is mount Meru; the Himalayas of modern geography; the Meros, or thigh of Zeus, in which Dionysos was concealed after the death of his mother Semele. Jambu-dwípa was surrounded by a sea of salt water. The six remaining continents are of course mythical. The first after Jambu-dwípa was surrounded by a sea of sugar-cane juice; the next by a sea of wine; the next by a sea of melted butter; the next by a sea of curds; then followed the sea of milk; and last of all was a sea of fresh water.



CHAP. VIII. or avatáras are invested with historical significance. They are generally reckoned as ten in number, although in some sacred books there are unimportant additions. In reality they were nothing more than the old gods and heroes of ante-Brahmanical times, who were incorporated into the Brahmanical system, and reproduced as incarnations of Vishnu. In this manner Vishnu is said to have successively become incarnate in four animals,—the fish, the tortoise, the boar, and the lion; and in five human beings,—Vámana, Parasuráma, Ráma, Krishna, and Buddha; and finally he is to appear on a white horse, in what is known as the Kalki avatár, and to destroy the present universe, and bring into existence a purer and better world.

Three Avatáras
referring to
the Deluge.

The myths by which these personifications are represented as incarnations, are the mere inventions of Brahmanical teachers; but they are nevertheless replete with meaning. The fish-god has been worshipped by many races from the earliest antiquity as the ocean deity. He was the Poseidon of the Greeks; the Neptune of the Romans. He is generally symbolized by a rude figure half human and half fish; but the idea was spiritualized by the Vedic Rishis into Varuna, the great god of elemental water, the supreme spirit of the deep seas. The tortoise and boar were apparently deities of a similar character; the gods or symbols of different races. All three deities appear in the Vishnu-avatára myths in association with some legend of a universal deluge. Thus Vishnu became incarnate as a fish in order to save Manu, the ancestor of the human race, from being drowned in the deluge. He became a tortoise in order to rescue the earth from the deluge by taking



it on his back. He became a boar in order to re-
cover the Vedas from the waste of waters. The
myths connected with the remaining avatáras have a
different significance. Vishnu became a lion in order
to destroy certain giants, who were seeking to de-
throne the gods. He became Vámana, or the dwarf,
in order to destroy the giant Bali, who appears to be
identical with Kansa in the Krishna legends. He
became Parasuráma, in order to punish the Ksha-
triyas, who had cruelly oppressed the Bráhmans.
He became Ráma in order to slay Rávana, the
demon king of Lanká in Ceylon. He became
Krishna in order to overthrow the tyrant Kansa.
He became Buddha in order to delude the giants
into neglecting the worship of the deities, and there-
by exposing themselves to certain destruction. The
last incarnation in the white horse avatára may be
dismissed as a theological dream, originating in an
idea, not uncommon amongst suffering humanity,
that the world has sunk into a hopeless state of sin
and sorrow; that man is helpless to work out the
problem of his being; and that the advent of deity
is necessary to the renovation of the universe.

Six of these incarnations of Vishnu possess a substantive historical value, namely, the avatáras as a lion and dwarf, and those of Parasuráma, Ráma, Krishna, and Buddha. One idea runs through them all, namely, that Vishnu became incarnate in order to destroy the giants or demons who sought to dethrone the gods. These giants have been generally identified with the non-Vedic rulers of the country; and no doubt in very ancient legends, such as find occasional expression in the Vedic hymns, the aboriginal or pre-Aryan princes were regarded as giants;

CHAP. VIII.
Six Avatáras re-
ferring to Bud-
dhism.



CHAP. VIII. and like the giants of nursery story were described as demons, ogres, man-eaters, Rákshasas, Daityas, and Asuras. But the myths of the incarnations or avatáras of Vishnu are of a comparatively modern date. They are not mentioned in the more ancient scriptures, such as the hymns of the Rig-Veda or the laws of Manu. They belong to the age of Brahmanical revival, when the persistent efforts of Buddhist teachers to deny the authority of the Vedas, and to dethrone or ignore the gods in general, had created an antagonism which culminated in a persecuting war. The colossal statues of Buddhas and Jain saints would suggest the idea of giants. The fact that Gótama and Adináth were both Kshatriyas would suggest the idea that the war was against Kshatriyas. The ninth avatára is a key to the whole. Vishnu became Buddha to delude the giants into abandoning the worship of the gods, and thereby working out their own destruction.

Incarnations of
Vishnu as Ráma
and Krishna.

Two of these myths, namely, the avatáras of Vishnu as Ráma and Krishna, have been interwoven with the main traditions of the Rámáyana and Mahá Bhárata, and impart a new and religious meaning to the Hindú epics. It will also be seen that a deeper significance underlies the sacred legend, than is involved in the mere antagonism between Brahmanism and Buddhism. The theology of the Bráhmans has always been too abstract and metaphysical for the masses. The bulk of mankind can only worship deified men and women; and unless their affections are brought into play, they have no real devotion. Indeed, without human love and human sympathies, religion drifts into a superstition of selfishness; a mere bartering of prayers, sacrifices,



and alms in exchange for happiness or prosperity.

The leaders of the Brahmanical revival seem to have discerned this important truth. The compilers of the Rámáyana represented Ráma and Sítá as types of a husband and a wife, as well as incarnations of deity. They moved the heart of the Hindú to love and sympathy; and then awakened his adoration for the divine. They employed a mythological machinery, which will appear strange and cumbrous to the European; but which, nevertheless, satisfied the aspirations of the masses by reproducing the supreme spirit in human forms. Vishnu is represented as the supreme spirit, the god above all gods, whose paramount power as the suzerain of the universe was acknowledged by Brahma and all the Vedic deities. The story of his birth, marriage, and exile as Ráma is consequently surrounded by a haze of supernatural details. The Vedic deities are oppressed by Rávana, the giant or demon king of Lanká, the modern Ceylon. They apply to Brahma for succour; but Rávana has performed so many religious merits in former lives that Brahma is powerless to help them. Accordingly Brahma proceeded with the Vedic deities to the sea of milk, where Vishnu was dwelling in unutterable splendour. Vishnu answered their prayers. The supreme god engaged to become incarnate as Ráma, and so effect the destruction of Rávana.

The incarnation of Vishnu is related with such supernatural details as would accord with his divine character. Dasaratha, Mahárajá of Ayodhyá, was without a son. Accordingly he celebrated a great sacrifice to obtain one. The gods came down from heaven and received their shares with their own

Legend of Ráma
as Vishnu.



CHAP. VIII.

Birth of Ráma
as a deliverer.

hands. A portion of the sacred food was given to the three queens, and Vishnu became incarnate in the first queen Kausalyá. At the moment of conception Brahma and the gods appeared in their chariots above the city of Ayodhyá, and sounded the praises of Ráma. At the moment of birth the gods again appeared in the sky and scattered flowers from heaven. The babe revealed his divinity to his mother alone. He was crowned with a diadem of pearls. He had four arms, holding respectively the shell, the chakra, the mace, and the lotos.¹⁰ His mother knew that he was god and adored him. He then concealed his four-armed shape, and assumed that of an ordinary infant, and began to cry. The Mahá-
raja heard the welcome sound and distributed treasures in alms.

Marriage of
Ráma and Sítá.

When Ráma was approaching manhood the sage Viswámitra appeared at Ayodhyá. He explained to the Mahá-
raja that Ráma was Vishnu, and that his female counterpart had been born at Mithilá as Sítá, the daughter of Raja Janaka. Accordingly Ráma was sent to Mithilá under the charge of Viswámitra, and married Sítá in due course; but Janaka stated that she was not actually his daughter, but was found under a furrow when turned up by the plough.¹¹

¹⁰ The frequent representations of Hindú deities with four arms has long been a problem to Europeans. But the so-called idolatry of the Hindús is nothing more than theology in hieroglyphics; and the idols are often two or more conceptions of deities moulded into one form. Vishnu was at once the divine hero of the Kshatriyas, and the supreme spirit of the Bráhmans. As a hero he carried the chakra and mace; as a god he carried the shell and lotos. Ráma exhibits the two-fold character of a hero and devotee throughout his exile.

¹¹ See *Achhyátma Rámáyana*. History, vol. ii., *Rámáyana*. The myth that Sítá sprang from the earth belongs to a class of religious fables, which appear to have originated during the Brahmanical revival. It would seem that certain Bráhmans of this period endeavored to revive the decaying worship of the



The account of the exile of Ráma is evidently a perversion of the original form of the tradition. Amongst the ancient Rajpoots the sentence of exile was carried out with funeral pomp, whenever a prince was deprived of his birthright or declared an outlaw. The ceremony was marked as a day of mourning in the calendar. The offender was clothed in black, and invested with a black sword and buckler, and then placed upon a black horse, and solemnly commanded to depart out of the limits of the kingdom. Some such ceremony was no doubt carried out in the case of Ráma;¹² but the Rámáyana represents him as a religious devotee.

CHAP. VIII.
Exile of Ráma.

The story of this exile presents many beautiful scenes, though it is tedious from the wildness of oriental exaggerations. Brahmanical hermitages are described with groves and pools of water, after the fashion of the hermitage where the Raja Dushyanta discovered the beautiful Sakúntalá. The holy men, however, are constantly harassed by the

Ráma, the
champion of the
Bráhmans.

spirits or elemental deities of the Vedas, by converting the heroes and heroines of Kshatriya traditions into similar personifications. In order to carry out this purpose they appear to have introduced new names and myths into the Mahá Bhá-rata and Rámáyana. This attempt to revive the worship of the Vedic deities utterly failed. Mr Cox, in his *Mythology of the Aryan nations*, has propounded a theory which is too exclusively based upon these later myths.

¹² This ceremony was carried out as late as the seventeenth century in the case of Umra Sing, a prince of Marwar. (See *Tod's Rajasthan*, vol. i., p. 687; vol. ii., p. 44.) Umra went out of Marwar with his personal retainers, and entered the service of the emperor Shah Jehan, the son of Jehángír. He proved a true Rajpoot. He absented himself from court without leave, and spent a fortnight in hunting. On his return the emperor reprimanded and fined him, but he refused to pay. He was then summoned to the presence, but there he stabbed the paymaster to the heart, and drew his sword to cut down the emperor, but shattered the weapon against a pillar. He, however, plied his dagger with such reckless fury, that he slew five Mogul nobles before he was mortally wounded. His retainers perished after the old Rajpoot fashion. They put on saffron garments, and rushed to the palace sword in hand, and slaughtered all they met, until they were at last cut to pieces to a man.



CHAP. VIII.

demon Rákshasas, who spoil the sacrifices. The divine Ráma, and the equally divine Sítá, go from one hermitage to another as incarnations of Vishnu and Lakshmí, receiving adorations and praises from holy sages and pious women. All had been longing for the advent of Ráma; all were rejoicing that the hour of their deliverance was nigh. Ráma becomes the champion of the Bráhmans against the Rákshasas. Occasionally he encounters a demon, and then a combat is described with all the exuberant details, and love of the marvellous, which characterize the Hindú bards. Those whom he kills obtain salvation, and the gods wonder at his benevolence. Meantime the demon king is reigning at Lanká in palaces of gold and gems, seated in gardens of matchless beauty and fragrance, thronged with young and blooming damsels, and surrounded by impregnable fortifications of stone and iron.

Abduction of
Sítá.

The subsequent action of the poem is of a very Asiatic character. The sister of Rávana is smitten with love for Ráma, and offers to become his wife. She is told that Ráma is already married to Sítá, and immediately rushes upon Sítá, on which Ráma's brother draws his sword and cuts off her nose and ears. She goes away breathing vengeance, and after some unimportant incidents, she appears before Rávana at Lanká. She dwells upon the beauty of Sítá, and the demon king is easily induced to attempt the capture of Ráma's wife. He puts on the garb of a religious mendicant, and proceeds to the hut of Ráma. The hero is absent, hunting a deer which had caught the fancy of Ráma. The brother of Ráma is also absent, for Sítá had petulantly insisted on his going out to help Ráma.



The result was that Ravana engaged Sita in delusive conversation, and finally seized her and carried her away to his chariot, and then drove through the air to his palace at Lanká. But Sita would not listen to his suit. If he had vanquished Rama she would have been compelled to become his wife; but until he had conquered Rama, he had established no right over her. Such was the ancient law of war amongst the Kshatriyas.¹³

Rama is in an agony of grief at the loss of his beloved Sita. He bewails her in a fashion which is scarcely compatible with his divine character. He searches for her in all directions, and at length discovers the fate that has befallen her. A monkey prince, named Sugriva, had beheld Ravana and Sita driving through the air. Moreover, Sita had thrown some of her ornaments from the chariot; and these had been preserved by Sugriva, and were at once identified by Rama. An alliance is concluded between Rama and Sugriva. The monkey prince has been deprived of his kingdom and his wife. Rama enables him to recover both, and in return Sugriva sends his monkey armies to help Rama.¹⁴

Rama's alliance
with the Mon-
key Raja.

Rama now prepared to march his army against Ravana. A celebrated monkey chieftain, named Hanuman, had leaped over the strait which separates India from Lanká, and found Sita in the royal gardens, and assured her that deliverance was nigh. Hanuman committed great havoc in the garden, and was ultimately seized by the guards and brought before the demon king. As a punishment

Victory of
Rama over
Ravana.

¹³ See *ante*, p. 23, *et seq.*

¹⁴ An army of bears also joined the monkeys, but their exploits are not deserving of special notice.



CHAP. VIII. his tail was dipped in melted butter and set on fire ; but the monkey escaped from his tormentors, and set fire to the whole city with his burning tail, and then hastened off to carry the glad tidings to Ráma. War was commenced at once. The monkeys are fabled to have built a vast bridge of stone from the continent to the island, and huge rocks are pointed out to this day as the remains of Ráma's bridge. At last, after a series of battles, Ráma and Rávana engaged in a combat of life and death, and the demon king was slain by the hand of Vishnu. But Rávana saved his soul. In his heart he had always adored Ráma. He had perished by the hand of Ráma. The picture of Ráma was before his eye, and the name of Ráma was on his lips, as he drew his last breath ; and his soul was seen to issue from his body in the form of flame and enter the foot of Ráma.¹⁵

Ráma and
Krishna com-
pared.

The legend of Krishna is different from that of Ráma, but indicates a warmer devotion and more impassioned love. Ráma is a family deity, the type of the husband and master of the household. He is proud and serene after the ideal of the Hindú householder. But Krishna is the playful, handsome hero, the universal lover who is idolized by every woman who sees him. Even wives and mothers are fascinated by his presence, and thrilled by his smiles.

Birth of Krish-
na as a cowherd.

Krishna was born amongst the cows in the pleasant meadows of Vrindávana on the left bank of the river Jumna. His father Nanda was a cowherd

¹⁵ For full details, see History, vol. ii., Rámáyana.



of the tribe of Yádavas. The Yádavas were herdsmen, who found their way into western India, and wandered about in carts selling milk and butter in the various towns in the Jumna valley. Opposite to Vrindávana, on the other side of the river Jumna, was the famous city of Mathurá. It stands about half way between Agra and Delhi. The king of Mathurá was an usurper and a tyrant, named Kansa. He was an ally of Jarásandha, the great Raja of Magadha, who reigned over the empire of the Gangetic valley after the manner of Sandrokottos, Asoka, and Síláditya. Kansa had married the two daughters of Jarásandha. Both Kansa and Jarásandha were worshippers of Siva. Kansa had dethroned the Suras, because they persisted in the worship of Vishnu.

CHAP. VIII.

But Krishna was not the actual son of the cow-herd. All was Mayá or delusion. In reality he was a son of Vasudeva and Devakí of the royal house of Sura.¹⁶ The tyrant Kansa had heedlessly permitted Vasudeva and Devakí to marry. He had himself driven the bride and bridegroom in his chariot in the marriage procession. But a voice was heard from heaven saying,—“The son of Devakí will be the destroyer of Kansa.” Then the tyrant was filled with a mortal fear. He seized the bride by the hair and dragged her from the chariot, and drew his sword to slay her. The trembling bridegroom was in an agony. He would make any sacrifice to save Devakí. He took an oath to deliver to the tyrant every child that should be

Kansa, the
usurper and
tyrant.

* * 16 The genealogy is not very clear. Kansa was himself a Sura. The point is not of much consequence in dealing with the legend.



CHAP. VIII.

Birth of Krishna
as a prince of
the Suras.

born. So Kansa stayed his hand, and Vasudeva led away his bride.

Henceforth the wife dreaded lest she should become a mother; the husband dreaded lest his wife should bear a child. At last the trouble came. Kansa knew it was coming. Husband and wife were bound and manacled; the house was locked and barred; and strong guards were posted all around. At night Krishna was born and revealed himself as Vishnu. At that moment the manacles fell to the ground, the doors were opened, and the guards thrown into a deep sleep. The father placed the child in a basket to carry it across the Jumna. It was the rainy season, and the river was swollen to its utmost height. At the touch of Krishna's foot the river became shallow. The rain fell heavily, but Sesha-nága, the many-headed serpent, followed Vasudeva, and canopied the father and the child with his stupendous hoods. In this manner Vasudeva crossed the Jumna, and reached the village of the cowherds. Yasodá, the wife of Nanda, had given birth to a daughter; and Vasudeva changed it for Krishna, and no one knew it. He took the infant girl to his wife's chamber; and at that moment the house was barred, and Vasudeva and Devakí were again in manacles. The infant cried and the guards were awakened. The news of the birth was carried to Kansa. He rushed to the house to kill the child, but the babe ascended to heaven, saying,—“A son is born who will destroy the house of Kansa.” Then Kansa was filled with wrath, and ordered that every male child should be slain throughout the land.¹⁷

¹⁷ Up to this point there is a remarkable resemblance between some incidents



The legend of Krishna now begins to assume something of a human character. Demons are said to have attempted to take the life of the child, and were in turns slaughtered by the infant hero; but otherwise the story is simple and domestic. The little Krishna, dressed in a blue frock, is the delight of his mother Yasodhá. He stumbles about the courtyard, and seizes the tails of the cows and heifers. As he grows older he seems to be imbued with the spirit of mischief. He upsets his mother's butter-churn; and steals the butter from the milk-maids. But still a divine element is exhibited at intervals. On one occasion his mother was about to correct him, when he opened his mouth and showed her the three worlds. One day when the milk-maids were bathing in the Jumna, he ran off with their clothes; and this prank is converted into a religious myth; the milk-maids were punished for having profaned the holy Jumna. But as Krishna

Boyhood of
Krishna: his
amours.

in the legend of Krishna and the gospel narrative. But the resemblance is not that of coincidence but of caricature. Mathurá was the Jerusalem of the Vaishnavas, and Vrindávana was their Bethlehem. Kansa was king Herod; the house of Sura whom he had deposed was the house of David. Jarásandha of Magadhá represented the power of imperial Rome. But Krishna was not born of a Virgin, nor was his reputed father a carpenter. His father Nanda kept cows, and his mother Yasodhá made butter. The antagonism between Vishnu and Siva was, however, strangely analogous to that between Christianity and Judaism. At the birth of Krishna the religious life at Mathurá bore a materialistic resemblance to that which prevailed at Jerusalem at the commencement of the Christian era. The worship of Vishnu, the religion of faith and love, was in abeyance; but the world was in a state of anxious expectation of his coming. The worship of Siva, the religion of good works and sacrifices, was in the ascendant; but the deity was in peril.

But notwithstanding this general resemblance, there was one vital disagreement. The seed of the woman was to bruise the head of the serpent; but the great serpent appeared as the guardian of Krishna.

Another son, known as Bala-ráma, is said to have been a brother of Krishna, and to have been brought up like him in the house of a cowherd. Bala-ráma was devoted to wine, just as Krishna was devoted to women. The conception, however, has found no expression in popular Hinduism. This story is related in History, vol. i., Mahá Bháráta, and Legends of Krishna.



CHAP. VIII.

grew older he became the idol of all the women. They devoted themselves body and soul to him. At the sound of his flute they followed him into the jungle, and danced and sang around him. He was a universal lover, and he reigned supreme in every heart. But he had one favourite mistress in the beautiful Radhá. When he sought the company of Radhá, the rest wept bitterly; when he returned to them, their sorrow was turned into joy.

Victory of
Krishna over
Kansa.

At last the time arrived when Krishna was to destroy Kansa; when Vishnu was to triumph over Siva. The catastrophe is surrounded with myth and miracle. Krishna paid a visit to Mathurá, and played his usual pranks. There was a great exhibition of fighting and wrestling before the Raja. The feats of Krishna excited universal applause, and at length awakened the suspicion and jealousy of Kansa. A quarrel broke out; a combat ensued between Krishna and Kansa, in which Kansa was slain. The son of Sura was restored to the throne of Mathurá, and Krishna became a hero of might and renown.

Migration of
Krishna to
Guzerat.

But the widows of Kansa returned to their father Jarásandha. The wrath of the old sovereign of Magadhá was aroused against Krishna. A war ensued which is scarcely intelligible. In the end Krishna retired to Dwáraká, in western Guzerat.¹⁸ He carried

¹⁸ If Buddha may be read instead of Siva, the story of the war between Krishna and Jarásandha may have a religious meaning. When Alexander invaded India, Vishnu was worshipped at Mathurá on the banks of the Jumna. Arrian (*India*, chap. viii.) expressly states that Herakles (Vishnu) was worshipped by the Suraseni (the descendants of Sura). The Suraseni had two great cities, Methoras (Mathurá) and Cleisoboras (Súrapura) near the river Jovares (Jumna). See Colonel Tod's "Comparison of the Hindú and Theban Herakles," *Asiatic Journal*, vol. v., 1831. The worship of Vishnu may have been subsequently superseded by Buddhism, as indicated by Fah-Hian (see *ante*, page 252); this fact finds expression in the legend of Kansa and Jarásandha. At a still later



away Rukminí, the daughter of the Raja of Vi- CHAP. VIII.
 darbha, and made her his wife. Henceforth he was
 celebrated for the number of his wives; but the fur-
 ther details respecting Krishna are interwoven into
 the traditions of the Mahá Bhárata.¹⁹

The worship of Siva is the religion of good works. The worship of Vishnu, whether as Ráma or as Krishna, is the religion of faith and devotion. The two currents of religious thought may occasionally intermingle in either religion; but still the general line of demarcation may be retained between the two.²⁰ The religion of Siva taught that the soul is saved by good works, such as penances and sacrifices; but it degenerated into the gross materialism of the Tantras. The religion of Vishnu taught that the soul is saved by faith and devotion. In the incarnation of Ráma, faith and love were symbolized by the confidence and affection which prevail between the husband and the wife. In the incarnation of Krishna, faith and love are symbolized by the worship and passion which are associated with the bridegroom and the bride. The religion of Krish-

Saivism, or sal-
 vation by
 merits: Vaish-
 navism, or sal-
 vation by faith.

period the worship of Krishna as Vishnu revived in Mathurá and the Jumna valley; this fact is partly indicated by Hiouen-Tsang (see *ante*, page 268). Ever since the visit of Hiouen-Tsang Mathurá has been the centre of the worship of Krishna.

¹⁹ The whole of the incidents connecting Krishna with the Pándavas may be dismissed as mythical interpolations of a comparatively modern date. The incidents are mere redundancies, in no way necessary to the plot; and his appearance is generally surrounded with some supernatural element which sufficiently betrays its mythical character. They will, however, be found exhibited in the first volume of the present history, in which they are criticized at length.

²⁰ The religion of both Siva and Vishnu have been largely modified by Buddhism; so much so that Siva sometimes represents Buddha, whilst Krishna still more often appears in the same character. The worship of Krishna as Jagannáth is evidently a relic of Buddhism. The idol is carried like the procession of the images of Buddha. Moreover, within the sacred precincts of Jagannáth all caste is laid aside.



CHAP. VIII. na thus presents attractions to the warm Asiatic which can scarcely be conceived by Europeans. The more advanced and spiritual worshippers regard his pranks and amours as Mayá, or delusion; the amusements of the hero before he was conscious of being the deity incarnate; and they adore the idol as the supreme spirit, who dwells in every heart, and is himself the universe. But the mother worships the handsome boy as well as the supreme spirit; the boy who stole the butter and kissed the milkmaids, as well as the youthful deity who opened his mouth and displayed the three worlds. To the neglected wife or the desolate widow, Krishna assumes a warmer character. He is young, beautiful, and divine; the passionate and universal lover. The worshipper aspires to become another Radhá. Ultimately the religion became depraved. A class of impostors appeared who claimed to be incarnations of Krishna; and deluded their votaries into sacrificing their chastity under the plea of being beloved by Krishna, of devoting all to Krishna. Such was the so-called religion of the Mahárajās of Bombay.²¹ India, however, has not been without her reformers. Perhaps the most celebrated is Choitunya, who flourished in Bengal during the early part of the sixteenth century. He revolted against the gross materialism of the age, and especially against the orgies of the Tantras. He imparted a spiritual meaning to the life and acts of Krishna, made war upon caste, denounced widow-burning, and recom-

²¹ History of the Sect of Mahárajās or Vallabhácháryas in western India. Trübner, 1865. Report of the Maharaj Libel Case. Bombay, 1862. A detestable but indescribable materialism, belonging to a primitive worship, seems also to have been associated with a lower form of the Krishna religion, but it has long since been banished to the most remote and secluded localities.



mended the re-marriage of widows. He made Nuddea his centre, but travelled to Gour, Benares, Vrindavana, and Púree. He did not succeed in carrying out all his views, especially as regards the re-marriage of widows, but to this day one-fifth of the population of Bengal, including all the opulent native families of Calcutta, are followers of Choitunya.²²

The association of Siva and Vishnu with humanity have imparted a vitality to the conceptions of those deities which is wanting in that of Brahma. In former times there was an antagonism between the Saivas and Vaishnavas, which ranged them into hostile camps; but in the present day this antagonism is dying out, and the votaries of both deities are engaged in the worship of the supreme being, who is equally identified with Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva. The worship of these three forms of the supreme spirit has thus become the life and soul of modern Hinduism. Sometimes they are separately adored as the creator, the preserver, and the destroyer of the universe, under the name of the Trimúrti, or "three forms;" but they are frequently worshipped as the three in one, and the name of one includes the name of all. The pious Hindú bows his head alike to Vishnu and Siva, to Ráma and Krishna, to Lakshmí and Durgá, or to any of the countless types of deity; but he mutters the mystic word Óm, which includes all the deities, and believes himself to be worshipping the one and the supreme.²³

Worship of
Brahma, Vish-
nu, and Siva as
the Trimúrti.

²² Travels of a Hindoo, by Bholanauth Chunder, vol. i.

²³ The term Óm is the symbol of the Trimúrti. In the original Sanskrit it is spelt with three letters, which may correspond to the letters **A**, **V**, **M**; the **A** representing Brahma; the **V** representing Vishnu; and the **M** representing Siva. In the more ancient Brahmanical ritual, the term included all the gods of earth, sky, and heaven. See History, vol. ii., part v., Brahmanic Period.



CHAP. VIII.

Miscellaneous
deities.

Besides these three great gods, there is a vast number of other deified existences in the Hindú pantheon. They may belong to extinct mythologies; but they are often regarded as forms of one or other of the three great gods,—Brahma, Vishnu, or Siva; or of one or other of their corresponding goddesses,—Saraswatí, Lakshmí, and Durgá.²⁴ Thus there are the seven Rishis sprung from Brahma; the ten Avatáras of Vishnu; the eleven Rudras or forms of Siva; the eight guardian deities of the universe. Others are invested with individual characteristics, which still render them objects of popular worship. Amongst these are Ganésa, the elephant-headed deity of good luck; Kuvera, the god of wealth; Kartikeya, the god of war; Káma, the god of amorous desire; Yama, the god of the infernal regions and judge of the dead. There are also other objects of worship, such as the Sun, the Moon, the Planets, the Serpent, the Bull, the Cow, the Earth, and the Rivers. The names and attributes of these deified existences awaken no associations in the mind of Europeans, and throw no light upon the religious ideas of the Hindús. Indeed they are often dismissed as the offspring of a blind and obstinate idolatry, which corrupts the heart and intellect of the Hindú; when they ought rather to be regarded as crude developments of the affections, which will be abandoned with the advance of education and civilization.

The usages of the people, however, fall under a very different category. They are well worthy of

²⁴ In the more abstract developments of the Hindú religion, the conceptions of gods and goddesses are reduced to mere emblems of the male and female energies, as the first causes of the universe.



study as illustrations of the earlier forms of religious development among the human race. They are best gathered from the narratives of the older European travellers, who faithfully recorded all they saw, and whose truthfulness will be attested by all who are familiar with the sacred books, or with the habits and manners of existing populations.

CHAP. VIII.

Religious
usages, as de-
scribed by old
European tra-
vellers.

The first traveller on record, who visited India after Hiouen-Tsang, was Marco Polo the Venetian. Marco Polo flourished in the latter half of the thirteenth century, when Edward the First sat upon the throne of England, and the last crusade was drawing to a close. He knew nothing of Hindustan or Bengal; but he was acquainted with the coasts of the Dekhan and Peninsula from Guzerat to Comorin, and from Comorin to the kingdom of Telinga or Telugu. His travels appear to have been written at Comorin, the most southerly point of India. He is the first traveller who mentions Comorin. Indeed, notwithstanding its remarkable position, Comorin has never attracted the attention of any Hindú geographer, ancient or modern. He describes it as a very wild country, abounding in bears, lions, and leopards, and especially in monkeys. The monkeys seem to have attracted his particular attention. He says that they were of such peculiar fashion, that they might have been taken for men; a remark which suggests the origin of the monkey warriors in the Rámáyana.²⁵ The region derives its name from a temple which was erected there in honour of Kumári, "the Virgin;" the infant babe who had been

Travels of Mar-
co Polo, 1260-
1295.

²⁵ Marco Polo, Book iii., chap. 23. The edition of the works of this traveller by Colonel Yule is a valuable boon to the student of Asiatic history. The notes are the results of large experience and extensive reading.



CHAP. VIII.

Coromande
country : cha-
racter of the
people.

exchanged for Krishna, and ascended to heaven at the approach of Kansa.²⁶

Eastward of Comorin was the Coromandel country ; the ancient Chola-mandalum. It is the land of the Tamil-speaking people, and extends northward along the Bay of Bengal as far as Telinga or the Telugu country.²⁷ Marco Polo describes the people almost as they might be described now. They were black, naked idolaters, who wore nothing but a cloth around their loins. They worshipped the cow and bull, and no one save the Pariahs would eat beef. They would not kill any animal, so that those who wanted flesh meat, such as kid or mutton, employed Saracens or other foreigners as butchers.²⁸ They plastered their houses with cow-dung. They all sat upon the ground, kings and nobles, as well as common people. The wealthier classes slept in beds of light cane-work, which were drawn up to the ceiling for the sake of coolness, and to escape the bites of tarantulas, or mosquitoes. When a child was born they wrote down his nativity ; that is to say, they noted down the hour, day, month, and age of the moon. The children were black enough, but the parents rubbed them every week with oil of sesamé, which made them as black as devils. They painted their gods black and their devils white.²⁹

²⁶ See *ante*, page 378. Faria y Sousa, vol. ii., page 394. Colonel Yule identifies Kumári with Durgá. This is an error. The temple of Kumári was erected by Krishna Raja of Narsinga, a zealous patron of the Vaishnavas.

²⁷ The frontier between the Tamil and Telugu languages is at Pulicat, twenty-three miles to the northward of Madras. The Dutch built a square fort here in 1609, for the protection of their trade in painted cottons and muslins, for which Telinga was celebrated in former times. Pulicat lake is a favourite pleasure haunt for residents at Madras.

²⁸ By Saracens Marco Polo seems to refer to Mussulmans generally.

²⁹ This is correct. Vishnu in his incarnation as Krishna is always painted