



HISTORY OF
INDIA.
PART II.

Distribution of
the merits of
the Aswamedha

General re-
joicings.

Yudhishtira's
apologies to
Vyása the sage.

Assigns estates
to Vyása, who
transfers them
to the Bráh-
mans.

Proportions of
gifts to the
Bráhmanus.

Yudhishtira's
apologies to the
Rajas.

world endures." Raja Yudhishtira replied :—"All that has come to me has been entirely by your favour." Then Krishna, with all the Rajas and principal Rishis, poured pitchers of water over Yudhishtira and Draupadí, and bathed them. Then all that remained of the medicinal herbs that had been brought to make the homa, was reduced to powder, and a ball of it was given to each of the persons present to eat ; and by so doing Raja Yudhishtira gave to each one a share of the merit of that Aswamedha Yaga ; and last of all Raja Yudhishtira partook of it himself. Then all the musical instruments struck up a symphony of rejoicing for the close of the Yaga ; and Kuntí with all her maidens and dependents manifested every sign of joy, and bestowed great quantities of effects and goods in gratitude to the gods who had enabled her son to perform so great a Yaga and had accepted the sacrifice. And all the materials for the homa were collected into one place, and the Bráhmans uttered blessings over them, and threw them all at once into the fire.

After this, Raja Yudhishtira arose and approached Vyása, and said :—"This Yaga, by your exertions and favour, is now brought to a close ; how can I make sufficient apologies to you for your trouble ?" Vyása replied :—"O Raja, you are my son, and it is my duty to sympathize with you in your concerns ; therefore you have no need for making any apologies to me." The Raja then assigned over to Vyása certain estates well inhabited and cultivated, with abundance of goods and chattels ; and Vyása transferred the whole of them as free gifts to the Bráhmans. Raja Yudhishtira then gave to each of the Bráhmans who had performed the homa, and to each of those who had assisted in the Yaga, a chariot, an elephant, ten horses of the first quality, four maunds of gold, a hundred milch cows with gilded horns, two seers and a half of pearls, and four intelligent slaves, who had learned the Vedas and all other sciences ; and to all the other Bráhmans, who had been present but had not taken a part in the ceremony, Raja Yudhishtira gave half as much. And when the Raja had finished bestowing his largesses upon the Bráhmans, he



turned to the Rajas, and made apologies to each; and he gave to each of the great Rajas a thousand horses of the first quality, and a hundred war elephants, and one crore of gold coin; and to each of the Raja's wives he gave everything that was necessary for a bride on her wedding night, including gold and precious jewels and splendid clothes. Yudhishtira then gave to each of the sons, and kinsmen, and friends of Krishna, twice as much as he had given to the Rajas; and he went respectfully to Krishna, and said:—"I have nothing worthy of your acceptance; but since the Yaga has been completed under your favour, I make a free offering of all its acquired merits to you."

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Distribution of
gifts.

Double gifts to
Krishna's
family.

Raja Yudhishtira then said to his brother Bhīma:—"Take all the Brāhmins and feast them!" So Bhīma feasted all the Brāhmins with the best of victuals and drink in golden trays and vessels; and after the feast he gave the whole of the golden vessels to those Brāhmins. The assembly then broke up, and all the Rajas returned to their own quarters; and the next day Krishna took leave, and set off for Dwāraká; and all the other Rajas took leave in like manner and set off for their respective countries.

Bhīma feasts
the Brāhmins.

Departure of
the Rajas.

The foregoing description of the Aswamedha of Raja Yudhishtira requires but little further comment. The rite of bathing calls for no remark, as it was and is performed at every important ceremony practised by the Hindús, and indeed is especially enjoined as a purifying rite by the Brahmanical law. The rite, in which the Raja ploughed the land set apart for the sacrifice, and the Rání sowed specimens of all the grains that grew in the Raj, was no doubt an ancient ceremony expressive of sovereignty, and appears to have been of Scythian or Buddhist origin. According to a Scythian tradition preserved by Herodotus, a golden plough fell from heaven at a remote period, and was for ever afterwards preserved by the

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foregoing de-
scription of the
Aswamedha.

Ploughing the
place of sacri-
fice a Scythian
or Buddhist
custom.

Scythian tradi-
tion of a golden
plough.

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the Mahawanso
of the plough-
ing of conse-
crated ground
by a Buddhist
sovereign.The Buddhist
procession.Description of
the offering of
the homa.

Royal Tribe as one of the emblems of royalty.²⁰ It is also still more remarkable that a golden plough was used by Buddhist sovereigns at the consecration of a monastery or temple; and a graphic description has been preserved in the Mahawanso of the performance of this ceremony by a monarch who reigned in the third century before the Christian era. The ground was first sprinkled with red sandal-wood, after which two elephants were harnessed to the golden plough, and the Buddhist Raja ploughed along the boundary line, accompanied by the priests and guarded by officials carrying staves of gold and silver. A large company of troops marched in procession, together with beautiful females carrying umbrellas and other decorations, and musicians playing every description of instrument; whilst gorgeous flags tingling with bells were carried in the air, as well as painted vases, glass mirrors, and garlands and baskets of flowers. In this way the Buddhist Raja ploughed the land, passing through many triumphant arches made of plantain trees, whilst a vast multitude waved their handkerchiefs in the air and rent the skies with their enthusiastic acclamations.²¹

To return, however, to the Aswamedha of Raja Yudhishtira. The attempt may now be made to separate those details which appear to belong to the Brahmanical offerings of the homa, from those which seem to refer to the sacrifice of the horse. The homa, consisting chiefly of ghee, was prepared in eight sacrificial pits, and was presented to the gods

²⁰ Herodotus, Book IV. c. 5. It should be remarked that the plough was accompanied by a yoke, or battle-axe, and a drinking-cup.

²¹ Mahawanso, *Turnour's translation*, pages 98, 99. The Chinese traveller, Fa Hian, seems to have witnessed a similar ceremony which, like the above, was performed in the island of Ceylon. *Travels of Fa Hian*, chap. xxxix.



in sacrificial ladles through the medium of fire; and on the present occasion samples of every vegetable, and every medicinal herb growing in the Raj, are said to have been likewise thrown into the homa. When the presentation of homa was over, the remaining portion of the medicinal herbs was reduced to powder and formed into balls; and a ball was given to each person present. By this rite the Raja was supposed to give to one and all a share of the religious merits which had been acquired by the performance of the sacrifice, and which was supposed to wipe off from the account of good and evil deeds, an indefinite number of the evil actions which had been previously committed by the individuals concerned. It should also be remarked that the offering of the homa was exclusively performed by Bráhmans, under the superintendence of the mythical Vyása, and in the presence of all the Rishis who are famous in Brahmanical tradition.

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Vegetables and medicinal herbs thrown into the homa.

Distribution of the religious merit acquired by the homa.

Bráhmans alone engaged.

It will now be seen that the sacrifice of the horse was carried out in a very different fashion; and that the rite was performed not by Bráhmans, but by two of the Pándavas. The place of sacrifice is said to have been paved with bricks of gold; and this costly arrangement was no doubt often carried out when the Aswamedha was performed by a rich and conquering Raja. Solomon overlaid not only the altars but the very temple itself with plates of gold; and amongst the treasures of Croesus were a number of golden bricks which may possibly have been cast for a similar purpose.²² Round the place of sacrifice eight pillars were set up, to which the horse, and perhaps other animals, were tied. The rite was per-

Description of the sacrifice of the horse.

Golden bricks or plates employed in ancient times.

The victims tied to pillars.

Rite performed by Nakula and Sahadeva.

²² Herodotus, Book I. c. 50.



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Speech of the
horse a Brah-
manical inter-
polation.

Unmeaning in-
troduction of
the Brahman
Dhaumya.

Conversion of
the horseflesh
into camphor
and homa.

Vedic idea of
the ascent of
the horse's
head.

formed by Nákula and Bhíma, although various at-
tempts are made, chiefly involving the introduction
of some supernatural detail, to impart a Brahman-
ical tone even to this portion of the narrative. Thus
when Nákula declared that the horse was speaking,
he was probably acting in accordance with a crude
notion that a victim before sacrifice was capable of
prophesying. But the language put into the mouth
of the animal is eminently Brahmanical; for the
horse is said to have exulted in the idea that instead
of going like other sacrificial horses to the heaven of
Indra, he was going beyond it, that is, to the heaven
of Vishnu, because of the presence of Krishna. Again
Dhaumya, the family priest, is introduced, to give
the scimitar to Bhíma, and to perform the senseless
miracle of squeezing milk out of the horse's ear.
The whole concludes with a miracle, in which the
flesh of the horse approximates to camphor, and is
finally converted by Dhaumya into homa. Here
the Brahmanical rite distinctly overlays the original
rite; for it is certain that in the ancient perform-
ance of an Aswamedha, the flesh of the horse was
cooked upon the fire, and was both presented to
the gods and eaten by the assembled guests.²³ The
statement that the head of the horse ascended to
heaven is also a miracle, but originates in a Vedic
idea rather than in the prolific imaginations of the
Brahmanical compilers.²⁴

²³ The first Aswamedha hymn in the Rig-Veda describes the boiling and
roasting of different portions of the flesh, the presentation of a part to the gods,
and the eating of a part by the persons present. See Wilson's *Translation*, Vol.
II. p. 121, *note*.

²⁴ See the second Aswamedha hymn in the Rig-Veda, Wilson's *Translation*,
Vol. II. p. 123, in which the worshipper is supposed to be reciting the following
verse:—"I recognize in my mind thy form afar off, going from the earth below,



One other incident seems to require some explanation. It has already been stated that the horse was originally sacrificed to the Sun; and yet in both the Mahá Bhárata and the Rámáyana the horse is said to have been offered to Indra. This change of deity seems to involve a new stage in the development of the Hindú religion. The worship of the Sun as a material existence had been superseded by the worship of a more human deity and protector in the person of Indra; just in the same way that the worship of the human hero Indra was subsequently superseded by the worship of the great Spirit Vishnu. The circumstances which led to this change in the national religion may be easily conjectured. The Sun is the deity of temperate climates, for it is he who ripens the harvests; but in a tropical climate like India the favourite deity is the one who sends the rain; and the Vedic deity who sends the rain is Indra, the god of the firmament. The subject is a curious one, and will be discussed in a future volume under the head of religion.

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Sacrifice of the
horse to Indra,
instead of to the
Sun, indicative
of an ancient
change in the
national religion.

by way of Heaven, to the Sun : I behold thy head soaring aloft, and mounting quickly by unobstructed paths, unsullied by dust."



CHAPTER XVII.

FINAL TRAGEDIES.

HISTORY OF
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PART II.

Duration of the
Raj of the Pán-
davas for thirty-
six years.

Three incidents
during the
period.

THE story of the Mahá Bhárata virtually ends with the Aswamedha of Raja Yudhishtira. The great war was over; the Pándavas had slain all their enemies; and Yudhishtira had not only been inaugurated in the Raj, but had celebrated the great horse sacrifice which established his sovereignty. A period of thirty-six years is said to have followed, at the expiration of which the Raj of the Pándavas was brought to a close. This period was marked by three incidents; the first of which occurred within a few years of Yudhishtira's inauguration, whilst the other two are connected with the termination of his reign. These three incidents are as follows:—

1st, The exile and death of Mahárajá Dhritaráshtira.

2nd, The destruction of Dwáraká and death of Krishna.

3rd, The exile and death of the Pándavas.

1st. The exile
and death of
Mahárajá Dhri-
taráshtira.

The narrative of the exile and death of the blind old Mahárajá requires no preliminary explanation. It involves, however, a wonderful miracle performed by the sage Vyása, which stands out as one of the finest products of Hindú imagination which can be



found in the Mahá Bhárata. The narrative may be left to tell its own story :—

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Now after Raja Yudhishtira had performed the great Aswamedha Yaga, the Pándavas lived for many years in peace and prosperity under Mahárajá Dhritaráshtira in the city of Hastinápur. But though the Pándavas had succeeded the Kauravas in the rule of the Raj, and were zealous in the performance of every filial duty towards their uncle the Mahárajá, yet Dhritaráshtira could never forget the death of his own sons, and could never forgive Bhíma for having slain Duryodhana. And there sprung up many bitter disputes between Bhíma and the Mahárajá, and Bhíma treated his blind uncle with insult, and refused to obey his commands ; and Dhritaráshtira determined to live at a distance from the brethren. And Dhritaráshtira departed out of Hastinápur, and went away to live in the jungle on the bank of the Ganges ; and he took with him his wife Gándhárí, and Kuntí, who was his brother's widow, and Vidura, and all the older members of the family ; and they abode there on the bank of the Ganges.

Peace and prosperity.

Bitter disputes between Bhíma and the Mahárajá

The Mahárajá departs with Gándhárí and Kuntí to the jungle on the Ganges.

And it came to pass that after some years, the Pándavas were desirous of paying their respects to Mahárajá Dhritaráshtira and the Rání Gándhárí, and to see again all their aged kinsfolk who had sought an abiding place in the jungle. And the five brethren went forth with their wife Draupadí, and paid a visit to the Mahárajá, and all were rejoiced to see them ; but when they asked for Vidura, they were told that he had gone to the bank of the Ganges to die by fasting ; and they hastened to the place where Vidura was, and when they came up to him he was speechless, and gave up the ghost.

Visit of the Pándavas to the Mahárajá.

Death of Vidura.

After this, whilst all were talking together of the husbands, and the sons, and the kinsfolk whom they had lost in the great war of Mahá Bhárata, the sage Vyása appeared amongst them, and said :—"I will this day heal all your griefs : Go you all to the river Ganges, and bathe therein, and there each one of you shall behold the kinsmen for whom you have been sorrowing." So they all went

The sage Vyása promises to assemble the ghosts of all who were slain in the great war of Mahá Bhárata.

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The widows of
the slain bathe
and pray in the
Ganges.

Vyása summons
the ghosts.

The armies re-
appear in all
their pomp as
when alive.

Perfect friend-
ship between
the Kauravas
and Pándavas.

Joy of the liv-
ing in the com-
pany of the
dead.

down to the river, and chose a bathing-place for themselves and families; and Vyása said to them :—"You shall see this night all those whom you desire." And the day passed away so slowly that it seemed like a whole year to them, but at last the sun went down, and they all bathed in the river by command of Vyása, and said their prayers, and went and stood near him; and Raja Yudhishtira and his brethren were on the side of Vyása, and Mahárajá Dhritaráshtira stood before them, and everybody else stood wherever places could be found. Vyása then went into the water, and prayed and bathed; and he then came out and stood by Dhritaráshtira and Yudhishtira, and called out the names of each of the persons who had been slain, one by one. At that moment the river began to foam and boil, and a great noise was heard rising out of the waters, as though all the slain men were once again alive, and as though they and their elephants and their horses were bursting into loud cries, and all the drums and trumpets and other instruments of music of both armies were striking up together. The whole assembly were astonished at this mighty tempest, and some were smitten with a terrible fear, when suddenly they saw Bhíshma and Drona in full armour seated in their chariots, and ascending out of the waters, with all their armies arrayed as they were on the first day of the Mahá Bháráta. Next came forth Abhimanyu, the heroic son of Arjuna, and the five sons of Draupadí, and the son of Bhíma with his army of Asuras. After them came Karna, and Duryodhana, and Sakuni, and Duhshásana, and the other sons of Dhritaráshtira, all in full parade seated upon their chariots, together with many other warriors and Rajas who had been slain. All appeared in great glory and splendour, and more beautiful than when they were alive; and all came with their own horses and chariots and banners and arms. And every one was in perfect friendship with each other, for enmity had departed from amongst them; and each one was preceded by his bards and eulogists who sang his praises; and very many singing men and dancing girls appeared with them, singing and dancing. Now when these



warriors had come out of the river, their widows and orphans and kinsfolk were overjoyed, and not a trace of grief remained amongst them; and widows went to their husbands, and daughters to their fathers, and mothers to their sons, and sisters to their brothers, and all the fifteen years of sorrow which had passed since the war of the Mahá Bhárata were forgotten in the ecstasy of seeing each other again. Thus the night passed away in the fulness of joy; but when the morning had dawned, all the dead mounted their chariots and horses, and disappeared; and those who had gathered together to behold them prepared to depart. And Vyása the sage said that the widows who wished to rejoin their dead husbands might do so; and all the widows went and bathed in the Ganges, and came out of the water again, and kissed, one by one, the feet of Dhritaráshtra and Gándhárí; and then went and drowned themselves in the river; and through the prayers of Vyása they all went to the places they wished, and obtained their several desires.

Disappearance
of the dead at
the dawn.

The widows
drown them-
selves in the
Ganges and re-
join their hus-
bands.

After this, Raja Yudhishtira and his brethren, and their wife Draupadí, took their leave of Mahárajá Dhritaráshtra and the Rání Gándhárí, and returned to the city of Hastinápur. And after many days Náráda the sage came to the palace of Yudhishtira, and said:—"The jungle has been set on fire, and the flames have been nourished by a strong wind; and the Mahárajá and the Rání, and all their kinsfolk and friends, have perished in the burning, and your mother Kuntí has perished also." And the Pándavas were smitten with horror and sorrow, and darkness fell upon them. But when some days had passed away, they were thrown into a deeper consternation; for very fearful omens appeared on all sides, and they felt that something very terrible was about to happen, and they knew not when or how it would happen.

Terrible death
of the Mahárajá
and all his
household in a
jungle fire.

Fearful omens
at Hastinápur.

The foregoing narrative calls for but little comment. The exile of the Mahárajá serves to prove the hollow character of his reconciliation with the

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foregoing nar-
rative.

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Grandeur of the picture of the resurrection of the dead who had fallen in the great war.

Compared with the last day.

Perfect bliss involved in the description in the Mahá Bhārata.

Affecting proceedings of the women.

Hindú character of the scene.

Pándavas, to which attention has already been drawn. But the glorious scene in which the dead who had fallen in the great war arose out of the river Ganges, arrayed in all the pomp and magnificence of battle, forms one of the grandest pictures ever presented to the human eye. The conception of the resurrection of the dead on the last day is perhaps more terribly suggestive, but the bursting open of the sepulchres by the shrouded inmates, and the horrible contrast between the saved and the damned, fills the imagination with pain and gloom. The idea in the Mahá Bhārata, however, is one of perfect joy. Trumpets are sounding, banners are waving, and the air is filled with the noise of horses and elephants and chariots, as the vast armies of warriors appear in glory and brightness out of the dark river, arrayed in all the imposing paraphernalia of war. All enmity, however, has departed from amongst them; and all are in perfect friendship with each other; whilst bards and eulogists are singing before them, and companies of beautiful girls are dancing in the midnight air. Moreover, the contrast between the women and the warriors is one which brings all the purest affections into play. Wives and mothers, sisters and daughters, are once again in the company of those whom they most loved, and in the enjoyment of the highest felicity after long years of bereavement and sorrow. The glorious and affecting scene is at length brought to a conclusion by an incident somewhat tragic in itself, but still in accordance with Hindú ideas of happiness. At the dawn of the morning, the vision disappears, and the poor widows are again overwhelmed with grief; but by the permission of the



sage, they take a touching farewell of their friends and relatives, and then drown themselves in the sacred river, and thus once again join their husbands in another world.

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The remaining portion of the narrative is more melancholy. The awful death of the Mahárajá and all his household in a jungle fire, is an event which to this day excites a sympathizing horror, for it is sudden, terrible, and overwhelming. In the case of the Pándavas, however, their consternation was increased by portentous omens; and thus they were not only oppressed by their present grief, but by the constant apprehension that something still more fearful was about to happen.

Horrible character of the jungle fire.

The alarming event which they were thus hourly anticipating at length came to pass. Tidings were suddenly brought to them of a frightful series of disasters which had taken place at Dwáráká, the city of Krishna and the Yádavas; but here, to avoid anticipating, it will be better to leave the narrative to tell its own story :—

2nd. The destruction of Dwáráká.

Now all this while the great city of Dwáráká, which was situated upon the sea, had been filled with mirth and feasting; and all the people drank wine in abundance, and the young men, who were the sons and grandsons of Krishna, scoffed at the Bráhmans, and at sacred things. And three great Rishis of the highest class, whose names were Viswámitra, Durvásas, and Nárada, were sojourning in the city of the Yádavas; and the youths of the place assembled together, and saw the three sages engaged in their devotions, and amongst them was Sám̐ba, the son of Krishna. And the young men for sport dressed up Sám̐ba to represent a woman with child, and they led him in this disguise into the presence of the three Bráhmans, and requested to know whether she would give birth to a son or to a daughter.

Wickedness and profanity of the people of Dwáráká.

The three great Rishis visit the city.

Trick played by the young men upon the Rishis

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Rishis.Their depart-
ure.Krishna issues
a proclamation
against wine.Fearful appar-
ition.

Great wind.

Portentous in-
crease of rats
and owls.

The Rishis replied:—"We well know whom you have brought before us; this is not a woman but a son of Krishna, and verily he shall bring forth an iron club which shall destroy the whole race of Yadu: And since you have preferred an evil life to a virtuous one, and have sought to scoff at and ridicule such poor men as we are, you and all your people shall perish by that club, except Balaráma, and he too shall leave the world shortly afterwards." So saying, the three Rishis drew over their shoulders the deer-skins on which they had been seated, and went out of Dwáraká, and made their way to the city of Hastinápura. And when the young men heard the words of the three Rishis, they repented of what they had done; and the news spread abroad amongst the people of the city, and they were sore afraid; and some carried the account to Krishna, and he said:—"If it is the will of God it will surely come to pass."

After this, Krishna issued a proclamation throughout Dwáraká, that whoever drank wine henceforth should be put to death with all his family. Then the people of the city abstained from the use of wine, and no man ventured even to utter its name. But at this time a fearful apparition showed itself at the doors of all the houses, and men said that it was death in a human shape; and its colour was black and yellow, and its head was shorn, and all its limbs were distorted; and all who saw the apparition were filled with fear and trembling, and if a man discharged an arrow at it, the figure disappeared, and no one knew whither it had gone. Meantime, a great wind arose, and uprooted many trees, and carried away many men and beasts, and blew about the doors of the houses until they were nearly all broken. And the rats increased in so prodigious a manner that thousands and thousands swarmed in every house, and carried off and spoilt everything that was put away; and they ran about the bazaars, and they gnawed away the hair and beards of the men who were asleep. And owls flocked to the houses of the people in great numbers, and screeched throughout the night; and the nightingales



and minas were scared by the noise of the rats, and the hooting of the owls, and continued their wailings both by night and day. And monstrous births filled the land, for the cows brought forth asses, and the swine produced lions' cubs, and the dogs produced kittens, and the weasels brought forth young mice. And vice and evil pervaded the whole race of Yadu; and the poor men and the devotees were openly reviled; and preceptors and learned men were treated with disrespect; and the women overruled the men, and fire refused to give light, and the flames of fire became black and blue. And the sun was surrounded at its rising and its setting by thousands of spectres of men without heads, who engaged in battle with swords and spears in their hands. And the Yogis and other devotees found that if they rose from the skins upon which they sat, those skins were changed into vermin. And the moon was eclipsed on its twelfth day, and the sun was eclipsed on the twenty-seventh day of the moon.

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Evil omens and
general de-
pravity.

Meantime Krishna issued a proclamation that on the morrow all the people of the city should go to the sea-shore at Prabhása, and pay their devotions to the deity of Dwá-raká. At that same time a dreadful apparition came to the city of a black woman, clothed in black garments, and having yellow teeth; and this woman went from house to house, grinning at all who were therein, and filling them with terror and dismay; and if any one attempted to seize her, she vanished from that place and showed herself at another, and thus she continued until she had gone over the whole city. And that same night evil spirits came and carried off the jewels of the women, and the weapons of the men, and no one had the power to recover either the one or the other. The chakra of Krishna was also suddenly taken up to heaven, and all the people saw it, and were filled with grief, and raised a great uproar. At the same time, the charioteer of Krishna harnessed his master's chariot; and upon this the horses bounded up into the air, and bore away the chariot over the sea, and disappeared for ever. Also the figure of a palmyra, which was on the standard of

Proclamation of
Krishna that
the people
should go and
worship at
Prabhása.

Apparition of a
black woman.

Jewels and wea-
pons carried off
by evil spirits.

Chakra of
Krishna ascends
to heaven.

His chariot and
horses disappear
in the sea.

Disappearance
of the ensigns
of Balarama and
Krishna.



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Warning of the
Apsaras.

The people per-
mitted to drink
wine at the fes-
tival at Prab-
hása.

Insult offered
to the Bráh-
mans.

General con-
viviality.

The Chieftains
drink wine in
parties.

Sátyaki insults
Kritavarman
for aiding in the
revenge of As-
watthama.

Balaráma, and the figure of the bird Garura, which was on the standard of Krishna, both separated themselves from their respective standards and rose into the air until they vanished from the sight. Also Apsaras appeared in the sky, and cried out to the people :—" Arise and be gone ! " And this cry was heard in every house throughout the city of Dwáraká.

And when the morning arrived, the people obeyed the proclamation of Krishna, and Krishna gave them permission to drink wine on that day only ; and they set out with their wives and families to the place of pilgrimage on the sea-shore, and they carried with them wine and provisions of every description ; and some took up their stations in tents, and others beneath trees. And when all the people were settled in their respective places, Krishna commanded that every variety of victuals and drink should be set apart and given to the Bráhmans ; and when the Bráhmans were about to eat, a certain man of the Yádava tribe came up with a large jar of wine in his hand, from which he had been drinking until he was intoxicated ; and he spilt a little of the wine upon the victuals set apart for the Bráhmans ; so the Bráhmans would not eat thereof, and Krishna ordered that the victuals should be given to the monkeys.

Meantime the feast proceeded without interruption. And the jugglers, and the musicians, the dancers, and the players of all kinds exhibited their performances before the people ; whilst the people all drank wine very largely. And all the Chieftains of the tribe of Yadu were present at that feast. There were Raja Ugrasena, and Balaráma, and Sátyaki, and Kritavarman, and the two sons of Krishna, and many others of renown. Now Balaráma, the elder brother of Krishna, was a great drinker of wine, and he ordered vessels of wine to be brought into the assembly and placed before each Chieftain ; and the assembly seated themselves in parties, so that those who were most intimate drank wine together. Thus Balaráma and Kritavarman drank by themselves, and the sons of Krishna drank with Sátyaki.

Now Kritavarman, who drank with Balaráma, was one



of the three who had slaughtered the sleeping men in the camp of the Pándavas; and Sátyaki—who was sitting near him, having got exceedingly drunk, suddenly cast his eye upon him, and said:—"Behold, my friends, this Kshatriya here, who boasts so much of his prowess! He went one night with Aswattháma, and attacked a number of boys, and killed them in the night time; and these are the men who boast of their bravery." Pradyumna, the son of Krishna, then cried out:—"Well said, Sátyaki!" And Krishna also was no friend to Kritavarman, for in the feud about the jewel, Kritavarman had murdered Satyajit, who was the father of Krishna's wife Satyabháma; and Krishna said to Sátyaki:—"Tell the story of how Kritavarman murdered Satyajit, and robbed him of his jewel!"¹ Sátyaki then repeated the story of the jewel, and said:—"This Kritavarman is moreover the same man who went out with Aswattháma, and unjustly slew Dhrishta-dyumna, and many thousands of innocent people: But his days are numbered." So saying, Sátyaki drew his sword and ran at Kritavarman before all the assembly; and whilst Kritavarman was rising up to defend himself, Sátyaki struck him on the neck with his sword with all his might, so that his head was severed from his body and fell upon the ground. Then many kinsmen of Kritavarman rushed upon Sátyaki, and many of Sátyaki's friends ran up to oppose them, and there was a great uproar and bloodshed. Krishna endeavoured to quell the tumult, but no one heeded him; and the friends of Kritavarman cut down Sátyaki and slew him, and also cut down Pradyumna, the son of Krishna, and slew him before his father's face. Krishna then revenged himself by killing all the murderers of his son; but the whole assembly was then frantic with blood and wine, and each man fell madly upon his neighbour; for in their bewilderment they knew not what they did, except that they struck each other and died; and fathers slew their sons, and sons their fathers, and brethren and kinsmen murdered each other. In this manner all the

Encouraged by
Krishna.Sátyaki slays
Kritavarman.

General tumult.

Sudden murders.

Horrible confusion and bloodshed.

Slaughter of all the Yadavas.

¹ The feud about the jewel will be found related in the legends of Krishna in Part III.



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PART II.

Yádavas were slaughtered by the curse of the three Rishis, and all the sons and grandsons of Krishna were amongst the slain.

Krishna goes out to Balaráma.

Sends his charioteer to Hastinápur.

Sends a Chieftain to Dwárákâ, who is slain by a fisherman.

Krishna proceeds to Dwárákâ.

While Krishna was horror-stricken at this sudden calamity, his charioteer came to him, and said that Balaráma had gone out of the assembly just after the beginning of the tumult. So Krishna mounted his chariot, accompanied by another Chieftain, and set forward in search of his elder brother; and when they had gone a little distance, they beheld Balaráma seated under the shade of a banyan tree, and his eyes were closed, and he was absorbed in a deep meditation. Krishna then said to his charioteer:—"You have seen what has befallen this people: Go now with all speed to the city of Hastinápur, and inform Raja Yudhishthira of all that has occurred, and desire him to send Arjuna to Dwárákâ with all speed." And the charioteer mounted the chariot by himself, and drove off in hot haste to the city of Hastinápur. Krishna then said to the Chieftain who was with him:—"You also have seen what calamity has befallen us: So go you back to the city of Dwárákâ, and look to the safety of the women and houses, lest thieves and Daityas should plunder the city and outrage the women: Have a care also for my father Vasudeva, who has been left behind in the city; and tell him that in the seventh day from this, which will be the full moon of the month Kartika, the sea will arise and swallow up Dwárákâ." And the Chieftain returned in all haste towards Dwárákâ, but on his way a drunken fisherman fell upon him and slew him; and some one who was looking on carried the news to Krishna. Then Krishna said to his brother Balaráma:—"I am afraid lest mischief be committed in the city: Stay you here whilst I haste thither, and return again." So Krishna went to Dwárákâ, and told his father Vasudeva of the slaughter of all their kinsmen and friends; and Vasudeva was exceedingly moved and began to weep very bitterly. And Krishna said to his father:—"This is no time for grief; I have despatched my charioteer to bring Arjuna hither; so do you bestir yourself that no evil may befall the women before he



arrives : And now we must take leave of each other, as I must return to Balaráma, who is waiting for me : Heretofore I saw all the Kauravas perish, and now I have seen all the Yádavas perish also ; and I will return no more to this city, but I and Balaráma will retire into the jungle, and pass the remainder of our lives in devotion." With these words Krishna embraced his father's feet, and all the women and slave girls set up a terrible cry of lamentation. Krishna then returned to his brother Balaráma, but found that he had given up the ghost whilst seated against the tree ; and Krishna was exceedingly troubled, and went into a thicket which was hard by, and rested his head upon his knees in deep contemplation, when a hunter, who was passing by, saw him, and thought he was a wild animal, and discharged his arrow and slew him upon the spot. Thus died the mighty Krishna.

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PART II.

Returns to
Balaráma and
finds him dead.

Krishna slain
by a hunter.

Meantime, the charioteer proceeded to Hastinápura, and told to Raja Yudhishtira and his brethren how the Yádavas had all slaughtered each other. The Raja swooned away at the news, and when he had recovered, Arjuna obtained his permission to depart that moment for the city of Dwáraká. So Arjuna set off with all haste, and found the city like a widow mourning for her husband ; and when the wives of Krishna set their eyes upon him they filled the air with their cries ; and the whole city echoed back their lamentations, for all the women there had lost husbands or sons, fathers or brothers, in the great quarrel. At this sight Arjuna was so distracted that for a long time all his strength seemed to have forsaken him, but after a while he asked for Vasudeva, and then went to see him. And Vasudeva wept very much, and Arjuna out of sympathy wept with him ; and all the women of the city came thither, with their hair dishevelled and their eyes filled with tears ; and when they saw Arjuna they made altogether such a melancholy noise as was never heard before. And after much weeping, Vasudeva told to Arjuna the cause of all the dreadful slaughter which had taken place, and prayed him to do what seemed to him best with the women and treasures.

Krishna's
charioteer carries the tidings
to the Pándavas.

Arjuna proceeds
to Dwáraká.

Terrible lamentations of the
widows.

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INDIA.
PART II.

Arjuna directs
all the residue
of the people to
leave the city.

Arjuna then proceeded with the charioteer of Krishna to the Council hall, and summoned all the Bráhmans who had survived the great disaster; and when they beheld him they all burst into a fit of weeping; but Arjuna bade them not to waste the time in useless sorrow, but to prepare for departing from the doomed city, for that after seven days Dwáráká would be overwhelmed by the sea.

Death of Vasu-
deva.

And Arjuna passed that night in the palace of Krishna, and when it was morning he bathed himself, and prepared to pay a visit to Vasudeva; when at that moment he heard a cry of lamentation, more terrible than ever, issue from the house of Vasudeva; and thousands of women ran about with their hair dishevelled, and their bosoms bare, and their garments rent; and they were beating their breasts and filling the air with their screams; and it was told to Arjuna that Vasudeva had given up the ghost. So Arjuna arose up in deep sorrow, and ordered the dead body to be carried to the spot where Krishna had performed an Aswamedha Yaga; for Vasudeva during his life-time had given orders that his dead body should be burned there. And the same Bráhmans who had performed the Yaga now collected wood and perfumes; and Arjuna himself cast the body upon the pile, and the Bráhmans lighted the pile: and four of Vasudeva's widows burned themselves upon the pile along with the body of their dead husband.

Burning of
Vasudeva with
four of his
widows.

Funeral cere-
monies of the
slain at Prab-
hása.

When Arjuna had thus performed the funeral ceremonies for Vasudeva, he went to the spot where all the Yádavas had slain each other; and when he saw the dead men lying about the field he was horror-stricken beyond description. And he commanded a very great quantity of fuel and inflammable materials to be brought and kindled; and he ordered that all the bodies of such as could be recognized should be thrown thereon and burnt; and he sent all the people to make strict search for the bodies of Krishna and Balaráma, and having found them, he caused them to be burned with much precious odours. Arjuna then performed the funeral rites for all those who were dead, and sprinkled water for their souls.



Having thus completed the obsequies, Arjuna ordered that all people should quit the city of Dwáraká on the sixth day, and prepare to journey to the city of Indra-prastha. So on that day all the men and women of the city, and all the male and female slaves, and all the people of the bazaars, and all Krishna's sixteen thousand wives, each with her own waiting maid, and all the kinsmen, and dependents, and slave girls of the royal house, departed out of Dwáraká, and were conducted by Arjuna along the road towards Indra-prastha; but scarcely had Arjuna and all this mighty multitude left the city, when the sea rose in a great heap in the sight of all the people, and overwhelmed Dwáraká and all that remained in it. And when the multitude beheld the rushing of the waters, they hastened on in great alarm lest the sea should overtake them, and overwhelm them in like manner.

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INDIA.
PART II.

Residue of the
people depart
with Arjuna.

The city of
Dwáraká over-
whelmed by a
cyclone.

Now all the tribes that lived round about were robbers and Daityas of the worst character; and when they heard that a mighty caravan of very many women, and but few men, was passing through their neighbourhood with vast treasures of gold and jewels, they surrounded the caravan in great numbers, and rushed in upon the multitude in all directions, and carried off many women and much spoil. And Arjuna found that all his strength had departed from him, and that he could not bend his bow nor draw his sword; and he prayed to God and regained a portion of his strength, and slew many of the robbers, but he could only save a few of the women and a small portion of the treasure.

Caravan with
Arjuna attacked
and despoiled by
robbers.

Arjuna then proceeded with the remnant of the people and goods, and conducted them in safety to the plain of Kurukshetra, where five of Krishna's widows burnt themselves on the funeral pile, whilst the remaining widows put on the dress of devotees and retired to the jungle. Arjuna then proceeded to Indra-prastha, and settled the remnant of the people there.

Five of Krish-
na's widows
burn them-
selves.

The foregoing narrative of the destruction of Dwáraká is evidently a mythical account of one of those great convulsions of nature which occur at

Review of the
foregoing nar-
rative of the
destruction of
Dwáraká.

HISTORY OF
INDIA.
PART II.

wide intervals in tropical climes. It seems to have been preceded by a feast, at which a quarrel arose which led to a dreadful scene of bloodshed; and although many of the details are mythical, yet as they seem to refer to some actual event, a brief review of the salient points may not be without value.

Story of the
three Rishis
purely mythical.

The story of the three Rishis, and the prank played upon them by the young men of Dwáaraká, is evidently fabulous; and it is not difficult to apprehend the reason for its insertion. The catastrophe at Prabhása, and the destruction of the city of Dwáaraká, were disasters of so marked a character as to give rise to the idea that they were inflicted by an offended deity; and hence the interpolation of a myth which referred them to the curse of three Bráhmaṇ Rishis.² The prohibition to drink wine, however, appears to have had some foundation in truth. Horrible spectres appeared in the streets and houses, such as are said to appear to drunkards when thrown into a state of delirium tremens by being suddenly deprived of strong drink. The quarrel at the festival at Prabhása also arose in the most natural manner, and illustrates in a remarkable degree the turbulence of the assemblies of Yádavas. But the great event was the destruction of Dwáaraká; and nearly all the subsidiary details in which Arjuna is alluded to, may be regarded as mythical in-

² According to the story already narrated the Rishis pronounced a curse that Sám̐ba should bring forth an iron club which should destroy the whole race of Yádū. Subsequently Sám̐ba is said to have voided an iron bar, which Krishna ordered to be pulverized to atoms in order to prevent the fulfilment of the curse. The atoms, however, were scattered on the sands of the sea-shore, and from them a number of iron reeds grew up as sharp as swords. Accordingly, when the Chieftains quarrelled at the feast, they are said to have killed each other with these iron reeds; and in this manner the curse of the Rishis is said to have been fulfilled.



terpolations of the Brahmanical compilers intended to connect Arjuna with this extraordinary catastrophe. The statement that the sea rose to a great height, and overwhelmed the whole city, is not without a parallel in modern times; and indeed the terrible disasters which accompanied the cyclones of 1864 at Calcutta and Masulipatam will never be forgotten by the present generation in India.³

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Nature of the
inundation
which over-
whelmed
Dwārakā.

The narrative of the exile and death of the Pándavas is evidently mythical, but calls for no remark, and may be permitted to tell its own story:—

3rd. The exile
and death of the
Pándavas.

After this Arjuna returned towards Hastinápura, and on his way he met with Vyása the sage; and Vyása told him that his prosperity was now at an end, and that his strength had gone from him, and he would no more be able to string his bow; and that his worldly reign was over, and he must now think only of the salvation of his soul. When Arjuna reached Hastinápura he told Raja Yudhishtira and his brethren all that had occurred, and of the advice which had been given to him by Vyása; and they were much grieved at the tidings brought by Arjuna, and determined one and all to follow the counsel which had been given by the sage.

Arjuna advised
by Vyása to
abandon
worldly con-
cerns.

Now after the death of Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna, his widow Uttarā gave birth to a son named Paríkshit; and Raja Yudhishtira, being resolved on retiring from the world, gave the Raj of Hastinápura to Paríkshit, the son of Abhimanyu, and the Raj of Indra-prastha to Yuyutsu, the only surviving son of Mahárajá Dritaráshtira; and Yudhishtira particularly enjoined them to live in friendship and

Yudhishtira
gives the Raj of
Hastinápura to
Paríkshit, and
the Raj of In-
dra-prastha to
Yuyutsu.

³ By those who were residing in Calcutta, near the banks of the river, in 1864, the memory of the great cyclone of the 5th October will ever be remembered. A night of wind and rain was followed by a tempest which increased in fury until it blew a tremendous hurricane, which substantial buildings alone could withstand. In the midst of this tumult of the elements, the river suddenly arose and overflowed its banks to an extent which proved that had Calcutta been situated, like Dwārakā, near the sea-coast, the whole city must have been overwhelmed.

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PART II.

The five Pándavas and their wife Draupadī assume the garb of devotees.

Die on the Himálaya mountains.

Review of the foregoing narrative of the close of the history.

Mythical details.

Conclusion of the Mahá Bhárata.

perfect amity with each other. Yudhishthira then took off his earrings and necklace, and all the jewels from his fingers and arms, and all his royal raiment; and he and his brethren, and their wife Draupadī, clothed themselves after the manner of devotees, in vestments made of the bark of trees. And the five brethren threw the fire of their domestic sacrifices and cookery into the Ganges, and went forth from the city following each other. First walked Yudhishthira, then Bhīma, then Arjuna, then Nakula, then Sahadeva, then Draupadī, and then a dog. And they went through the country of Banga towards the rising of the sun; and after passing through many lands they reached the Himálaya mountain, and there they died one after the other, and were transported to the heaven of Indra.

The foregoing narrative of the closing scenes in the history of the Pándavas is overlaid in the Mahá Bhárata with many puerile details of a Brahmanical character from which nothing of value can be inferred. They involve some exaggerated moral precepts and a fanciful description of a hell; and as these can only serve to illustrate the later religious conceptions of the Hindús they may be reserved for future discussion.

Here, then, ends the great national poem of the Mahá Bhárata, the treasury of Hindú history and fable, invested by modern interpreters with a deep religious meaning, and converted, as it were, into a testament for enforcing the worship of Krishna as the incarnation of Vishnu. But the light in which this matchless Epic is regarded by the modern Hindús may perhaps be best illustrated by the following paragraph which concludes the poem; and which, however absurd it may be to the European, is unquestionably the living faith of the millions



who dwell in the Indian peninsula under British rule :—

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The reading of this Mahá Bhárata destroys all sin, and produces virtue ; so much so, that the pronunciation of a single sloka is sufficient to wipe away all guilt. This Mahá Bhárata contains the history of the gods of the Rishis in heaven and those on earth, of the Gandharvas and the Rákshasas. It also contains the life and actions of the one God holy, immutable, and true, who is Krishna ; who is the creator and the ruler of this universe ; who is seeking the welfare of his creation by means of his incomparable and indestructible power ; whose actions are celebrated by all the sages ; who has bound human beings in a chain, of which one end is life and the other death ; on whom the Rishis meditate, and a knowledge of whom imparts unalloyed happiness to their hearts ; and for whose gratification and favour all the daily devotions are performed by all worshippers. If a man reads the Mahá Bhárata, and has faith in its doctrines, he becomes free from all sin, and ascends to heaven after his death. If a man reads even the summary in the opening chapter of the Mahá Bhárata every morning and evening, he is absolved from all the sins that he commits during the day. As butter is to all other food ; as Bráhmans are to all other men ; as the Arunika chapter, which points out the way of salvation, is to all the four Vedas ; as amrita is to all other medicines ; as the ocean is to a pool of water ; and as the cow is to all other quadrupeds ;—so is the Mahá Bhárata to all other histories. He who on days of festival merely reads a small portion of the Mahá Bhárata, obtains the same advantages as is derived from reading the whole. He who attentively listens to the slokas of the Mahá Bhárata, and has faith in them, enjoys a long life and solid reputation in this world, and an eternal abode in the heavens in the next.

It is called Mahá Bhárata, because once upon a time the gods placed the Mahá Bhárata on one scale, and the Vedas on the other ; and because the Mahá Bhárata weighed

Reason for its
being called the
Mahá Bhárata.



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PART II.

heavier, it was called by that name, which signifies the greatest in weight.*

* This mythical estimate of the comparative value of the Mahá Bhárata and the Vedas is of some importance; inasmuch as it indicates an attempt to exhibit the Brahmanical doctrines involved in the Mahá Bhárata as overriding the earlier religious belief which appears in the Vedas.

END OF THE MAHÁ BHÁRATA.



PART III.

EPISODES IN THE MAHÁ BHÁRATA.

CHAPTER I.

LEGENDS OF KRISHNA.

THE episodes in the Mahá Bhárata are very numerous, and, indeed, form the bulk of the poem, but very few appear to possess any real historical value. They chiefly consist of mythical fables intended to exalt the pretensions of the Bráhmans, or to enforce the rules of Bráhmanism, or caste. Accordingly they generally refer to miracles performed by certain Brahmanical sages; to the rigour of their austerities; to their occasional adventures with celestial nymphs or other women, which led to the birth of heroes or heroines who were famous in tradition; to the mastery of the passions, which enabled certain ascetics to resist the most powerful female allurements; or, at the best, they are extravagant stories of the devotion of a wife or the obedience of a son or a pupil. Accordingly, by far the greater por-

HISTORY OF
INDIA.
PART III.General character of the
episodes in the
Mahá Bhárata.

HISTORY OF
INDIA.
PART III.Absence of
historical value.Importance of
the legends
referring to
Krishna.Their signifi-
cance, historical
and religious.Three other
important
legends beside
those connected
with Krishna.Historical
character of
Krishna as a
hero.

The Yádavas.

tion are utterly devoid of historical significance, and may be passed over as unmeaning myths, belonging to an age long posterior to the Vedic period, and tacked on to the main tradition of the Mahá Bhá-rata for the purpose of imbuing the masses with Brahmanical ideas. There is, however, one group of legends, namely, those which refer to the life of Krishna, which cannot be passed over in silence. Many, as will already have been seen, are interwoven with the story of the great war; but in addition to those already indicated, there are a series relating to the birth and adventures of Krishna before his pretended connection with the Pándavas, which are of twofold significance; first, as authentic traditions of the tribe of cowherds, known as Yáda-vas, who succeeded in establishing a Raj in the peninsula of Guzerat; and, secondly, as religious myths intended to represent Krishna, the hero of the Yádavas, as an incarnation of the Supreme Being known as Vishnu. In addition to these Krishna legends there are three stories which are valuable both on account of their intrinsic merits, and as belonging to three different epochs in Hindú history. The latter, however, will be treated hereafter. For the present the attention may be confined to the life of Krishna.

The historical character of Krishna as a hero may be briefly indicated. He appears to have belonged to a tribe well known in Hindú history as that of the Yádavas, or descendants of Yadu. These Yádavas were a nomade race, who grazed cattle and made butter, and occasionally migrated to different places accompanied by their cows and wag-gons. The time and circumstances under which



they first entered Hindústan are alike unknown. At the birth of Krishna they appear to have settled in the neighbourhood of the city of Mathurá, the modern Muttra, on the banks of the river Jumná, and about a hundred and twenty miles to the south of the site of the ancient city of Hastinápur. Had such been their geographical position in the time of the great war of Bhárata there would have been less reason to doubt the connection of Krishna with the Pándavas; although as cowherds they were regarded with great contempt by the Kshatriyas, and were supposed to belong to the inferior caste of Vaisyas. But at the time when Krishna is said to have first come into contact with the Pándavas, he and his tribe had already migrated to Dwáraká, on the western coast of the peninsula of Guzerat, which is at least seven hundred miles from Hastinápur as the crow flies. Accordingly, it seems impossible that such relations as those said to have subsisted between Krishna and the Pándavas could really have existed; and this suspicion is confirmed by the mythical character of every event which apparently connects the Yádava Chieftains of Dwáraká with the royal house at Hastinápur.¹

The personal character of Krishna will be found clearly indicated in the legends. He was originally

HISTORY OF
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PART III.

Their encampment in the neighbourhood of Mathurá.

Migration of the Yádavas from Mathurá to Dwáraká.

Improbability of intimate relations between the Yádavas of Dwáraká and the Pándavas of Hastinápur.

Personal character of Krishna.

¹ The Rajas of Vijaya-nagar, who in the fifteenth century of the Christian era maintained a supremacy over the whole of the country south of the Krishna river, and thus possessed the last great Hindú empire which was established in India, claimed to be descendants of the Yádava tribe; and it is a curious fact that it was from one of the decayed Chieftains of this fallen dynasty that the East India Company obtained in the first half of the seventeenth century the grant of land on the coast of Coromandel, on which stands the modern city of Madras. The original grant engraved on a gold plate appears to have been preserved for more than a century; but was finally lost in 1746, when Madras was captured by the French under Labourdonnais.

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A cowherd
famous for his
pranks and
amours.

Takes a part in
a popular move-
ment against
Raja Kansa and
slays the tyrant.

Subsequent
efforts to enno-
ble the birth of
Krishna.

Religious
character of
Krishna.

Implied opposi-
tion of Krishna
both to Siva
and Indra.

Connection of
Krishna with
Fetische wor-
ship and Bud-
dhism.

a mere cowherd, stealing butter and performing other similar pranks when a boy, and rendering himself famous for his amours when he attained the years of manhood. About this time Krishna and his companions left their encampment at a rural village named Vrindávana, and paid a visit to the city of Mathurá, where they appear to have conducted themselves like boors and cowherds as they were. The time however appears to have been a critical one. Kansa, the Raja of Mathurá, was a usurper, and seems to have been unpopular with his subjects; and a tumult arose during a festival in which he was slain by Krishna. Henceforth Krishna is represented as a hero, and efforts were made to ennoble his birth by representing him to have been in reality the son of a chieftain of the tribe. How far these efforts were mythical may be gathered from the legends themselves.

The religious character of Krishna will be discussed hereafter. It will be sufficient to remark that he appears to have been opposed alike to the worship of Siva and the worship of Indra. The first opposition appears natural enough, for as Krishna was represented as an incarnation of Vishnu, he was of course opposed to the god Siva; the worshippers of Vishnu and those of Siva being in strong antagonism for many centuries. But the opposition to Indra is remarkable, because Krishna induced the Yádavas to worship the mountain Govarddhana in the place of Indra; an incident which would imply a conflict between a low Fetische worship and the worship of the Vedic deities. It will however be seen hereafter that Krishna was associated not only with Fetichism, but also with Buddhism; a circumstance



which would account for his opposition both to the worship of the Vedic deities, and to that of the Linga which is emblematical of the god Siva.²

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The principal legends connected with the early life of Krishna appear to be seven in number, viz.—

Seven legends
connected with
the early life of
Krishna.

1st, Birth of Krishna.

2nd, Infancy and boyhood of Krishna.

3rd, Krishna's opposition to the worship of Indra.

4th, Love adventures of Krishna.

5th, Krishna's adventures in Mathurá.

6th, Krishna's contest with Raja Kansa.

7th, Krishna's life at Dwáráká in Guzerat.

These legends of Krishna may be related in their order as follows :³

1. *Birth of Krishna.*

In days of old the children of Yadu dwelt on both sides of the river Jumná, that is, in the village of Vrindávana on the western bank of the river, and in the country of Gokula on the opposite shore. And the Chiefs of that tribe were Sura and his son Vasudeva.

Yádava tribe
dwelling at
Vrindávana and
Gokula.

Sura and Vasu-
deva.

In those days Raja Kansa ruled the Bhojas who dwelt in the city of Mathurá which is nigh unto Vrindávana.⁴ And Raja Kansa was a wicked Raja. He had deposed his father Ugrasena and reigned in his stead; for Kansa worshipped

Ugrasena, Raja
of Mathurá,
deposed by his
son Kansa.

Persecution of
the worshippers
of Vishnu by the
worshippers of
Siva.

² The historical and religious aspect of this question will be discussed in a future volume. It will be sufficient to remark in the present place that the religious wars between the Buddhists and the Linga worshippers of the Dekhan is one of the most important events in Hindú history.

³ The legends in connection with the life of Krishna are to be found in the Khila-Harivansa-Parva, which is comparatively a modern supplement to the Mahá Bháráta. They are also to be found in the Bhágavat-purána, and its Hindú paraphrase, the Prem Ságar. The narrative in the text has been drawn up from Mr Eastwick's translation of the Prem Ságar, compared with the abridgment in the fifth book of the Vishnu-purána, p. 491, Wilson's translation.

⁴ The Bhojas are said to have been a branch of the Yádavas, but the relationship is very obscure.



HISTORY OF Siva, and Ugrasena worshipped Vishnu; and Ugrasena
INDIA. would not pray to the god Siva when his son Kansa
PART III. requested him.

Marriage of
Devaki to
Vasudeva.

Now Devaka, who was the brother of Ugrasena, had a daughter named Devakí. And Devaka said to his nephew Kansa :—"O Raja, unto whom shall I give my daughter Devakí in marriage?" And Kansa replied :—"Give her in marriage to Vasudeva, the son of Sura, Chief of the Yáda-vas." So the marriage was agreed upon, and when the day had arrived for the nuptial ceremony, Sura, and his son Vasudeva, and all their kinsmen and friends, proceeded from the village of Vrindávana to the city of Mathurá, and the marriage rites of Vasudeva and Devakí were performed according to the ordinance.

Kansa threatens
to slay Devaki
on her wedding
day.

When the marriage ceremony was over, the bridegroom and the bride ascended a chariot, and Raja Kansa drove the chariot with his own hand in the marriage procession. At that moment there came a voice from heaven, saying :—"O Kansa, the son of Devakí will be your destroyer." Then Kansa was in a great fear, and seized Devakí by her hair and dragged her from the chariot, and drew his sword to slay her. And Vasudeva trembled greatly, and besought Kansa to spare his hand; and he said to Kansa :—"No son of mine shall ever do you hurt, for I will deliver into your hands every infant that is born of Devakí." So Kansa listened to the words of Vasudeva and spared the life of Devakí.

Vasudeva en-
gages to deliver
up his children
by Devaki to
Raja Kansa.

Birth of Bala-
ráma, who is
brought up in
Gokula as the
son of Rohini.

Conception of
Krishna.
Kansa's efforts
to secure the
infant.

After many days Devakí conceived and bore a son who was named Balaráma, but the babe was carried away to the country of Gokula, which is on the other side of the river Junná, and brought up as the child of Rohiní, who was another wife of Vasudeva. And Devakí conceived again, and Kansa heard of it; and he bound Vasudeva and Devakí with gyves and manacles, and he fastened the doors of their dwelling with locks and bars; and he ordered his mightiest warriors to keep constant guard round about the place, with elephants, lions, and dogs. And on a certain night the child



Krishna was born, and all the marks of Vishnu were seen upon him; and immediately after his birth the gyves and manacles fell from the hands of Vasudeva and Devakí, and the doors opened of their own accord, and the guards were all thrown into a deep slumber. So Vasudeva placed the babe in a basket which was used for winnowing corn, and set it upon his head, and went to cross the river Jumná to carry the babe to the country of Gokula. Now when Vasudeva entered the river, the waters of the Jumná were very deep, and rose up to his nostrils so that he was sore afraid; and the child Krishna stretched forth his foot and the waters were stayed, and became shallow and fordable. At the same time the rain began to fall; but the many-headed serpent, Sesha-naga, followed Vasudeva, and spread out his hoods so as to cover the divine babe. So Vasudeva crossed the river with the child, and carried it to the house of Nanda, who was a cowherd; and behold on that night Yasodá, who was the wife of Nanda, had given birth to a daughter. And Vasudeva changed the infants, and Yasodá and Nanda knew it not; and Krishna was brought up in the house of Nanda, as his own son; whilst Vasudeva returned across the river, and gave the infant daughter of Yasodá to his wife Devakí. At that moment the doors became locked as before, and Vasudeva and Devakí put on the gyves and manacles; and the infant cried aloud and awoke all the guards. And Kansa heard that the child was born, and he rushed on the spot and seized the babe to slay it; but the infant escaped from his hands, and ascended to heaven, crying:—"O Kansa, thy foe has already been born, and now thou canst not escape alive." Then Kansa was filled with wrath, and ordered that all the worshippers of Vishnu, young and old, should be slain; and he commanded his warriors to make search for all young children throughout that country, and to slay every male child that possessed strength and vigour. And Nanda and the cowherds at Gokula heard that Kansa was slaying the infants, and they were in great fear; and they loaded their carts with milk, butter, and curds, and they took with

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Birth of Krishna.

Vasudeva carries the babe across the Jumná in a basket.

Miraculous lowering of the waters.

The great snake Sesha-naga protects the infant Krishna.

Krishna changed for the infant daughter of Nanda and Yasodá.

Kansa seizes the supposed daughter of Devakí, who escapes to heaven.

Slaughter of the worshippers of Vishnu and the male children.

Nanda and the cowherd pay tribute to Raja Kansa.



HISTORY OF INDIA. PART III. them silver money, and carried them all to Mathurá as tribute to Raja Kansa.⁵

Demons sent by Kansa to slay Krishna.

After this Kansa sent many wicked demons in various forms to slay the infant Krishna. The first assumed the shape of a beautiful woman with a poisoned nipple; and when she offered her breast to Krishna he seized it and sucked away her life. Next a demon got into a cart whilst Krishna was sleeping beneath it; but the infant kicked against the cart, and broke it into a thousand pieces, and thus slew the demon. A third came in the form of a whirlwind, but Krishna dashed him against a stone and he fell down dead.

2. *Infancy and boyhood of Krishna.*

Infancy of Krishna and Balaráma.

When Krishna and his elder brother Balaráma began to grow, they rejoiced the hearts of their mothers, Yasodá and Rohiní. And they were dressed in frocks of blue and yellow, and their hair was trimmed like the wings of a crow;⁶ and wooden ornaments were hung from their necks, and they had playthings in their hands. After a while they began to crawl about the courtyard upon their knees, and to stumble and fall, and prattle lispingly. And their mothers Yasodá and Rohiní followed close behind them lest they should be frightened and fall down; and sometimes when they fell they took hold of the tails of the calves and heifers and pulled themselves up again.

Childish gambols of Krishna and Balaráma.

Yasodá about to whip Krishna, when she sees the three worlds in his mouth.

One day Yasodá was very angry with Krishna, because he would eat dirt, and she took a stick to beat him; but when she came to him he opened his mouth, and she looked in and saw the three worlds; and she marvelled greatly for a while, and then remembered it no more.

Churning day in the house of Nanda and Yasodá.

One morning after this, Yasodá and all the cowherdesses

⁵ The account of Raja Kansa is supposed by many to have been borrowed from the Gospel account of King Herod. Whether this be the case or not, it is certain that most of the details are mythical, and inserted for the purpose of ennobling the birth of Krishna.

⁶ This simile implies that the top of the head was shaved, whilst the black hair was left on each side of the head. Many Hindú children are shaved in this manner, though some have the whole head shaved, sides and all.



arose very early to churn ; and they swept and cleansed the house, and plastered it with fresh cow-dung, and each took her own churn and sat down to make butter. Meantime the noise awakened Krishna, and he began crying for his food, but no one heeded him. Then the lad was filled with wrath, and took the staff out of his mother's churn, and began to kick and cry ; and Yasodá took him on her lap, and coaxed him, and gave him some milk and bread and butter. Whilst Krishna was eating, a cowherdess ran in and cried out that the milk was boiling over ; and Yasodá set the lad down upon the ground, and ran off to save the milk. Meanwhile Krishna broke the vessels of curds and butter-milk, and began to eat the butter, and give it to the other boys who were there. When Yasodá returned she was very wroth, and tied Krishna to the churn, but he ran away with it until it was caught between two trees ; and he tore down the two trees, and when the people came up to see what he had done, they found him laughing between the trees and sitting upon the churn.

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Petulance of
Krishna at not
getting his
breakfast.

Krishna's
pranks with his
mother's churn.

Pulls down two
trees.

After this the Yádavas moved away from Gokula, and set off with their waggons and cattle for the village of Vrindávana ; and here Krishna and Balaráma lived like two cow-boys along with the cows and cowherds. And when Krishna was a lad he began to play his pranks ; and he went out and stole the butter and curds which the cowherdresses had made ; and when they told his mother, he said that they did not tell the truth ; and the women gazed upon his face and smiled, and went their way. And demons came to slay Krishna, and one came in the shape of a cow, and another in the shape of a crane, and another as a great serpent ; but he fought and killed them all.⁷

The Yádavas of
Gokula migrate
to Vrindávana.

Krishna steals
butter.

Kills many
demons.

And it came to pass that the Raja of the Rain saw that the Hot Season was parching up the country of Vrindávana ; and he took compassion upon the beasts and birds and living creatures, and assembled all his warlike clouds from

War between
the Raja of the
Rain and the
Hot Season.

⁷ Krishna's triumph over the great serpent Káliya was at one time supposed to be borrowed from the triumph of Christ over Satan. There appears however to be no allusion whatever to the bruising of the Serpent's head in the sense in which it is understood by Christian commentators.



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Assembling of
the clouds in
battle-array.

Flight of the
Hot Season.

Joy of the
Earth.

Festivities of
the cowherds
and cowherd-
esses.

Krishna plays
the flute in the
pastures.

Confusion of the
damsels of
Vrindávana.

Krishna hides
the clothes of
the damsels
who are bathing
in the Jumná.

every quarter, and went forth to battle against the Hot Season. Then the clouds thundered like kettledrums, and flew through the air like mighty heroes; whilst the lightning flashed like the glittering of swords and spears; and the long rows of cranes fluttered their white wings like the waving of many banners, and the frogs and peacocks raised their voices like bards chaunting the praises of great Rajas; and the heavy drops of rain fell like a shower of arrows. Now when the Hot Season saw his enemy advancing in such gallant array, he fled with all haste from the thirsty plains. And the Rain refreshed the Earth, as a husband refreshes his spouse after a separation of many days; and the Earth opened her bosom to her lord, and brought forth fruits and flowers to pay obeisance to their father. And the country of Vrindávana appeared like a beautiful woman adorned with all her jewels; and the lakes and rivers were filled with water; and the trees waved their branches to and fro, whilst the cuckoos, and the pigeons, and the parrots poured forth their joyous strains. And all the cowherds and cowherdesses of Vrindávana gave themselves up to mirth and play; and they put on red and yellow garments, and began to swing in swings, and to sing with loud voices their hymns of welcome to the Rains.

At this time Krishna and his companions went out to the pastures with the cows, and sported about in the jungle. And Krishna played upon his flute, and all the young damsels of Vrindávana heard him, and said one to the other:—"Krishna is now playing and dancing amongst the cows, but at evening time he will return hither and we shall behold him." And one day the damsels went down to the river Jumná to bathe; and Krishna saw them, and carried away their clothes, and climbed up a tree; and he made each damsel come out of the water and receive her clothes at his hands. And Krishna said:—"Take not amiss the lesson I have given you; for the god Varuna dwells in the water, and no one should bathe in it without clothes."⁸

⁸ This implied lesson seems to be an after-thought of the author, to impart a religious significance to the dubious prank played by the incarnation of Vishnu.



3. *Krishna's opposition to the worship of Indra.*

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Now the custom was for the people of Vrindāvana to hold a great feast on the fourteenth day of the dark half of the month Kārtika; and on that day they bathed, and washed their clothes, and filled a square place with saffron and sandal wood, and offered sweetmeats to Indra, together with cakes, fried in butter and oil, and incense and lamps. When Krishna saw what was going on, he said to his father:—"Why worship Indra as the Supreme God? He cannot grant prosperity, for that is acquired by our religious merits, and when he is defeated by the Asuras, he flies away and hides himself: O father, we are Vaisyas, and our cattle live upon the pastures: Let us, therefore, cease to worship Indra, and pay our devotions to the mountain Govarddhana."

Great feast at Vrindāvana in honour of Indra.

So Nanda and the cowherds obeyed the words of Krishna, and they placed the sweetmeats, and the fried cakes, and other things they had prepared, in large baskets, and brazen dishes and pots, and carried them in carts to the mountain Govarddhana, whilst a band of musicians accompanied them and played all the way. When they reached the place, they swept and cleaned the ground all round the mountain, and sprinkled water, and arranged the cakes and sweetmeats in order, and spread garlands upon the mountain. Then Nanda and all the cowherds summoned the family priest and prayed to the mountain. Then Krishna assumed a second form as the genius of the mountain, and manifested himself to all the people; and Krishna in his first form as a cowherd bowed reverentially to the mountain, and all the cowherds and cowherdresses did the same, saying:—"When did Indra ever manifest himself as Govarddhana has done?" And the cowherds and cowherdresses presented the cakes and sweetmeats to the mountain; and Krishna in the form of the genius of the mountain stretched forth his arms and began to eat the food. Then Krishna in his own form, and all the people who were there, walked in adoration round the mountain, and returned merrily to Vrindāvana. And all the cowherds and cowherdresses rejoiced greatly, and they painted marks on

Krishna counsels the Yādavas to transfer their worship from Indra to the Govarddhana mountain.

The Yādavas worship the mountain.

Krishna appears in a second form as the genius of the mountain.

Offering of cakes and sweetmeats to the mountain.

Sports of the cowherds.



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all the cows and calves, and fastened small bells and tinkling ornaments round their necks, and engaged in every kind of sport and pastime.

Wrath of
Indra. He sends
down rain to
wash away the
country of
Vrindāvana.

When, however, Indra saw that the Yádavas had forsaken his worship and made their offerings to the mountain, he was very wroth, and commanded the Raja of the clouds to go with all his host, and pour down such a deluge as should wash away the mountain and all the country of Vrindāvana. So the Raja of the clouds obeyed the commands of Indra, and all the people of Vrindāvana came to Krishna trembling with fear; but Krishna cried out:—"Fear not! The mountain himself shall protect you." Then Krishna by his divine

Krishna renders
the mountain
fiery hot, and
raises it over
the people like
an umbrella.

power made the mountain fiery hot; and he raised it up with the little finger of his left hand, so that it covered all the people like an umbrella. And it was told to Indra that all the rains poured down by the Raja of the clouds fell upon the mountain with a hiss; and he went himself and rained without ceasing for seven days and nights, but not a drop fell upon the people of Vrindāvana. So Indra returned to his abode in Swarga, and Krishna set down the mountain in its proper place as it had been before; after which Indra and all the gods came to Krishna and did homage before him as the God of gods and Lord of all.

Indra worships
Krishna as the
Supreme Lord.

4. *Love Adventures of Krishna.*

Krishna dances
with all the
women of
Vrindāvana on
the night of the
full moon.

After this, on the night of the full moon in the month Kártika, Krishna went out into the jungle and played upon the flute; and all the women of Vrindāvana heard the sweet notes of the flute, and were filled with love for Krishna, and followed him into the jungle. And Krishna led the women

Disappears with
his favourite
Radhika.

to the bank of the Jumná, and they all danced and sang round him in a ring, until he appeared like the moon surrounded by a circle of stars. Presently Krishna disappeared from amongst them, for he had a beautiful mistress named Radhika; and he went away to wander with his favourite damsel beneath the light of the full moon. And all the other women sorrowed greatly, and sought for Krishna in all directions, but they found him not. And presently they

Sorrow of the
women.



saw a mirror upon a bed of leaves, and one said to the other :—"When Krishna sat down to wreath the long back hair of Radhika, she could not see his face; and she held up the mirror and saw his divine countenance whilst he beheld the face of his beloved." Meantime Krishna was walking with Radhika, but her soul was elated with pride, and she thought herself better than Krishna, and she said to him :—"O my beloved, I am weary, and I pray you to carry me upon your shoulders." And Krishna sat down and smiled, and beckoned her to mount; but when she stretched forth her hand, he vanished from her sight, and she remained alone with outstretched hand. And Radhika wept very bitterly, and the other women saw her, and approached her, and led her back to the bank of the Jumná.

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Finding of the
mirror.
Sinful elation of
Radhika.

Krishna abandon-
s Radhika.

The women find
Radhika, and
return with her
to the Jumná.

Whilst the women were sitting by the river, mourning the absence of their beloved Krishna, he suddenly appeared amongst them, and their sorrow was turned into great joy. And Krishna multiplied himself into many forms, so that each cowherdess thought that she had Krishna to herself; and the women joined hands two and two, and between each two was a Krishna; and the Krishnas and the damsels danced together in the circular dance, until their necklaces of jewels were snapped asunder, and their wreaths of flowers had fallen to the ground, and the drops of perspiration glistened on their brows like rows of pearls, and their raven tresses hung down upon their fair faces like young snakes clinging for nectar to the full moon. And the Krishnas and the cowherdresses gratified every desire of their hearts; and they all went down into the river Jumná, and sported and gambolled in the waters; and the moon, surrounded by the stars, was fascinated with the sight, and sent down nectar with its beams.

Krishna returns
to the women.

Multiplies him-
self into as
many Krishnas
as there are
women.
The circular
dance.

Sporting in the
river Jumná.

5. *Krishna's Adventures in Mathurá.*

Now it so happened that Raja Kansa performed a great sacrifice to the god Siva in the city of Mathurá, and many fighting men and wrestlers went to the city to exhibit their skill before the Raja. And Krishna and his brother

Raja Kansa per-
forms a sacrifice
to the god Siva
in the city of
Mathurá.



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Krishna and
Balaráma go to
the city of
Mathurá.

Adventure with
the washerman
of the Raja.

Amusing mis-
takes in putting
on the clean
clothes.

Krishna for-
gives the sins of
the tailor.

Pious address of
Kubja to Krish-
na.

Krishna
straightens the
humpback and
renders her
young and
beautiful.

Kubja offers
herself to
Krishna and is
accepted.

Balaráma went to Mathurá with the other cowherds; and all the women of Vrindávana sorrowed at the departure of Krishna. Now when they entered the city their clothes were very old and dirty, and they saw the washerman of the Raja laden with bundles of washed clothes; and they prayed the washerman to lend them new clothes, but the man would not. Then Krishna and the other cowherds fell upon the washerman and belaboured him, and Krishna struck him so that his head flew off like an ear of corn. So Krishna and his companions seized the garments that the washerman had washed, and began to put them on; but they were rude cowherds, and understood not the raiment, and some thrust their arms into the drawers whilst others drew the jackets on to their legs. And Krishna laughed as he beheld his companions, but presently a tailor came up, and Krishna requested him to dress the cowherds; and the tailor obeyed the request, and set to work with all speed and fitted the clothes upon the cowherds, and Krishna rewarded him by forgiving him all his sins.⁹

After this a woman who was humpbacked appeared before Krishna, and her name was Kubja. And she said:—"I am the handmaid of Raja Kansa, and my duty is to anoint him with saffron and sandal; and I pray you to permit me to do the same for you." So Krishna gave her leave, and she did so. Then Krishna took compassion upon the humpbacked woman, and he placed his feet upon her feet, and his two fingers beneath her chin, and raised her up, so that she became quite straight, and by the touch of Krishna she was rendered young and beautiful. And Kubja seeing that she was now very beautiful, prayed Krishna to come to her house; and Krishna took her by the hand and said:—"I will come and meet you when I have slain Raja Kansa." So Kubja went to her own house, and filled a square place with saffron and sandal, and rejoiced greatly in the hope of receiving Krishna.¹⁰

⁹ The grounds upon which Krishna seems to have forgiven the sins of the tailor seem to form a travesty of Christianity.

¹⁰ The similarity between this story and two events recorded in the Gospel nar-



Meanwhile Krishna and his companions approached the gate which was called the gate of the bow ; and here was placed the great bow of Siva, which was as long as three palm trees, and so heavy that no man could lift it. And the warders of the gate, seeing the cowherds approaching, cried out to them to keep their distance, for that this was a royal gate, and no man could go through it excepting the Raja. But Krishna and those who were with him pretended not to hear the warders, and went straight to the place where the bow of Siva was lying. And Krishna took up the bow and broke it as an elephant breaks a sugar cane ; and the air was filled with the mighty sound of the breaking of the bow. Then the warders rushed upon the cowherds, but Krishna withstood them with great power and slew them all. And the people who looked on said one to the other :—" Surely these two men will slay Raja Kansa." Meantime the Raja himself heard the mighty sound, and demanded of his servants the reason thereof ; and they uncovered their heads and said :—" Two men of the Yádava tribe, named Krishna and Balaráma, have entered the city of Mathurá and made a great uproar, for they have broken the mighty bow of Siva, and slain all the warders." At these words Kansa summoned many fighting men, and ordered them to go and put the two cowherds to death ; but Krishna and Balaráma fell upon the fighting men and slew them as they had already slain the warders. Then the two brothers returned to the place where the Yádavas had pitched their tents, and Krishna showed to his father Nanda the clothes that he had taken from the washerman of Raja Kansa. And Nanda said :—" O Krishna, will you never cease your pranks ?

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Krishna breaks
the bow of Siva.

Krishna slays
the warders of
the bow.

Raja Kansa
orders the death
of Krishna and
Balaráma.

Krishna and
Balaráma
slaughter the
fighting men of
Kansa.

Krishna warned
by Nanda.

rative, is too striking to be passed over without notice. The healing of the woman who had been bowed down for eighteen years, and who was made straight by Christ on the Sabbath day, and the incident of the woman who broke an alabaster box of spikenard, and poured it upon his head, seem to have been thrown together in the legend of Kubja. (Comp. Luke xiii. 2; and Mark xiv. 3.) The compilers of the life of Krishna appear however to have been compelled to garble the incidents in order to bring them into conformity with the amorous character of the Yádava hero. It is subsequently related with some grossness of detail, which has been omitted from the present text, that Krishna ultimately visited Kubja and gratified all her desires.



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Remember that this is not the forest of Gokula, or the village of Vrindávana, but the city of Raja Kansa; therefore keep my counsel in mind, and work not any mischief here."

6. *Krishna's contest with Kansa, Raja of Mathurá.*

Restlessness of
Kansa.

Now on that night Raja Kansa was filled with anguish, and he had no rest whether he rose up or whether he sat down, but he told no man of his deep anxiety. After a while he lay down upon his bed, but for the space of three watches he could not sleep. Then he fell into a short slumber, and he saw in a dream the phantom of his own body moving about without a head; and the phantom appeared to be bathing naked in the sand; and it swallowed poison and rode along upon an ass; and it dwelt with goblins in a cemetery, wearing a garland of blood-red flowers; and flaming trees were all around it with young children sitting thereon. And Kansa rose up from his bed in great terror,

Portentous
dreams of
Kansa.

Kansa orders
his Ministers to
prepare an
arena for the
exhibition of
wrestlers.

and sent for all his ministers and said:—"Let the great arena be swept and sprinkled with water, and summon thither all the Chieftains and people of the Yádavas, and all the Rajas who have come from afar, and after a while I myself will go into the arena." Then the ministers caused the arena to be swept and sprinkled, and they threw a canopy over it, and spread it with silken cloths, and they hung it with flags and garlands and strings of flowers, and ordered the musicians to play aloud and summon all men into the arena. And a vast multitude came and took the seats which were allotted them; and Raja Kansa came filled with pride, and sat himself upon a raised throne; and the gods seated in their cars began to look down from the sky.

Assembly of the
Raja and the
people.

Krishna and
Balaráma
approach the
arena disguised
as jugglers.

And at the dawning of the morning, Nanda and all the chief cowherds entered the assembly, and Krishna and Balaráma and the other young cowherds followed them disguised as jugglers. When Krishna and Balaráma arrived at the gate of the arena, they saw the furious elephant that belonged to Raja Kansa; and that elephant had the strength of ten thousand elephants, and stood at the gate swaying his



body to and fro. Then Balarāma called out to the keeper of the elephant :—"Take the elephant away and give us a passage to the Raja, or I will dash him down and destroy both him and you." At these words the keeper was in a rage, and urged on his elephant against the cowherds; but Balarāma swung round his fist and buffeted the elephant so that it drew up its trunk and fell backwards with a loud roar. And all the warriors of Raja Kansa were looking on, and the driver knew that he should be slain unless he conquered the striplings; and he plunged his goad into the elephant, and drove him against Balarāma and his brother Krishna. Then that elephant in its might and fury seized Krishna with its trunk, and threw him upon the ground, and would have gored him, but Krishna remained in safety between its tusks. Then Balarāma seized the elephant by the trunk and Krishna caught it by the tail; and they sported with the elephant, like children sporting with a calf. Then Krishna pulled the tail of the elephant, and swung him round and dashed him down, and buffeted him to death with his fists; and he tore away its tusks with his two hands so that the blood flowed forth like a river. And the driver shouted aloud in defiance, but Krishna slew him and cast him under the feet of the elephant; and Krishna and Balarāma carried a tusk in each hand, and entered the arena in great joy.

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Adventures of
Balarāma and
Krishna with
the great
elephant of
Raja Kansa.

Krishna kills
the elephant
and its driver.

Now when Krishna entered the assembly, the cowherds thought he was their companion, and the wrestlers thought he was a wrestler; but the damsels of the city thought that he was a miracle of comeliness, and the Rajas thought that he was a Raja, whilst the gods on high knew him to be their Supreme Lord. And Kansa cried out with a loud voice :—"O wrestlers, down with these two men and slay them, or else force them away from my presence." Then the wrestlers advanced and said to the two brothers :—"Our Raja is sad to-day, and desires to amuse himself with our wrestling: Be pleased, therefore, to wrestle with us and gratify the Raja." Krishna replied :—"We are but ignorant children; how then shall we encounter you? Nevertheless,

Different ideas
of the people
and the gods
respecting
Krishna.

Kansa orders
the expulsion of
Krishna and
Balarāma.

The wrestlers
challenge
Krishna and
Balarāma.

Krishna's
reply.

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PART III.Krishna and
Balaráma slay
the wrestlers.

as it is the will of the Raja, we will do as you say; but do not exert your force and dash us down, for we seek only to gratify the Raja." Then two mighty wrestlers came out and confronted Krishna and Balaráma; and they began to wrestle, head with head, arm with arm, eye with eye, leg with leg, pouncing, grappling, snatching, and tugging. And the people cried out:—"Shame upon the wrestlers for fighting such children." And whilst they were thus speaking Krishna and Balaráma hurled the two wrestlers backward and slew them upon the spot; and all the other wrestlers came up and were slain in like manner by Krishna and Balaráma.

Joy of the
people and the
gods.

Then all the people were filled with joy, and the musicians played aloud, and the gods showered down flowers from heaven; but Kansa cried out in a rage:—"Why is the music sounded, and why are the people rejoicing at the victory of Krishna? Seize the two young striplings, and bind them, and take them out of the assembly; and go and bring hither my father Ugrasena, and the treacherous Vasudeva and his wife Devakí: We will slay them first and then put to death the two brethren." At these words Krishna rose up clothed in mail, and a helmet was upon his head, and he held a shield in one hand and a double-edged sword in the other. And Raja Kansa stood up in great alarm, and began to tremble violently. And Krishna and Kansa fought desperately, and at last Krishna seized the Raja by the hair, and dashed him down and leaped upon him so that his life departed from his body. And the people cried out:—"Krishna has slain Kansa!" And gods, and men, and sages were filled with joy. And the gods rained down flowers and sounded the great kettledrum; and the hearts of all the men and women of Mathurá expanded on beholding the countenance of Krishna, as the lotus expands on beholding the full moon. And Krishna dragged the corpse of Raja Kansa to the river Jumná, and the Ránis of Kansa arose and took courage, and went to the banks of the Jumná and performed the obsequies of their lord.

Kansa orders
the slaughter of
Krishna and
Balaráma, and
the arrest of
Ugrasena, Vasu-
deva, and
Devakí.
Krishna rises
up and fights
Kansa.Death of
Kansa.Rejoicings of
the gods.The Ránis per-
form the
funeral rites
for Kansa.

After this Krishna released Vasudeva and Devakí from



their bonds, and placed the old Raja Ugrasena upon the throne of Mathurá; and all the cowherds returned to Vrindávana, but Krishna and Balaráma remained in the city of Mathurá. And Krishna went to the house of Kubja, and gratified all her desires.

Now the two Ránis of Raja Kansa were the daughters of Jarásandha, Raja of Magadhá; for when Kansa was very young he marched an army against Jarásandha and defeated him, and Jarásandha gave him his two daughters in marriage. And when Kansa was dead the two Ránis returned to the house of their father, and told him how Krishna and Balaráma had put their husband to death; and Jarásandha was filled with wrath and prepared to do battle against the Yádavas. And Jarásandha made war against Ugrasena, and Krishna defeated him seventeen times. Then Yama assembled an army of barbarians to aid Jarásandha, and they had thick necks and arms, large teeth, brown hair, and red eyes. And Jarásandha marched with an army of thirty millions of these unclean barbarians against Mathurá; and Ugrasena, and Krishna, and all the inhabitants of Mathurá and Vrindávana, migrated to the city of Dwaraká, which is in the country of Guzerat nigh unto the western sea.

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Krishna releases Vasudeva and Devaki, and restores Ugrasena to the throne.

Jarásandha, Raja of Magadhá, makes war against Mathurá, and is defeated by Krishna.

Marches an army of barbarians against Mathurá.

Krishna and the Yádavas retire to the city of Dwaraká.

7. *Krishna's life at Dwaraká.*

After this Balaráma took to wife Revatí, who was the daughter of Raja Raivata; and Krishna married Rukminí, the daughter of Bhíshmaka, Raja of Vidarbha. Now Rukminí was betrothed to Sisupála, but on the nuptial day she went with all her companions and maidens to worship in the temple of the goddess Durgá, when Krishna saw her and took her by the hand and carried her away in his chariot. And Rukmin, who was the brother of the damsel, and Sisupála, to whom she was betrothed, followed after Krishna, but he defeated them both, and brought away Rukminí to the city of Dwaraká, and married her according to the ordinance. And Rukminí bore a son to Krishna, and his name was Pradyumna.

Marriage of Balaráma with Revatí.

Krishna carries off Rukminí, the daughter of the Raja of Vidarbha.

Satrájit intrusts a precious gem to his brother Prasena, who is slain by a lion.

And there was a certain Chieftain of the Yádavas named

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Satrájit, and he had a very precious gem; and one day he put the gem upon his neck and went into the assembly of the Yádavas. And the minds of all men were captivated by the sight of the gem, and Krishna asked Satrájit for it, but Satrájit went away and delivered it into the charge of his brother Prasena. And Prasena took the jewel, and went out into the forest to hunt, and a lion met him and slew him. And the lion took the gem in his mouth and departed with it, but was attacked and killed by Jámnavat, the Raja of the Bears; and Jámnavat kept possession of the gem.

Krishna
suspected of
stealing the
gem, and re-
covers it from
Jámnavat.

Meanwhile Satrájit suspected Krishna of having slain his brother Prasena for the sake of the gem; and this was told to Krishna, and he collected a number of Yádavas and went forth in search of Prasena, and followed the marks of his horse's hoofs until he came to the spot where he had been killed. And all the people saw that Prasena had been slain by a lion, and acquitted Krishna of having taken the gem. But Krishna followed the footsteps of the lion, and found that the lion had been killed by Jámnavat; and he fought against Jámnavat and subdued him, and Jámnavat presented him with the gem, and gave him his daughter Jámnavatí in marriage. After this Krishna returned to Dwaraká and gave the gem to Satrájit, who then knew that Krishna had not slain Prasena. And Satrájit gave Krishna his daughter Satyabhámá in marriage, and presented him with the gem as dowry, but Krishna desired him to keep the jewel.

Krishna marries
Jámnavatí.

Marries
Satyabhámá,
the daughter of
Satrájit.

Murder of
Satrájit.

Krishna re-
venges his
death.

Now before Satyabhámá had been given to Krishna she had been sought in marriage by many Yádavas; and they were greatly enraged with Satrájit, and one of them killed Satrájit in his sleep and obtained possession of the gem. When Krishna heard what had been done he followed the man and slew him with his chakra; but the man had made over the gem to the charge of Akrúra, and it remained ever afterwards in the possession of Akrúra.

Krishna's love
of women, and
Balaráma's love
of wine.

And Krishna married many wives and took many concubines, and all his life he was famous for his love of women;



and his elder brother Balaráma was in like manner ever famous for his love of wine.

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The foregoing legends respecting Krishna, so far as they refer to his historical character, appear to call for no particular remark. They sufficiently illustrate both the low origin of Krishna as a cowherd, and the disorder and violence which prevailed in the Yádava tribe. In the previous traditions which connect Krishna with the Pándavas, and which have already been indicated in the Mahá Bhárata, Krishna is represented in a higher and better character. His amorous temperament is but briefly noticed, and he stands prominently forward as an experienced warrior, witty in his conversation, ardent in his friendships, and a comforter to those who are in affliction. But in the present series Krishna is little better than a boor, with some sense of humour and decidedly mischievous propensities, and above all with a strong amorous temperament. The deification of such a hero as an incarnation of Vishnu forms a curious subject of inquiry; but the question is so closely intertwined with the history of the Hindú religion, that it must be reserved for a future volume.

Review of the
foregoing
legends respect-
ing Krishna.

Difference in
the character of
the separate
traditions of
the early life of
Krishna, and of
those which are
interwoven
with the story
of the great
war.

Question of his
deification to be
discussed here-
after.