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THE
LITERATURE OF BENGAL

BEING
AN ATTEMPT TO TRACE THE PROGRESS
OF THE
NATIONAL MIND IN ITS VARIOUS ASPECTS,
AS REFLECTED IN THE NATION'S LITERATURE
FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES TO THE PRESENT DAY;
With Copious Extracts from the Best Writers.

BY
AR CY DAE.

~~~~~  
"And soft as the accents of lovers' farewell,  
"Are the hearts that they bear and the tales that they tell." BYRON.  
~~~~~

CALCUTTA:
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1877.

To My Uncle

RAI SHOSHEE CHUNDER DUTT, BAHADUR.

THE FOLLOWING PAGES

ARE DEDICATED

AS A TOKEN

OF

SINCERE GRATITUDE, ESTEEM AND AFFECTION.

PREFACE.

No work has yet been written from which Englishmen can gather any information regarding the literature and thought of a people in many respects the most striking of those which have passed under their sway. No other reason could be urged to justify a hasty collection and publication of a number of Magazine articles.

Even for the Bengali reader there is but one book which gives a tolerably complete idea of the literature of the nation. My obligations to Pundit Ramgati Nyaratna's work on Bengali Language and Literature are very great indeed. His researches have been extensive, and if he has not been able to collect the particulars of the life of every writer of eminence, he is not to blame. I have, in the body of the work, quoted frequently from his book, but I must record here, once again, my sense of the great value of the biographical portion of his learned work.

In justice, however, to the present attempt, I may be allowed to add, this book has been written on an entirely new plan, that nearly one-half of the

work has been devoted to the elucidation of a most important subject on which no attention was previously bestowed, *viz.*, the characteristic features of different periods of time, and the vigorous though silent and often unperceived influences of religions, of political revolutions, of social changes on the national mind, and therefore on the national literature. It has been my attempt to make this the leading feature of the present work, while in the line of criticism, too, the old standard, which held up the *Vidya Sundar* as the perfection of poetry, has been departed from, and a freer, and, it is hoped, a healthier standard adopted.

Calcutta, 1877.

ARCY DAE.

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LITERATURE OF BENGAL.

INTRODUCTION.

OUR forefathers have left no record of their doings. We have no means to ascertain how they acted and how they thought, how they fought, conquered and gradually settled down in this vast peninsula,—what dynasties conquered, and what dynasties were conquered. No authentic history has been left to us, not one trustworthy account of the reign of a single prince or the conquests of a single potentate. The departed past with all its glories and grandeur is a blank to us.

Such is the complaint made by our baffled antiquarians. We do not say that there is not *some* reason for complaint, but we must say that the grounds of complaint have been greatly exaggerated. A great nation never passes away without leaving some lasting memorials of its doings, some broad traces and distinct outlines of its thoughts and actions. True, no authentic record has been left to us of the doings of the ancient Aryans of India, but no such record, were it ever so elaborate, could have conveyed to us such a distinct idea of their thoughts and actions as the literature of ancient India. The literature of every country, slowly expanding through successive ages, reflects accurately the manners and customs, the doings and thoughts of

the people. To take an instance, English literature bears on its broad bosom the impress and reflection of every period and almost every great event in English history. Without the aid of history we could mark in the pages of Spenser, Bacon and Shakespear the broad blaze of light, the spirit of daring and adventure, the first peeps of knowledge and enlightenment, that burst upon England about the close of the sixteenth century. Milton represents the national mind struggling for independence and the free-born rights of man about the middle of the seventeenth century; the pages of Waller and Dryden mark the reaction from stern and sustained effort to voluptuous ease. The literature of the beginning of the eighteenth century, as represented by Pope and Addison, shows the national mind once more refining, expanding, gathering strength. Johnson represents the last period of authority and conservatism, and the clinging to old institutions because they were old. That authority, however, was shaken, and the pages of Burns and Wordsworth, of Shelly and Byron, bear impress of the multifarious and tumultuous passions, the crumbling down of old institutions and the questioning of old authorities, the violent rush after Freedom in the completest sense of the word, in religion, politics and society, which marked the dawning of a better era for mankind.

Precisely in the same manner, the literature of India represents the national mind through successive ages. The Historian however has yet to arise who, with Niebuhr's powers of research and generalization, will give us an accurate and elaborate History of India as

deduced from its Literature. He will have to trace the course of the national mind first progressing, and then retrogressing, through successive stages of civilization. He will give us picture after picture, as it were, of the ancient Hindu society, moulding itself to the various wants and requirements of various ages. From the hymns or *Sanhitas* of the Vedas (the earliest record extant, not only of Aryan, but of Human thought) he will deduce and paint a simple state of a society of warriors on the banks of the Indus, fighting with the *Dasyus* or aborigines, and [invoking the aid of their gods,—the elements,—to preserve them in safety in a foreign land, to keep their flocks from disease and themselves from harm, and to destroy the enemy. These noble and yet simple hymns at once indicate the simplicity of the people as well as the fervency with which they prayed. The vigour of the national mind however relaxed when the first onset of the battle of nations was past, and the Aryans obtained a footing in India; and the *Brahmanas* of the Vedas present us therefore with a state of society more enervated and less simple. But the vigour of the Aryan intellect could never die. There was no longer however any need for action, for the Aryans had obtained a permanent footing in the soil; and the strength, therefore, which had ere while been displayed in wars with the *Dasyus*, now manifested itself in the boldest flights of daring intellect. The *Upanishads* of the Vedas contain lofty contemplations and daring investigations into the sources of creation, and into the mysteries of religion and philosophy. The daring mind of the en-

quirer had learnt to be sceptical, and to question the truth of foregone conclusions regarding religion and philosophy; and the intellectual few as represented by the *Vedanta*, which was written at a somewhat subsequent period, ventured to reject the worship of the elements, and to accept the faith of one God. We need not follow out the triple system of philosophy which was gradually developed from the enquiries which the *Upanishads* started, for philosophy and inquiries into religion were carried on by the intellectual few, and do not give us any idea of the society and the people. There are other works however which give us pictures of society and life at a period subsequent to that of the Vedas, and they are the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the Code of Manu. The *Ramayana* represents the first Aryan migrations and conquests in southern India. The *Mahabharata* presents us with wonderfully accurate pictures of the state of society of that period. The whole of India was governed by warlike Aryan princes, each governing one or more tribes, considering war and conquest as objects of ambition and glory, fired with genuine heroism, and swayed by rules of honor and a regard for truth such as reflect credit to the nation. No single work, not even the *Iliad* gives one so accurate an idea of the manners and customs of an age as the *Mahabharata*, a work, if rightly interpreted, invaluable to the Historian of India. No delineation could be more vivid and glowing, and at the same time more precise and accurate, than the *Mahabharata*, regarding the manners and customs of the age, the degree of civilization attained,

the position occupied by women in society, the feelings of kings towards the people, and of the people towards their kings, the relation between rival princes and chiefs, the occupations, thoughts and condition of the people, their sources of wealth, their apprehensions and dangers, the system of the warfare of that age, the weapons used for offence and defence, the religion, politics and society of the period. To the Historian of India, the book would at once show how far the Aryan nation had progressed in civilization, how far military science had improved since the time of the simple warriors on the banks of the Indus of the Vedic period, how far the country had been enriched, how far luxury had crept into society with the increase of wealth.

In the same way, the poems of Kalidasa show us in what respects the country had progressed or retrograded since the age of the *Mahabharata*. About the time of Kalidasa the civilization of India had reached its utmost height, and was beginning to wane. The kings of Kalidasa's period were more luxurious and given to pleasure, and less warlike than those of the time of the *Mahabharata*. Luxury and indolence had crept into society and had already told detrimentally on the energies of the nation. Refinement in everything had reached its extreme height, and pervaded the court and the camp, the king and the people.

Nor are these the only data on which to base a History of India. We have besides a succinct account of the religious revolutions that took place in India. Every revolution was an awakening of the national mind. We

know how the worship of elements slowly ripened into a system of gorgeous idolatry, the Brahmanism of India. We know how the inequalities sanctioned and perpetuated by this religion called forth a protest about the sixth century before the Christian era, which shook all India from the Indus to the Brahmaputra. We know how with the rise of Buddhism the national mind, as if awakened from a long sleep, rose in grandeur and strength, how the reigns of Chandragupta, Asoka, and other princes of the same family, were the most glorious periods in India. The whole of northern India was brought under one vigorous rule, arts and commerce flourished, and the prowess and the rectitude of the nation called forth the admiration of Greek and Chinese travellers.

But the contest between Brahmanism and Buddhism was not yet at an end. After a few centuries the religion of Buddha quailed before the renewed attacks of Hinduism, and the latter religion once more established its reign over the length and breadth of India. Indeed, it was now established with a vengeance. Its grasp was now stronger than ever, and was indeed suffocating to the free energies of the nation. In its train now came in Puranism with its choking superstition; and liberty of thought in India was suppressed for ever.

There are more data still. The Greeks, the Chinese pilgrims, the early Muhammadan conquerors, have all left us pictures of the states of society which they respectively witnessed, and the pictures are very flattering indeed to us as a nation. The future Historian of India will take advantage of these records, and, as we have said before,

will altogether find ample materials to write a history of the *people*, and of the national mind of the Aryans in India.

It will still be objected by some that the literature of a people does not furnish one with an account of the reigning princes and dynasties, of wars, conquests, or settlements. No,—but the idea that history consists of an account of the lives and reigns of princes, is getting obsolete, and will at a no distant date be utterly rejected. It is the history of a *people*, not the history of princes, that we are anxious to have; and if we succeed in learning how our forefathers progressed in civilization, how they acted, thought, and lived, how manners, religion and society were gradually moulded in accordance with the various requirements of various ages,—we for one, shall not regret that a list of princes, and a list of wars and conquests are wanting to complete the History of India.

As it is in England, as it is in India, even so it is in Bengal. The literature of Bengal reflects the national mind through successive ages, and is the only real index to the history of the people. Ask a schoolboy, and he will give you details of all the wars from the conquest of Bengal by the Muhammadans to the battle of Plassey; he will tell you the names of all the rulers of Bengal from Bukhtiar Khilji down to Sir Richard Temple. And yet how little do we know of the true history of the *people*. Too much of the canvas is filled up with the figures of rulers and warriors and the details of their wars, too little indeed is given to those silent millions who plod from day to day, from year to year, and dot the level

plains of Bengal with quiet shady villages. Our ideas on these subjects should indeed be considerably altered; in this point at least we ought to be thorough republicans. What hoots it to us, who succeeded Bukhtiar Khiliji, or why should we encumber our memory with a list of names? Why should we not rather look down from the king to the people, from the zemindar to the lowly ryot, from the influential few to the millions who constitute the nation? Why should we not rather sympathise with the lowly than worship the proud, why should we not trace the progress of the arts of peace, rather than commit to memory the accounts of carnage and war?

To be sure, dates and names of kings have their use. They ought to serve as pins by which to set up and adjust the map of History. The condition of the people through successive ages should be the real subject of history, the dates and the names of kings should be the strings, as it were, by which to keep the real facts in order and commit them to memory. Instead of that we have only the shadow, the substance is nowhere.

To trace, as far as possible, the history of the *people* as reflected in the literature of Bengal will be the object of the future chapters. In doing so, we shall endeavour to note the influences acting and re-acting on the national mind, and leaving their traces in the literature of the country. We shall dwell at length on such historic facts as really told on the condition of the people, and shall try to ascertain their influence on the national literature. We shall pause to explain the revolutions in thought which have marked the national mind in Bengal, and left their

impress on literature. In a word, we shall endeavour to show our readers how our forefathers acted and thought, what they felt and what they believed, how they loved and how they lived. The literature of our country bears the true impress of the national mind, through its successive changes, and is the *only* index to the condition of the millions of Bengal during several hundreds of years.

Before we enter into any discussion regarding the comparative merits of our poets we would fain have some definite standard by which to judge.

Poetry may be defined a piece of metrical composition, raising an image or a string of ideas, and awakening our finer sensibilities. We shall try to illustrate what we mean.

We all know, though it is scarcely possible to define, what our nicer sensibilities, our finer emotions are. To take an instance, the emotion of laughter is not one of the nicer sensibilities, and a piece of composition, calculated to move laughter, comes in more properly within the province of a comic journal than of poetry accurately so called. On the other hand, veneration, for the mighty and the sublime, sorrow and sympathy for the lowly and the suffering, love for the innocent and the beautiful,—these, and such as these, are pre-eminently the finer sensibilities of our heart, and that which excites these feelings is genuine poetry.

We shall try to illustrate our remarks with a few extracts, but the storehouse of poetry is so vast, so varied, so rich, that the task of selection even at random is exceedingly difficult.

Seldom has a poet's imagination created anything more exquisitely beautiful, more intensely poetical than Sakuntala. The innocence of a saint, the simplicity of a child, the purest and the tenderest feelings which can ever animate the heart of a human being, the first troubled impressions of love stealing into and glimmering in a child-like and tender bosom as softly as moonbeams glimmer in the ripples of a crystal lake,—these and a thousand soft associations clinging around a retired hermitage and its amiable inmates, make the character of Sakuntala exquisitely beautiful and poetical. Nowhere can truer or deeper poetry be found than in the lines in which Sakuntala takes a tender leave of the Madhavi creeper, the female antelope, the little fawn and the other companions of her earlier and happier days. We shall make a short extract from Sir W. Jones's translation.

Sakuntala.—Father! when yon female antelope who now moves slowly from the weight of the young ones with which she is pregnant shall be delivered of them, send me, I beg, a kind message with tidings of her safety.—Do not forget.

Kanna.—My beloved, I will not forget it.

Sakuntala.—[*Advancing, then stopping.*] Ah! what is it that clings to the skirts of my robe and detains me? [*She turns round and looks.*]

Kanna.—It is thy beloved child the little fawn, whose mouth, when the sharp points of Kusa grass had wounded it, has been so often smeared by thy hand with the healing oil of Ingudi; who has been so often fed by thee

with a handful of Syamaka grains, and now will not leave the footsteps of his protectress.

Sakuntala.—Why dost thou weep, tender fawn, for me, who must leave our common dwelling place? As thou wast reared by me when thou hadst lost thy mother, who died soon after thy birth, 'so will my foster-father attend thee, when we are separated, with tender care.—Return, poor thing, return,—we must part. [*She bursts into tears.*]

* * * * *
Kanna.—Come, my beloved girl, give a parting embrace to me and to thy companions.

Sakuntala.—Must Anusuya and Priyamvada return to the hermitage?

Kanna.—They too, my child, must be suitably married; and it would not be proper for them yet to visit the city. Gautami will accompany thee.

Sakuntala [*embracing him.*] Removed from the bosom of my father, like a young sandal tree rent from the hills of Malaya, how shall I exist in a strange soil?

* * * * *
Sakuntala [*again embracing Kanna.*] When, my father, oh! when again shall I behold this asylum of virtue?

Kanna.—Daughter, when thou shalt long have been wedded, like this fruitful earth, to the pious monarch, and shalt have borne him a son, whose car shall be matchless in battle, thy lord shall transfer to him the

burden of empire, and thou with thy Dushmanta shalt again seek tranquillity, before thy final departure, in this loved and consecrated grove."

Our extract has been longer than we expected, but what is it that pleases or affects us in the above? The poet raises an image, a conception, a combination or string of ideas, which affects us and awakes our softer sensibilities, and we feel the tender affecting impulse before we know whence it proceeds. What are the ideas that have been strung together? A quiet and holy hermitage, a child of beauty and sweet simplicity, a father pious and tender-hearted, creepers, plants, little fawns, which have, up to this time, been the sole companions of the amiable creature who must now leave her home, and is taking an affecting touching leave of all companions, animate and inanimate. Such are the ideas which have been so skilfully, so beautifully strung or woven together that the whole effect is striking. We feel love for the amiable young soul, we feel desolation at her parting, we feel a strange thrill of touching emotions as Sakuntala takes leave of her fawns and creepers with tears in her eyes. All these feelings are our nicer and softer sensibilities, and the image, the composition which awakes them is genuine poetry.

Ideas and images of a different character awake in our heart sensibilities different in kind, but not the less noble or poetical when the great Homer wakes from his immortal harp notes of martial ardour, and sings the deeds of Hector in the following lines:--

"Thus armed, before the folded gates he came,
Of massy substance and stupendous frame;
With iron bars and brazen hinges strong,
On lofty beams of solid timber hung:
Then thundering through the planks with forceful sway,
Drives the sharp rock: the solid beams give way;
The folds are shattered; from the crackling door
Lead the resounding bars, the flying hinges roar.
Now, rushing in, the furious chief appears,
Gloomy as night! and shakes two shining spears!
A dreadful gleam from his bright armour came,
And from his eye-balls flashed the living flame;
He moves a god, resistless in his course,
And seems a match for more than mortal force!"

In these lines is raised an image of a very different character. It is that of a god-like hero bursting through all opposition with superhuman energy and glory, and shining with increased splendour after the feat. Our veneration for the great, our awe for the mighty and the sublime, these are among the finest sensibilities of our heart, and these are suddenly aroused by the image of splendour placed before our mind's eye. We admire the feat done, we stand in veneration and breathless awe before the hero who has done it. Awe and veneration are among our finer emotions, and the image, the composition which awakes these feelings so strongly, is genuine poetry.

A painting, a piece of sculpture, can in the very same manner arouse our finer feelings, and indeed the excellence of painting and sculpture lies in the degree in which a piece is capable of arousing our feelings. Whoever has witnessed the master-works of painting in Europe, and the "breathing marble," the unrivalled sculpture works of Canova, knows to what extent these sister

arts have a strange fascinating power over us. As on reading a piece of fine poetry, even so on seeing a fine piece of painting or sculpture work, our finer sensibilities are awakened, the effect on our mind is the same, the standard by which we judge the excellence of the performance is the same, the process only by which the effect is produced is different. In the case of poetry the image or string of ideas is presented to our mind by means of language, in the case of painting or sculpture the same thing is done by means of a representation on the canvas or on the marble.

Beside painting and sculpture, there are many other things which produce the same effect on our mind as poetry. Music does not raise any distinct image in our mind, but the *ultimate* effect is the same, it wakes our poetical emotions. It produces in us a soft and settling melancholy, or wakes us to enthusiasm according to its tone. Our heart hears the touching appeal, of whatever character it may be, and responds to it. We grow merry and light-hearted, or we grow pensive and religious. Without raising any definite ideas, music wakes definite emotions, and then a thousand associations, corresponding to the particular emotion raised, steal into our heart. The excellence of music too is judged by the degree in which our finer sensibilities are awakened.

A variety of other things produce the same effect. Natural scenery, seasons of the year, hours of the day, the incidents of our every-day life, the presence or absence of dear relations, all these produce the same effect in us; and we therefore say there is poetry in a group

of children playing together; there is poetry in the stillness of a calm evening by the margin of a lake; there is still nobler poetry in lofty mountains and snow-clad peaks. What we really mean is, that a group of children with shining faces, a lake sleeping under the stillness of evening, or a lofty mountain piercing through clouds and raising its serried snow-clad heights to the skies, inspires in us the same feelings of love or beauty or sublimity as a poetical composition does.

The *differentia*, then, which marks poetry as distinguished from painting and sculpture, as also from a variety of other things, we might include novels and other works in prose, is, that poetry is *metrical composition*. The reason why poetry should be confined to metre has been often discussed. It is sometimes asserted that in ancient times, when the art of writing was unknown, everything worth remembering had to be committed to memory, and as measured lines are more easily remembered than prose, everything in ancient times was composed in verse. This is a very plausible argument, and would probably be a satisfactory one, if we had to explain the phenomenon of metrical compositions only in ancient times. But poetry still continues to be written in measured lines long after the invention of the art of writing, and the argument that we are still imitating, without rhyme or reason, the practice of our forefathers, though the necessity for so doing has entirely ceased to exist, will not appear sound. To those who really appreciate poetry the phenomenon admits of a simpler explanation. They must have felt that a touching,

affecting thought strikes us with double force when clothed in metre, that metrical composition *enhances* the effect of an image or a string of ideas on our emotions. To be sure, we know of prose works which are more touching, more affecting, than most of what has ever been written in verse; but these are exceptions, and do not vitiate the general rule. Few will deny that, as a rule, an idea, clothed in verse, strikes us more touchingly than in prose, and in this, we suppose, lies the explanation why poetry is so inseparably connected with verse. The readers of Kalidasa are aware that, though the great dramatist's works are replete with passages in prose, yet whenever and wherever he brings up a noble image, a really poetical idea, he invariably comes back to verse. Wherefore is it so? Wherefore but because a noble thought finds a most appropriate expression in verse, and the poet involuntarily speaks in verse whenever he speaks genuine poetry. The same thing may be said of some English dramatists, as well as of nearly all Sanskrit dramatists.

It were easy to prove that mere metrical composition is not poetry properly so called. Nor is it enough that those lines should simply raise an image in our mind, unless the image is such as is capable of affecting our finer sensibilities. The following lines, for instance, in which Johnson ridicules ballads and ballad-writing certainly raise a distinct image:—

I put my hat upon my head
And went unto the strand,
And there I saw another man,
A hat upon his band.

It is impossible to deny that the above is metrical composition, or that it raises a distinct image. The image is of two persons on the strand, one with a hat on his head, and the other with a hat on his hand. Yet it were abuse of language to call this poetry, simply because it does not arouse our finer feelings.

There is a class of critics who assert that Pope's *Essay on Man* is clever writing but is not poetry. The reasons for such assertion we have nowhere seen distinctly stated, but we think we might make a guess. The whole poem is filled with arguments and reasoning, which, one would think, could not affect our fine emotions. If that were a fact, we should, consistently with our definition, deny the name of poetry to that composition. But such is not the fact. Those critics forget that Pope's reasoning is interspersed with figures, similes and images, which call forth the finest emotions of our heart. When the poet reasons—

The lamb thy riot dooms to bleed to-day,
Had he thy reason would he skip and play?
Pleased to the last he crops the flowery mead,
And licks the hand just raised to shed his blood.

We not only assent to the reasoning, but respond with an outburst of warm emotions to the touching description. The image of the lamb, licking the hand of his murderer, raised to shed his blood, is so touching, and speaks of such innocence and simplicity that, before we have assented to the reasoning, our emotions have been moved, our finer feelings awakened.

On the other hand, Swift is universally considered a delightful writer in verse, but not a genuine poet.

His poems are very pleasant reading, and amuse us and make us laugh out, but they do not affect our finer emotions and are therefore not genuine poetry. When for instance the Dean describes the fate of scribblers in the following lines:—

Poor starveling bard, how small thy gains !
How unproportioned to thy pains !
And here a *simile* comes pat in,
Though *chickens* take a month to fatten,
The guests in less than half an hour
Will more than half a score devour.
So after toiling twenty days
To earn a stock of pence and praise,
Thy labors, grown the critic's prey,
Are swallowed o'er a dish of tea ;
Gone to be never heard of more,
Gone where the *chickens* went before !

He raises ideas in our mind which do not move our finer emotions, and his writing is therefore no poetry *properly so called*. For our reader need scarcely be reminded that, in a *general* sense, whatever is written in verse is called poetry.

We have thus gone over the whole ground of our definition, and our readers will understand what we mean by saying, that Poetry is *metrical composition, raising an image or a string of ideas, thereby awakening our finer sensibilities*.

It will now be understood that whatever awakens the keenest emotions is the highest kind of poetry. This is the only standard by which to judge poetry,—there is absolutely no other. All the laws of criticism that have been invented in ancient or modern times, all that has been said regarding poetry by Aristotle or Longinus, by

Dryden or Addison, by Boileau or Pope, are only parts and parcels of this comprehensive and only perfect standard. Unity of time, place and action, is important, because when there is any serious want of such unity, the effect on our sensibilities is weak or imperfect. Character-painting is important, because character-painting increases the effect of poetry on our emotions. Let the appreciative and feeling reader forget all the laws of criticism he has ever learnt, let him judge poetry simply and solely by the degree of effect which it produces on his finer and nobler emotions, and he possesses the best and the only correct standard by which the excellence of poetry may be judged.

It is necessary to remark here that the language of real feeling is not necessarily and invariably poetry. Indeed the language of real woe, the wails of a bereaved mother, or the sighs of a disconsolate widow, do not always affect us very much, while the language of woe in works of fiction, such as would never be used by a really distressed person, has a thrilling effect on our feelings. Reduce into writing the shrieks, the wails, the ravings of the most distressed repentant, and it will read dull and insipid. The ravings of Othello after the murder of Desdimona are unnatural because no really distressed man would rave in blank verse, or in such artificial language as is used by the Moor ; and yet how powerfully, how deeply, this measured artificial language stirs our innermost feelings.

Thus there is a wide difference between the language of a man who feels, and the language which can repro-

duce such feelings in others. The former is not poetry, the latter is. Poetry, therefore, is not a composition produced or suggested by the finer sensibilities of our heart, but it is, as we have defined it, a composition which can awaken the finer sensibilities of our heart.

The extent to which our feelings are moved is, as we have stated, the only standard by which we judge the beauty of a poetical composition. This standard is not uniform, it is not the same in all ages and among all nations. Feelings are susceptible of cultivation, and a composition, which will arouse the cultivated feelings of an Italian, will have no effect on a barbarian. Similarly, there are shades of difference between the sensibilities of different nations, judgment varies accordingly, and each nation really believe their own national poet to be the greatest that ever lived. Yet in spite of minor variations, the civilized world of the present day feel generally in the same way and have some sort of a general standard of criticism; and that will be our guide in the following pages.

We cannot more appropriately conclude our definition of poetry than by quoting a passage from one of the greatest poets that the world has produced. It raises the image of a man who was once noble, but has deeply sinned, whose nobler feelings have been smothered or blunted by a long tissue of sins and crimes. At the last moment, dangers crowd upon him, friends drop around him, and the coveted prize, for which he has sinned, is in danger of being wrenched from his clutches. For a moment his stout heart seems to quail, he pauses

and meditates. The emotion raised by this image is one of desolation of the most dreary character, unmingled and untempered by grief.

Macbeth—What is that noise?

Seyton—It is the cry of women, my good lord.

Macbeth—I have almost forgot the taste of fears:
The time has been, my senses would have cool'd
To hear a night-shriek; and my fell of hair
Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir,
As life were in't: I have supped full with horrors;
Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,
Cannot once start me.—Wherefore was that cry?

Seyton—The queen, my lord, is dead.

Macbeth—She should have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word.
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

We are now in a position to judge what are the necessary qualifications of a poet. Who is a poet?

He is a poet who can raise an image or a string of ideas calculated to rouse our finer emotions. In order to be able to do so he must have keen sensibilities himself. The composition which would move our emotions must itself take its birth in deep emotions. Language is but the channel for the communication of

thoughts, and the language of poetry but communicates deep-felt emotions from the heart of the poet to the heart of the reader. That image which touches our sensibilities and finer feelings could, we may be sure, never be raised, without the poet in the first instance feeling the impulse which he now excites in his readers. He who would be a poet, therefore, must possess keen sensibilities.

But the mere possession of keen sensibilities and strong emotions will not make a poet. The definition of poetry, given above, consists of two distinct portions and represents distinct faculties. The metrical composition must, in the first place raise an image or a string of ideas, and in the second place awaken our finer sensibilities. In order to do the second, the poet, as we have just seen, must possess fine sensibilities himself. But that alone is not enough; in order to do the first *i. e.* to raise an image, the poet must possess another and a distinct faculty,—Imagination. It is possible to feel intensely without being able to reproduce the feeling in others, and we constantly come across men possessing fine sensibilities, appreciating poetry, but without being great poets themselves, because they cannot raise an image, because they do not possess imagination in a marked degree. Poetry then must raise an image and awaken our fine emotions;—a poet therefore must possess strong imagination as well as deep emotions like those of sublimity, sorrow or love.

Our remarks have been confined to poetry alone since Bengal had no prose literature previous to the 19th century.

LITERATURE OF BENGAL.

CHAPTER I.

THE PERIOD OF LYRICAL POETRY.

We have elsewhere seen that Buddhism, after a reign of some centuries in India, quailed before the renewed attacks of Brahmanism, and perished in the strife; and idolatry once more spread itself through the length and breadth of the land. It was not possible, however, that so vast a fabric of superstition as the Puranism of India, followed by so many millions of people should remain unaltered or entire. A long time did not elapse before the whole fabric was split into a variety of different religions, each finding its votaries among a limited number of tribes living in some particular province. Each tribe, in accordance with its natural inclinations and predilections, elected some particular deity or deities as the favored objects of worship. The warlike peasantry of Behar and the North West preferred to pay homage to the great warrior-king Rama, who had carried his conquests into the heart of Ceylon. A weak and helpless race of people, dwelling on the Delta of the Ganges, preferred to whimper their never-ending complaints to a goddess-mother, Uma, or to give vent to their soft and tender feelings in effusions on the amours of Krishna.

The prevailing faiths, then, that obtained in Bengal, from the twelfth century of the Christian era onwards, were the Tantrika and the Bhagavat, in other words the worship of Uma in one of her various forms, and the worship of Krishna. Uma or Sakti, according to the Puranas, is the female representation of the creative power of the Creator, but it was not as such that she was worshipped in Bengal. Religion and deities change their character according to the predilections, idiosyncracies and habitudes of thought of the people among whom they find favor and acceptance; and even the mild religion of Christ led to fearful and devastating wars when embraced by the rude barons of the mediæval ages. In the same way Sakti was not the creative power with the people of Bengal, she was a mother, a tender-hearted Bengali mother, and was worshipped with all the fondness, all the gushing affection of a Bengali child. The strains of the Sakta poets of Bengal are just like the complaints of a child to its mother. The goddess is not a lofty conception, dignified, noble, unapproachable. Such a goddess would not, could not satisfy the requirements of the weak Bengali worshipper. The Bengali worshipper wanted a goddess to whom he could speak familiarly as to a mother; before whom he could weep and complain in the fullness of his grief; whom he could sometimes praise for her bounties, oftener, much oftener tax for her unkindness; of whom he could ask favors not as a man asks favor of his Creator, but as a child asks favor of his mother, often complaining or even pretending anger,—assured

that a mother's boundless and unchanging affection will bear with every thing. Helpless amid political revolutions and the vicissitudes of life, wholly unrelying on his own strength or energies, the weak worshipper of Bengal wanted a deity who would bear with his eternal complaints, who would be at his side to affectionately help him at every little need and emergency, who would tend the grown up child with the unwearied patience and unfathomable love of a mother. And such a goddess was Sakti, Durga, Bhavani or Kali, as she is variously named, whose worship engaged the people and inspired the poets of Bengal in those days.

The other religion which also found votaries in those times, and indeed was perhaps even more generally followed, was the religion of Krishna. The soft amours of Krishna have always been a favorite theme of songs in all parts of India, but nowhere to such an extent as in Bengal. Here too the religion agreed with the idiosyncracies of the people. The peculiar natural conditions of the country which have made the Bengali so unfit for all vigorous exercise, for energy in war, and hard labour in times of peace, have at the same time developed his softer and tender feelings to a remarkable extent. Charity and kindness of feelings, a ready sympathy for the suffering and the lowly, a feeling, loving heart, these and an astute intellect have been the portion of the Bengali in place of manlier and nobler virtues. To such a people the tender amours of Krishna, by the banks of the deep blue Jumna, had a peculiar significance. Thus the religion of Krishna was peculiarly suited

to the natural predilections of the people, and inspired the earliest poets of Bengal with the truest poetic fervour.

The contest between the religion of Krishna and the religion of Sakti continued for many centuries, and indeed to a certain extent continues to the present day. And yet it is a curious fact that, up to the end of the 15th century, we do not find the name of a single Sakta poet of note; and from the middle of the sixteenth century up to the present date not a single Vaishnava poet of merit has flourished. At the first sight these facts would lead one to suppose that up to the middle of the sixteenth century Vaishnavism was the only prevailing religion in Bengal, and that the worship of Sakti began subsequently. As we proceed, however, we shall in future chapters adduce evidence to shew that such was not the case, that the worship of Krishna and the worship of Sakti were coeval, though we cannot account for the fact why the latter sect is not represented in the literature of the early times.*

There was a great awakening of the national mind in the sixteenth century of the Christian era, and a new era dawned in the country. The worship of Sakti, which,

*Let it not be imagined from what we have said that the religion of Sakti and the religion of Krishna were the only two religions in Bengal. On the contrary, the community has been divided into a variety of sects from very ancient times, and up to the present time Siva and other deities have their respective followers. But these are comparatively few in number and small in importance; the Tantrika and the Vaishnava being the only prevailing religions of the country; and these two consequently are the only religions which have left their traces in the literature of Bengal. And all these religions are included in *Hinduism*.

it seems, had degenerated into lewdness and debauchery, called forth a vigorous protest from the followers of Krishna, and Chaitanya began his work of reformation. It is not possible in the present day to realize the vehemence of the tide of reformation and zeal which deluged the land from one end to the other. *Bhakti* or illimitable faith in Krishna, it was preached, was the one means of salvation and purification. All external rites and ceremonies were ignored and declared useless, true virtue and true piety lay in the heart, in an overwhelming faith in Krishna. Up to this time the religion of Krishna was a part and parcel of Hinduism, just as the religion of Sakti or the religion of Siva. But Chaitanya, in the vehemence of his convictions, ventured to declare open war against Hinduism itself, and questioned some of its most fundamental tenets. The utility of rites and ceremonies was ignored; the system of caste inequalities boldly questioned; the Chandala who had faith in Krishna was declared superior to the unbelieving Brahman though versed in the Vedas; and a strong tide of love and faith in Krishna found expression in loud and sincere *Sankirtans* which rang from all parts of Bengal, and "the sound of Hariṇam reached the skies."

The distinctive feature then of the work of Chaitanya lay, not in founding the Vaishnava religion, as some imagine, for the Vaishnava religion, we have already seen, existed for centuries before the advent of the great Reformer, but in effectively declaring that *Vaishnavism was not a part and parcel of Hinduism, but was opposed to Hinduism*. From the time of Chaitanya onwards,

Vaishnavas were not Hindus properly so called. They formed a distinct sect, ignoring the faith of the Hindus, ignoring caste inequalities, ignoring the utility of Hindu rites and ceremonies. Centuries rolled on however, and a strange compromise has now been made. Hinduism has made some small compromise, and in so doing has absorbed the religion of Chaitanya into itself. Hinduism allows her votaries to ignore caste for a season, *viz.*, when they travel to the great Vaishnava temple of Jagannath, Hinduism has also recognized some of the Vaishnava rites, and by such conciliatory acts has weakened Vaishnavism and deprived it of its power. Respectable and well-to-do Vaishnavas, in the present day, tacitly recognize the inequalities of caste, and practise Hindu rites; rigid followers of Chaitanya and his religion being found scattered about in villages, possessing no power, no influence in the country, and utterly unable to offer any effectual opposition to the march of Hinduism. The work of Chaitanya has been well nigh undone.

The beginning of the sixteenth century witnessed one revolution; a little before the close of the same century, another revolution, though of less importance, was brought about by the province of Bengal finally passing from the rule of the Pathans to that of the Moghuls. The great Todar Mall, who virtually conquered the country, and brought it under the sway of Akbar, signalized his reign in Bengal by inaugurating a new system of collection of rent, and yet more by forcing his co-religionists, the Hindus of Bengal, to learn the Persian, by ordering that

all government orders should henceforth be written in Persian.* This order and these measures had a sensible effect on the literature and language of Bengal. Persian words came into vogue, and the Bengali language, in unconscious imitation of the language of the rulers, improved in compactness and solidity. While authors and poets were slow in making use of Persian words or idioms, our ancestors in their every-day life and work, in their familiar conversations, and more specially in their deeds and documents, willingly exchanged the somewhat cumbersome and verbose Bengali idiom for the more compact Persian forms of expression. Even the poets themselves were not always free from the prevailing influence, and the pages of Makunda Ram and other poets shew an admixture of Persian words and idioms for which we would vainly seek the works of preceding poets. To be convinced how greatly the Bengali language has been satu-

* Professor Blochman in his translation of the Ain Akbari thus comments on these changes: "He (Todar Mall) thus forced his co-religionists to learn the court language of their rulers, a circumstance which may well be compared to the introduction of the English language in the courts of India. The study of Persian therefore became necessary for its pecuniary advantages. Todar Mall's order, and Akbar's generous policy of allowing Hindus to compete for the highest honours—we saw on p. 441 that Man Sing was the first commander of seven thousand,—explain two facts, *first*, that before the end of the 18th century the Hindus had almost become the Persian teachers of the Muhammadans; *secondly*, that a new dialect could arise in upper India, the *Urdu* which without the Hindus as receiving medium, never could have been called into existence. Whether we attach more influence to Todar Mall's order, or to Akbar's policy, which once initiated, his successors, willing or not, had to follow, one fact should be borne in mind that before the times of Akbar the Hindus, as a rule, did not study Persian, and stood therefore politically below their Muhammadan rulers."

rated with the Persian we need only take up a deed of contract or gift or sale in our own day. With the exception of the verbs, articles and other small words, almost all the words are Persian. Similarly almost all words used in the zemindar's sherista, such as Zemindar, Naeb, Gomashta, Rayat, Halshana, Chowkedar, Jamadar, Pottah, Kabuliat, Kobala, Dakhila, Waris, Malguzari, Lakhraj, Taluq, Ijara &c.; and all words used in courts of justice such as Adawlut, Dewani, Fouzdari, Hukm, Hakim, Hozoor, Hazir, Malik, Ejlal, Furiadi, Asami, Mohkuma, Amin, Chaprasee &c., are Persian or Arabic to which there are no Bengali equivalents.

The sixteenth century then was a century of two great revolutions, one political and the other religious. About the commencement of the century there was an awakening of the national mind under the leadership of Chaitanya; towards the close of the century, Bengal passed from the hands of the Pathans to those of the Moghuls, and a second revolution in the language and literature of Bengal was unconsciously effected by the great Todar Mall. These two revolutions left permanent traces on the minds of the people, and in the literature of the country.

Up to the end of the 15th century, our literature consisted simply of songs feelingly sung, about the amours of Krishna and Radhika. But the national mind was now awakened. The first effect of this change was the introduction of a new religion deep and earnest in its character, and far reaching in its consequences. In literature too, there was a hankering for something vaster

and nobler than what had been inherited from the preceding ages, there was an energy capable for something greater than the composition of songs. At such a crisis the nation turned its eyes to the hitherto virgin mine of Sanskrit literature, and that was a mine which satisfied the highest aspirations, and rewarded the utmost endeavour. From this time forward then, we find our authors producing not simple songs as hitherto, but big tomes of poetry, all in the classical style. The two great epics in Sanskrit, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, were translated into Bengali, and original epics like the Chandi of Makunda Ram and the Annada Mangal of Bharat were written in the classical style. Nor was the national mind satisfied with poetry alone. The abstrusest questions of law and metaphysics, and deep and subtle problems of psychology, engaged the attention of the great Raghu Nath and other earnest workers of the school of Nuddea. Thus the revolution of the 16th century had a three fold effect, viz. religious, literary, and philosophical.

Thus rolled on three centuries more. And then was seen another revolution vaster in magnitude, deeper in its influence, wider in the area brought under its scope, than any that had ever preceded. Our readers must be aware that we are alluding to the conquest of Bengal by the English. The influence which this event has exerted on the literature of the country did not commence till some scores of years after the conquest took place, but the thousand and one ways in which this occurrence has influenced our feelings and actions, our manners and

customs, our ideas and our thoughts, and which necessarily are reflected in the literature of the period, cannot be adequately described within the limits of a single chapter. Fortunately our readers, living, as they do, in this particular period, must be aware of the nature of the influences at work, and of the characteristic merits of our present literature, and so, much of what we might otherwise have said about this period may be dispensed with.

Were it possible to describe in a few words the nature of the change which is taking place in our thoughts and ideas, and *ergo* in our literature at the present day, we should say that it consists in our strongly imbibing a spirit of freedom and individuality from the west. It consists in our learning to sacrifice classical perfection and harmony to strong individuality and individual freedom, even though this leads to diversity and confusion. It consists in our being more practical in our ways of thinking and action, in our preferring what is consistent with utility to what is prescribed by patriarchal and classical notions. It consists in our preferring freedom and resistance in the lowly to the grandeur and glory of the great, in our sympathising with the woes of a common citizen or a common peasant, rather than admiring the pomp and splendor of gods and goddesses, of kings and princes, of queens and princesses. It consists in the great, though silent, transition through which the entire continent of India is even now passing, in the rejection of notions and institutions thousands of years old, in the acceptance of a new baptism, as it were,

with the ideas of the West. All these facts have their influence on the national mind and on the national literature, and the result is that the literature of our country has shot forth with an activity and freedom quite unprecedented in the annals of Bengal.

As in the sixteenth century of the Christian era, even so in the nineteenth century, a political revolution is accompanied with a religious. But the religious revolution of the sixteenth century was antecedent in point of time to the political revolution of the same century, and deeper in its influence on the national mind; while the religious revolution of the nineteenth century inaugurated by the great Raja Ram Mohan Raya is not only subsequent in point of time to the conquest of Bengal by the English, but also shallow in its influence and limited in its sphere of operation. The religious revolution of the sixteenth century was a real awakening of the national mind, the religious revolution of the nineteenth century is simply a result of the nation imbibing the ideas of the West. There is nothing in the Brahmatism of the present day which will compare for a moment with the daring spirit of the old Vaishnavas, who, at a time when Hinduism was firmly established, called in question its most fundamental tenets. There is nothing again in modern Brahmatism which can for a moment supply the place of the maddening fervour of faith and love in Krishna which characterized the ancient Vaishnavas, and tinged the literature of the period. We have a creed now, an intellectual phenomenon of the day; the deep feeling,

the burning fervour, the overwhelming love and faith, are nowhere.

Yet Brahmaism, such as it is, has had its influence on the literature of Bengal and specially in the formation of the prose literature and the hymnology of the modern day, and it is for this reason that we make mention of it in this rapid survey. In a future chapter we shall trace the nature of the influence it has exerted on our literature.

We are averse to making any artificial division into epochs, but those who have followed us through the foregoing remarks will observe that the history of Bengali literature as of the Bengali people; naturally divides itself into three distinct periods viz :—

First, the period of lyrical poetry, extending from the twelfth to the end of the fifteenth century of the Christian era. The representative men of this period are Jayadeva, Vidyapati and Chandi Das. A host of other poets of smaller note flourished in this period.

Second, the period of classical influence, extending from the beginning of the 16th century to the end of the eighteenth century. The representative men of this period are the great Chaitanya, Kirttibas, Makunda Ram, Kasi Ram Das, the great Raghunath and Bharat Chundra Raya.

Third, the period of European influence, being the period in which we are living, and commencing with the nineteenth century. The central figures of this period are the great Ram Mohan Raya, Akhai Kumar Datta, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Ishwar Chandra Gupta,

Mudhu Sudan Datta, Hem Chandra Banerjea, Dina Bandhu Mitra and Bankim Chandra Chatterjea.

The first period presents us with a mass of love songs about Krishna and Radhika, composed with deep feeling. The second period presents us with more earnest thinking and work, with the rise of a new religion, the cultivation of literature in the classical style, and investigations into sanscrit philosophy. The last period strikes us with an outburst of multifarious feelings and the display of a free daring intellect. The second period is an improvement on the first, and the third beats all. For we do not hesitate to say that the *Meghnad Badha Kavya* leaves *Chandi* and *Vidyasundar* as far behind as *Chandi* and *Vidyasundar* leave behind the simple though sweet strains of Vidyapati and Chandi Das.

If our readers have followed us attentively through the foregoing remarks, they must have been struck with the close resemblance which the history of Bengali literature bears to the history of English literature. Leaving aside Jayadeva who wrote in Sanscrit, and who may therefore be compared to the earlier Anglo-Saxons who wrote in Latin, we shall find that the earliest poets who wrote in Bengali, namely Vidyapati and Chandi Das, wrote probably (for the precise date or even century is not known) at the time when Chaucer and Gower were writing in England, viz. about the close of the 14th century. In the sixteenth century Luther began his work of reformation in Europe, and Chaitanya in Bengal; and the rise of a new religion and a variety of other causes led to an unusual activity in thought

and action in England precisely at the same time at which similar causes led to similar results in Bengal. To compare small poets with great, our most popular poets Kirtibas and Kasi Ram Das wrote precisely at the times when Shakespeare and Milton wrote in England respectively. And to complete the comparison, the tumultuous revolution in feelings, thoughts and ideas which shook England and the whole of Europe about the end of the eighteenth century, was contemporaneous, and may not unaptly be compared, with the vastest revolution that Bengal has ever undergone, viz., the conquest of the country by the English.

We now enter upon the first of our Epochs, viz., the period of Lyrical Poetry.

CHAPTER II.

JAYADEVA GOSWAMI.

THE earliest poet of Bengal, and the only one of note who has written in Sanskrit, is Jayadeva Goswami. It has now been ascertained with tolerable certainty that he lived and wrote in the 12th century of the Christian era, *i. e.*, immediately before the conquest of Bengal by the Muhammadans. We shall not enter into discussions, but shall only mention the grounds on which this conclusion is based.

(1). A stone belonging to the Court of Lakshmana Sena, has been found in which the following lines are inscribed—

Govardhana, Sarana, Jayadeva, Umapati and Kaviraja, are the jewels in the Court of Lakshmana.*

These five authors therefore evidently lived in the time of Lakshmana Sena, *i. e.*, 12th century of the Christian era.

(2). Jayadeva too at the commencement of his great work, the *Gita Govinda*, describes the qualifications of these five poets, including himself. The fourth verse of the first *Prabandha* of the first *Sarga* of the *Gita Govinda* runs thus :—

Umapatidhara excels in word painting; Jayadeva alone knows purity of style; Sarana is praised for speedily rendering difficult passages and works; Govardhana excels in description of love; no one is so famed as the Kavikshmapati (*i. e.* Kaviraja) named Dhoyi for retaining in memory what is once repeated.†

It is evident from the above that Jayadeva was contemporaneous with the four other poets named; and if they, as we have seen before, lived in the 12th century, Jayadeva too must have lived at the same time.

(3). Perhaps the most satisfactory evidence to establish this point will be found in the fact that Sanatana Goswami, a follower and pupil of the great Chaitanya,

* গোবর্ধনশ্চ শরণো জয়দেব উমাপতিঃ।
কবিরাজশ্চ রত্নানি সমিতৌ লক্ষণস্যচ ॥

† বাচঃ পল্লবয়তি উমাপতিধরঃ সন্দর্ভ শুদ্ধিং গিরাং
জানীতে জয়দেব এব শরণঃ স্নায়ো চক্রহৃদতে।
স্বাক্ষরোত্তর সংগ্রহের বচনৈরাচার্য গোবর্ধনঃ
স্পর্শী কোম্পিন বিক্রমঃ কৃতধরো ধোয়ী কবিক্ষাপতিঃ।

who flourished in the beginning of the sixteenth century, asserts that Jayadeva was contemporaneous with Lakshmana Sena, King of Bengal, who reigned in the twelfth century. The learned Sanatana writing in the sixteenth century had at his command facts and proofs which we do not possess at the present day, and we may be certain he was not mistaken. The Vaishnavas of the sixteenth century too, as we learn from their writings, were passionately fond of the songs of Jayadeva, Vidyapati and Chandi Das, and looked back with an affectionate ardour on those earlier representatives of Vaishnava thought and feelings; and their investigations and knowledge regarding such earlier poets must have been minute and profound.

Very little is known of the life of this, the earliest poet of Bengal. He was born in Kendubilwa better known as Kenduli, about eighteen miles from Suri in the district of Birbhum. His father's name was Bhojadeva, and his mother's Bamadevi.* In early life Jayadeva left home, and it is said, began preaching the faith and love of

* We shall briefly notice in a note a somewhat uninteresting discussion as to whether the poet Jayadeva is identical with a logician of the same name who obtained the title Pakshadhara Misra. Haridas Hirachand, the learned editor of *Dhatu manjari* and *Kavya Kalapa*, speaking of the poet says, "Jayadeva from his infancy used to take his lesson once a fortnight from his teacher, hence his other name was Pakshadhara Misra or a fortnightly student. He was an able Logician, Rhetorician, Dramatist, Songster" &c FitzEdward Hall supports this view; but Baboo Rajani Kanta Gupta, in his sensible and well-written pamphlet on the life of Jayadeva, successfully combats this supposition, and we believe the Baboo is perfectly correct. To shew that the homeless wanderer who sang and preached the love of Krishna all over Bengal and out of Bengal, was also an accurate metaphysician and a scholar, requires stronger evidence than has yet been adduced.

Krishna. He had a few pupils and followers, and it is asserted that he attempted to establish a distinct religion like what Chaitanya did four centuries later. All this however we must accept with caution. Much of what little we know of Jayadeva is from Vaishnava writers, and they were naturally anxious to discover and establish a resemblance between so great a poet and their great Master. That Jayadeva's faith in Krishna was ardent and deep, is amply shewn in his great work; that the same fervour and feeling was shared not only by a few friends of his, but by a large portion of the people at large, is also highly probable;—but that he began preaching the faith of Krishna as a *new religion* is perhaps the unfounded supposition of later Vaishnava writers.

After passing a few years in devotion and study, Jayadeva married and settled down in his native village. The daily routine of home life was however ill adapted to the feelings of the ardent poet, and he left home once more and travelled through northern India as far as Vrindavan and Jayapur, to which latter place he seems to have been invited by the king. Nothing more is known of the poet than that he survived his wife Padmavati, and that he passed his last days in devotions in his native village where his tomb is yet to be seen surrounded by beautiful groves and trees.

The little that is known of the life of the poet is so mixed up with fables, that it is impossible at this distance of time to glean the truth from the falsehood. Such fables, however, in many cases are constructed out

of some true fact or circumstance; anyhow they always represent the impression of later ages regarding the life and times of the earliest poet of Bengal. As such, some of them may with propriety find a place in this brief sketch.

A curious story is connected with the marriage of Jayadeva with Padmavati. A certain childless Brahman, after many prayers and devotions, was favored by the god Jagannatha with an only girl, whom the father named Padmavati and nursed with extreme affection and care. When she attained her youth, her father was taking her to the god intending to devote her to his services. In the way however he dreamt a dream, and the god told him to give his child in marriage to a certain devout follower of his, named Jayadeva. The Brahman did as this match-making god commanded. Jayadeva, then leading a life of study and devotions, was unwilling to encumber himself with a wife; but the girl would not leave him, and said she would follow him through life though forsaken and abused. "One must love partridge very well to accept it when thrown in one's face," would be the sort of feeling one would naturally feel under such circumstances, but our poet knew better; he rewarded her persistent affections with marriage, and they made a very affectionate and happy couple ever after in life.

The death of this Padmavati furnishes us with another story. She is said to have been so affectionate a wife that a false rumour of her husband's death caused her death. Such virtue however dwelt in the name of

Krishna, that the poet no sooner muttered that name than his spouse woke to life again.

It is impossible not to see in these stories the invention of the later Vaishnavas, but at the same time we are not perhaps wrong in supposing that they indicate the fervent and boundless faith in Krishna which marked the life and actions of the poet, and made him so great a favorite with the Vaishnavas, and, indeed, which rendered the invention of such stories possible. A story more natural is told of the poet, which discloses a very amiable trait of his character. When he set out on his travels he was attacked by a gang of robbers, who robbed and mutilated him. Some time after, the poet took shelter in the court of a king where he, to his great surprise, saw these dacoits in disguise. The most natural course for him was to demand justice and shame the villains, but he was moved at their helpless condition and publicly recognized them, not as robbers but as his ancient friends and benefactors.

To this incident, which is probably a fact, a story is superadded. It happened that some attendants were curious enough to enquire into the reason of Jayadeva's kindness towards these persons. The latter replied that once on a time a certain king had been offended with Jayadeva, and had ordered them (the robbers) to kill him. They, however, were moved with pity, spared his life, and only mutilated him, and that this was the reason of Jayadeva's recognizing them now as his benefactors. The attendants were satisfied with this story, but no sooner was this foul fabrication uttered than the earth yawned,

and down sank the hypocrites, and lo ! Jayadeva got his mutilated limbs again !

The most celebrated story however connected with the poet's life is that relating to the composition of a certain passage in the 10th *Sarga* of the *Gita Govinda*. The passage occurs where Krishna is represented as pacifying the wrath of Radhika, who had been offended with him for his promiscuous love, and assumed a contemptuous silence towards him. *মম শিরসি মণ্ডনং দেহি পদপল্লবমুদারং* means "On my head, as an ornament, place your beauteous feet,"—these words being a touching appeal which an offended mistress seldom resists. When Jayadeva composed this, he looked on Krishna as an ardent lover ; but after he had written the first portion, *viz.*, "On my head, as an ornament," he remembered that Krishna was a god as well, he hesitated, and ventured not to add any thing about a human foot being placed on the head of a deity. Filled with doubts the poet went to bathe in the river. Soon after Padmavati saw her husband return and ask for his meals. The breakfast was produced and finished, and then he went to where the *Gita Govinda* was, and wrote something. After her husband had finished his meals, the duteous wife finished hers, when lo ! her husband came in again and called for breakfast ! The worthy dame certainly did not relish this unseasonable joke, but her husband was obstinate, and asserted he had only then returned from his bath and had not yet taken his meals ! The confusion of poor Padmavati would have been complete, but she asserted that he had just before added something to his book. The book was examined,

and what was the poet's surprise when he found that after the words, "On my head, as an ornament," which he had written before, the words "place thy beauteous feet" had been added. The mystery was soon cleared up. The god Krishna had marked the doubts which had arisen in the mind of his votary, and had solved the difficulty by personally assuming the shape of Jayadeva, coming into his house, and writing the passage himself.

There is more in this story than at first sight meets the eye. We think this fable gives us some clue to the character of the Vaishnavism of the twelfth century as contradistinguished from the Vaishnavism of the sixteenth century. The Vaishnavism of the twelfth century was merely an ardent attachment to the myth of Krishna and Radhika, an intense and feeling appreciation of the poetry that pervaded their amours and doings. Krishna was looked upon as the beau ideal of a lover, and a strong sympathy with the actions and feelings of the lover, rather than the conception of a deity, as such, characterized the Vaishnavism of the twelfth century. But the national mind had awakened in the sixteenth century, and a loftier conception of a deity had entered into the constitution of the new faith. The amours of Krishna were now explained away, and the deity incarnate was now devoutly worshipped. The Vaishnavism of the twelfth century had not hesitated to represent the lover demeaning himself to a mistress ; the Vaishnavism of the sixteenth century was shocked at this passage, and invented a fable to ignore the fact that a follower of Vishnu could ever write such a passage. Ample proofs

exist to shew that the earnest workers of the sixteenth century formed a lofty conception of the same Krishna who had erewhile been sung of as a lover, with whose pleasures and woes a mortal could sympathise. We have in the previous chapter seen that the same religion assumes a variety of aspects in accordance with the predilections of the nations by whom it is espoused. The mind of the nation was roused about the beginning of the sixteenth century, and with it the religion of the country rose in loftiness; and *Sankirtans* in praise of the deity took the place of love-songs relating to the amours of the lover.

It is said, that the king of Nilachala was offended at the widely spreading fame of Jayadeva, and wrote, or caused to be written, a book on the same subject and challenged comparison. Learned Pandits, unable, or unwilling, to decide the question, placed both the volumes at the temple of Jagannatha, calling upon the deity to decide it. It is said the deity held the volume of Jayadeva on his breast, and threw away the work of king Satwika. Posterity has sufficiently vindicated the critical powers of the deity. Centuries have rolled away, and the fame of Jayadeva remains undiminished, and will continue to remain so, as long as the Sanskrit language is not forgotten.

Centuries have rolled away, says Baboo Rajani Kanta, on concluding his book, since the death of Jayadeva, and yet to the present day an annual fair is held at Kenduli by the Vaishnavas in memory of the departed poet. At this fair, fifty or sixty thousand men assemble round the

tomb of Jayadeva for worship, and the Vaishnavas still sing of the amours of Krishna and Radhika immortalized in the *Gita Govinda*.

The Bengali was no doubt the spoken tongue of Bengal at the time of Jayadeva, as it is now. But the learned and the *elite* still considered the Sanskrit tongue as their noble heritage, and authors vied with each other in writing in this language. All learned works, therefore, all speeches and orations in court, all traditional and genealogical fables, were probably composed and sung in the Sanskrit. Learned Brahmans carried on their investigations in this learned language, and poets, desirous of ingratiating themselves with kings, composed and pronounced stiff artificial poetry in a dead language. It was thus that the Italians of the age of Dante and Boccaccio wrote in Latin; it was thus that English writers of the time of the great Alfred made feeble attempts in the language of Rome. All attempts in a foreign tongue or in a dead tongue must necessarily be feeble; and thus with the single exception of Jayadeva's works, all attempts of the national intellect of the twelfth century, directed as they were in a wrong channel, have been forgotten and deservedly forgotten.

The *Gita Govinda*, however, is an exception, and a noble exception. It is a book of songs on the amours of Krishna and Radhika, divided into twelve *Sargas* or Cantos, each *Sarga* being divided into several *prabandhas*, and each *prabandha* consisting of several verses. The first thing that strikes the reader is the exquisite music of the songs. Never in the Sanskrit language,

never perhaps in any language in the world, have such melodious verses been written. One would suppose the sonorous and somewhat artificial Sanskrit language was incapable of so much softness and melody;—but no, it is a master hand that wakes the lyre, and the ear is pleased and ravished with a flood of the softest and sweetest melody before one comprehends the sense. In the hand of a *Bengali* poet the Sanskrit language loses its august stiffness and assumes more than Italian softness; and constant yet melodious repetitions and alliterations, make the *Gita Govinda* a remarkable and singular work in the Sanskrit language. It is the only book of songs in the language extant.

And if the book is rich in its music, it is no less rich in its soft and voluptuous descriptions. The blue waves of the Yamuna, the cool shade of the darksome Tamal tree, the soft whisperings of the Malaya breeze, the voluptuous music of Krishna's flute, more melodious than the song of the Kokil from the neighbouring Bakul tree, the timid glances of the love-stricken milk-maids that spoke of love, the fond workings of a lover's heart, the pangs of jealousy, the sorrows of separation, the raptures of re-union,—all these are clearly and vividly reflected in the song of the immortal bard of Birbhum.

The poem begins with a voluptuous description of love-lorn milk-maids disporting themselves around Krishna in the cool shades of Gokul. Radhika sees this; she marks with bitter pang the love of Krishna shared by less worthy rivals,—and yet the very sight of Krishna half tempers her sorrow. Nothing can be more ex-

quisitely beautiful than the description of the thrill of rapture which the forlorn and abandoned Radha feels, involuntarily and almost in spite of herself, at the very sight of him who is so dear to her heart, at the sudden recollection of the joys they have shared together. An English version conveys no idea whatever of the beauty and elegance of the original, yet such as it is, we quote from Sir William Jones's translation.

That god whose cheek is beautified by the nectar of his smiles, whose pipe drops in his ecstasy, I saw in the groves encircled by the damsels of Vraja who gazed on him askance from the corners of his eyes. I saw him in the grove with happier damsels, yet the sight of him delighted me. Soft is the gale which breathes over you clear pool, and expands clustering blossoms of the voluble Asoka—soft yet grievous to me in the absence of the foe of Madhu. Delightful are the flowers of Amra trees on the mountain tops while the murmuring bees pursue their voluptuous toil,—delightful yet affecting to me O! friend, in the absence of the youthful Kesava.*

In the sorrow of her heart Radhika retires into her grove and weeps. There the Duti sees her and describes

* हस्तप्रसन्न विलासवत्पशुनञ्जु ज्वलन्निमदल्लरी,
ब्रह्मदेवस्यैरि दुर्गसुबोधित मति श्रेयार्जगुणसुलभं ।
मायुदीक्ष्य विलम्बित स्मितमुखा मुक्तामनसं कानने,
गोविन्दस्य त्रजसुन्दरीगणरतस्य पश्यामि ह्ययामि च ॥
दूरालोकस्य श्लोकप्रवकनवकाशैकलतिका,
विकाशस्य कासारोपवन पवनोहपि व्यथयति ।
अपि त्राम्यसु क्री रणित रमनीयान् मुकुल,
प्रहृतिश्च तानां सखि शिखरिनीयं सुथयति ॥

Gita Govinda, 2d Sarga.

We shall here remark once for all that our quotations are made from Haridas Hiraçha's edition of the *Gita Govinda*. The above translation must have been from some other edition as slight differences are observable.

to her afresh the promiscuous amours of Krishna. Radha's heart bleeds afresh, and the workings of a jealous mind are powerfully described by our author. The deserted yet doting girl raises bitter images and ideas of the happiness of her rivals, which gnaw into her heart and make her almost frantic with grief. We have not space enough for a lengthy extract, and shall therefore quote one passage in which she concludes a couching and bitter lamentation.

O, gale scented with sandal, who breathest love from the regions of the south, be propitious but for a moment: when thou hast brought my beloved before my eyes thou mayst freely waft away my soul! Love, with eyes like blue water-lilies, again assails me and triumphs, and while the perfidy of my beloved rends my heart, my female friend is my foe, the cool breeze scorches me like a flame, and the nectar-dropping moon is my poison. Bring disease and death, O! gale of Malaya! seize my spirit, O! god with five arrows! I ask not mercy from thee: no more will I dwell in the cottage of my father. Receive me into thy azure waves O! sister Yamuna, that the ardour of my heart may be allayed!*

* মনোভাবানন্দন চন্দ্রানিল,
প্রসাদ রে দক্ষিণ যুগে বামতাং ।
কণৎ জগৎপ্রাণ বিধায় মাধবৎ,
পুরো মম প্রাণ হরো ভবিষ্যসি ॥

রিপুরিব সখীসংবাসোঃয়ৎ শিখীব হিমালিলো,
বিষমিব সুধারশ্মি দূরৎ ছনোতি মনোগতে ।
হৃদয়মদয়ে তস্মিন্নেবৎ পুনর্বলতে বলাৎ,
কুবলয়দৃশাৎ বামঃ কামো নিকাম নিরঙ্কুশঃ ॥

বাধাৎ বিধেহি মলয়ানিল পঞ্চবাণ,
প্রাণান্ গৃহাণ ন গৃহৎ পুনরাঞ্জরিয়ে ।
কিং তে কৃতান্ত ভগিনি কময়া তরঙ্গৈ,
রঙ্গালি লিঙ্ক মম সাম্যতু দেহদাহঃ ॥

Gita Govinaa, 7th Sarga.

But the hour of retribution comes at last. The Duti goes back to Krishna, and describes to him the wretched state to which he has brought his beloved. Krishna is seized with compunction, seeks out Radhika, and tries to pacify her wrath by a touching entreaty and appeal. The appeal is too lengthy for quotation, yet it is too glowing and eloquent to be left out altogether. We shall therefore extract a small portion of it.

Speak but one mild word, and the rays of thy sparkling teeth will dispel the gloom of my fears. My trembling lips like thirsty *chatakas* long to drink the moon-beams of thy cheek. O! my darling, who art naturally so tender-hearted, abandon thy causeless indignation. At this moment the flame of desire consumes my heart; O! grant me a draught of honey from the lotos of thy mouth. Or if thou beest inexorable, grant me death from the arrows of thy keen eyes; make thy arms my chains, and punish me according to thy pleasure. Thou art my life, thou art my ornament, thou art a pearl in the ocean of my mortal birth; O! be favorable now, and my heart shall eternally be grateful. Thine eyes, which nature formed like blue water-lilies, are become through thy resentment like petals of the crimson lotos; O! tinge with their effulgence these my dark limbs that they may glow like the shafts of love tipped with flowers. Place on my head that foot like a fresh leaf, and shade me from the sun of thy passion whose beams I am unable to bear. Spread a string of gems on those two soft globes; let the golden bells of thy zone tinkle and proclaim the mild edict of love! Say, O! damsel, with delicate speech, shall I dye red with the juice of *alaktaka* those beautiful feet which will make the full-blown land-lotos blush with shame? &c., &c.*

* বদসি যদি কিঞ্চিদপি দন্তরুচিকৌমুদী ।
হরতি দরতিমিরমতিযোরং ।
ক্ষু রদধর সৌধবে তব বদনচন্দ্রমা,
রৌচয়তি লোচনচকোরং ॥
প্রিয়ে চারুশীলে,
মুঞ্চ ময়ি মানমণিদানং ।
সপদি মদননলো দহতি মম মানসং,
দেহি মুখকমলমধুপামং ॥

Who can resist such a touching, glowing appeal,—
and from such a handsome appellant? Radhika could
not. If she had proper cause of offence, the offender
has done proper penance; and all resentment is at an
end. Krishna retires to his grove, and Radhika follows
her, and is thus welcomed with an outburst of the most
melodious songs.

নভামেবাসি যদি স্মৃতি ময়ি কোপনী,
দেহি খরনয়নশরযাতং ।
যটর ভুজবন্ধনং জনয় রদখণ্ডনং,
যেন বা ভবতি সুখজাতং ॥
তমসি মম ভূষণং তমসি মম জীবনং,
তমসি মম ভবজ্বলধিরত্বং ।
তবতু ভবতীহ ময়ি সততমরুরোধিনী,
তত্র মম হৃদয়মতিথত্বং ॥
নীলনলিনাতমপি তস্মি তব লোচনং,
ধারয়তি কোকনদরূপং ।
কুমুমশরবাণভাবেন যদি রঞ্জয়সি,
কুমুমিদমেতদহরূপং ॥
ক্ষুরতু কুচকুণ্ডলৈরপরি মণিমঞ্জরী,
রঞ্জয়তু তব হৃদয়দেশং ।
রসতু রসনাপি তব মনজঘনমঙ্গলে,
ঘোষয়তু মম্মথনিদেশং ॥
শূলকমলগঞ্জনং মম হৃদয়রঞ্জনং,
জনিতরতিরঞ্জপরভাগং ।
তণ মহশবাণি করবাণি চরণদ্বয়ং,
সরসলসদলজকরাগং ॥
স্মরণলখণ্ডনং মম শিরসি মণ্ডনং,
দেহি পদপল্লবযুদীরং ।
জ্বলতি ময়ি দারুণো মদনকন্দনানলো,
হরতু তত্স্থপহিতবিকারং ॥
&c., &c.

Gita Govinda, 10th Sarga.

Enter, sweet Radha, the bower of Hari; seek delight, O! thou
whose bosom laughs with the foretaste of happiness.

Enter, sweet Radha, the bower graced with a bed of Asoka
leaves; seek delight, O! thou whose garland leaps with joy on thy
breast.

Enter, sweet Radha, the bower illumined with sweet blossoms;
seek delight, O! thou whose limbs far excel them in softness.

Enter, O! Radha, the bower made cool and fragrant by gales
from the woods of Malaya; seek delight, O! thou whose amorous
lays are softer than breezes.

Enter, O! Radha, the bower spread with leaves of twining
creepers; seek delight, O! thou whose arms have been so long in-
flexible.

Enter, O! Radha, the bower which resounds with the murmur
of honey-making bees; seek delight, O! thou whose embrace yields
more exquisite sweetness.

Enter, O! Radha, the bower attained by the melodious band
of Kokilas; seek delight, O! thou whose lips, which outshine the
grains of the pomegranate, are embellished when thou speakest by
the brightness of thy teeth.*

- * ১। মঞ্জুরকুঞ্জতলকেলিসদনে,
প্রবিশ রাধে মাধবসমীপমিহ বিলস ।
রতিরতলহসিতবদনে ॥
২। নব ভবদশোকদলশরনসারে,
প্রবিশ রাধে মাধবসমীপমিহ বিলস,
কুচকলসতরলহারে ॥
৩। কুমুমচরণচিত্তশুচিবাসগেহে,
প্রবিশ রাধে মাধবসমীপমিহ বিলস ।
কুমুমক্ষুমারদেহে ॥
৪। যুজ্বলমলয়পবনসুরভিশীতে,
প্রবিশ রাধে মাধবসমীপমিহ বিলস ।
রসবলিতললিতগীতে ॥
৫। বিততবহুবলীনবপল্লবঘনে,
প্রবিশ রাধে মাধবসমীপমিহ বিলস ।
চিরমিলিসপীনজঘনে ॥

Here we must pause. The pleasures of a reunion between two such amiable and enthusiastic lovers may be better conceived than described even by the inimitable Jayadeva. Enough has been said to acquaint the reader with the character and merits of Jayadeva's poetry. He is the only poet who has attained eminence by writing in a dead language, who has wrung so much sweetness and soft melody out of an artificial classical language, who has embalmed and perpetuated the amours of Radha and Krishna in songs which remain as the sole specimen lyrical composition in Sanskrit literature. Writing in an age of ignorance, and in a classic tongue, his genius burst through all difficulties, and will ever shine bright as long as the Sanskrit language is not forgotten.

We may here mention that Lassen and other European scholars have discovered in the *Gita Govinda* a concealed allegory. The joys of Krishna in company with the milkmaids of Brindaban represent earthly pleasures which seduce our heart and lull our senses for a time. The love of Radha is true, celestial, eternal felicity, to which the mind of the repentant sinner at last turns from the sensual and fleeting pleasures of this world.

৬। মধুমুদিতমধুপকুলকলিতরবে,
প্রবিশ রাধে মাধবসমীপমিহ বিলস।
মদনরসসরসভাবে ॥
৭। মধুরতরপিকনিকরনিনদমুখরে,
প্রবিশ রাধে মাধবসমীপমিহ বিলস।
দশনরুচিরুচিরশিখরে ॥

Gita Govinda, 11th Sarga.

This may be the conception of the poet; and the following passage which we quote from Mr. Edwin Arnold's exquisite translation of *Gita Govinda* will shew that the five milkmaids described by Jayadeva, in reality personify the five senses,—smell, sight, touch, taste, and hearing:—

One with star blossomed champac wreathed, woos him to rest his head,
On the dark pillow of her breast so tenderly outspread;
And o'er his brow with roses blown she fans a fragrance rare,
That falls on the enchanted sense like rain in thirsty air;
While the company of damsels wave many an odorous spray,
And Krishna laughing, toying, sighs the soft spring away.

Another gazing in his face, sits wistfully apart,
Searching it with those looks of love that leap from heart to heart;
Her eyes—afire with shy desire, veiled by their lashes black—
Speak so that Krishna cannot choose but send the message back;
In the company of damsels whose bright eyes in the ring
Shine round him with soft meanings in the merry light of spring.

The third one of that dazzling band of dwellers in the wood—
Body and bosom panting with the pulse of youthful blood—
Leans over him, as in his ear a lightsome thing to speak,
And then with leaf-soft lip imprints a kiss below his cheek;
A kiss that thrills, and Krishna turns at the silken touch
To give it back,—Ah Radha! forgetting thee too much.

And one with arch smile beckons him away from Jumna's banks,
Where the tall bamboos bristle like spears in battle ranks,
And plucks his cloth to make him come into the mango shade,
Where the fruit is ripe and golden, and the milk and cakes are laid:
Oh! golden red the mangoes, and glad the feasts of Spring,
And fair the flowers to lie upon and sweet the dancers sing.

Sweetest of all that Temptress who dances for him now
With subtle feet which part and meet in the Rās measure slow,
To the chime of silver bangles, and the beat of rose-leaf hands,
And pipe and lute and cymbal played by the woodland bands;
So that wholly passion-laden—eye, ear, sense, soul o'ercome—
Krishna is theirs in the forest; his heart forgets its home.

We have already stated, it is likely; the whole poem, like Spenser's Fairy Queen, is meant to be an allegory; but the allegory is so overlaid with rich, vivid, voluptuous descriptions, that the reader misses the allegory, does not care for the allegory, and pores on the descriptions. The fame of Jayadeva rests not on the philoso-

phic or moral significance of the *Gita Govinda*, but in the splendid imagery, the soft and tender feeling, the gorgeous descriptions with which the work is replete.

In his own words, "whatever is delightful in the modes of music, whatever is exquisite in the sweet art of love, let the happy and wise learn from the song of Jayadeva."*

CHAPTER III.

THE BENGALI LANGUAGE.

JAYADEVA GOSWAMI, as we saw in the last chapter, wrote in Sanskrit. The authors of whom we shall now have to speak all wrote in Bengali. This seems therefore to be a fitting place for taking a rapid view of the spoken tongue in Bengal as it has been and as it is.

It is a very widespread impression among our countrymen that the Bengali language has come directly from the Sanskrit. The labors of recent antiquarians shew, however, that this impression is mistaken. We shall shew that the Bengali language is derived from the

* বঙ্গকবিগণকুলে সুকৌশলমহুধ্যানং চয়দৈক্যবৎ,
মচ্ছ স্মারিবিবেকতত্ত্বরচনাকাব্যেবু লীলায়িতং ।
তৎসর্বং জয়দেবপণ্ডিতকবেঃ কৃষ্ণকর্তাণাং মনঃ,
সানন্দাঃ পরিশোধয়ন্তু সুধিয়ঃ ॥ গীতগোবিন্দতঃ ॥
Gita Govinda, 12th Sarga.

Prakrita, and the Prakrita was derived from the Sanskrit. *The Prakrita is the mother, and Sanskrit the grandmother, of the Bengali language.*

It would be out of place here to trace the successive changes which the Sanskrit language underwent. Suffice it to say that, as the rude and semi-civilized Aryan warriors on the banks of the Indus gradually turned into the most refined and polished nation on the face of the globe, their language too underwent a similar change, from the stiff unmusical Vedic style to the sweet harmonious strains of Kalidasa. Centuries elapsed before this change was finally brought about, and every succeeding age saw the language more and more polished.

While this change was going on, another, no less striking, was observable. In no country perhaps is the spoken tongue precisely similar to the written; but the difference between the spoken and the written Sanskrit, between the vulgar and the learned Sanskrit, seemed gradually to increase with the lapse of ages. In the earlier Sanskrit literature we find no account of the spoken dialect as distinguished from the written or chanted; the grammarian Panini for instance makes no mention of the tongue of the people as distinguished from the language of books. The difference however seems to have so much increased later on, that the grammarian Bararuchi, at the time of the great Vikramaditya, wrote a separate treatise on the spoken tongue, entitled the *Prākṛita-Prakāsa*, and this is the first notice taken of the Prākṛita language, or the language of the people.

We have supposed the increasing difference between the learned and the vulgar tongue to be the cause of the notice taken of the latter at the time of Vikramaditya. There may be another and a more plausible reason for this. It is possible to suppose that, the difference between the vulgar and the learned tongue existed from the earliest times, and yet no notice whatever was taken of the former. The Sanskrit dramatic literature, however, began sometime before the time of Vikramaditya, and attained its zenith of excellence at the time of that great potentate. Now, it is in dramatic literature only that the tongue of the people has to be introduced in written compositions. It follows therefore that, though the popular tongue may have existed from the earliest times, it never found place in books and compositions till some time before the time of Vikramaditya, and was therefore never mentioned or taken notice of till the time of that prince. Whether, then it was on account of the increasing difference between the learned and the vulgar tongue, or whether it was in consequence of the development of the dramatic literature at the time of Vikramaditya, it was at his time that the grammarian Bararuchi took the first distinct notice of the Prákrita language in his *Prákrita-Prakása*.

It may always be assumed that a grammar is never written till some considerable time after the language is distinctly formed. Assuming that the great Vikramaditya reigned shortly before the birth of Christ, as his era shows, we are not far from the truth in assuming that the Prákrita had formed itself into a distinct language some

centuries before the birth of Christ. It is well known that the accounts of Antiochus and other contemporary princes, inscribed on stone at the time of Asoka 200 years before Christ, were all in Prákrita. We may therefore go a century earlier, and assert that, when Alexander came into India, the Prákrita as a distinct tongue was spoken by the people of northern India. Further, we find that the Páli tongue, in which the religious books of the Buddhists are written, is only a form of Prákrita, and that before the time of the Buddhistic revolution we find no mention of the Prákrita language. Are we mistaken in supposing that the formation of the Prákrita, as a distinct language, was one of the effects of that great effort and awakening of the national mind which manifested itself in the rise and spread of Buddhism? This point is worth consideration.

It is well known that Brahmanism sanctioned the baneful system of caste inequalities, and so repressed the free energies of the people for centuries together. It was the Brahmins who were entitled to read the Vedas, who were entitled to immunity from punishment, who were entitled to veneration and worship. If the Kshatriyas had obtained the ruling power by means of their prowess, the Brahmins assumed loftier functions; they were the spiritual guides, the teachers, the counsellors, the ministers. The Vaisya might trade and the Sudra might labor, but never aspire to any higher position. Education and improvement were things sealed to the plodding Sudra with seven seals. Such artificial inequalities not only demoralized the servile Sudra, but the

privileged Brahmins too; till in course of time the superiority, so impudently assumed, was boldly questioned, and the equality of all men was proclaimed with the voice of a trumpet. This is the true import of Buddhism; it was a protest against the inequalities sanctioned by the custom of ages; it was pre-eminently a popular awakening, a struggle for the rights of the people. It is but natural to suppose that, such a popular movement should be carried on, not in the language of the Brahmins and the Sastras against which it protested, but in the language of the people. It stands to reason to suppose, that, whatever might be the dialect in which the people spoke with one another, that dialect would at such a time receive encouragement and development. The religious revolution in England, in the time of Henry VIII. and succeeding rulers, brought about a complete change in the language of the country, and the language of Chaucer and Gower was transformed into that of Shakespear and Milton. There is therefore nothing absurd in the supposition that the simplification of the Sanskrit language into the Prākṛita was contemporaneous with, and partly caused by, the vast religious revolution which shook the whole of northern India. But we must extricate ourselves from this thorny discussion.

Assuming that the Prākṛita, as a distinct language, (or rather as a set of distinct languages such as Pāli, Mahārāshtri, Māgadhī, Sauraseni, Paishāchi &c.) was derived from the Sanskrit language about the time of the great Buddhist movement of the sixth century before Christ, the question next arises as to when the Bengali language

was derived from the Prākṛita. Before entering into that question, however, we must shew in the first place that the Bengali is derived from the Prākṛita. This is very easily done. If we take up any large number of colloquial Bengali words derived from the Sanskrit, we shall invariably find in them traces of the Prākṛita. If we take up any sentence at random from our every-day conversation, we shall find that most of the words have been derived from the Sanskrit through the Prākṛita. We subjoin in a foot-note a list of words, furnished by Pandit Rāngati Nyayaratna, which will shew at a glance that the Bengali language is immediately derived from the Prākṛita.*

*संस्कृत	प्राकृत	बाङ्गाला	संस्कृत	प्राकृत	बाङ्गाला
तुम्	तुमम्	तुमि	रुक्	रुडु	रुडा
अहम्	अहम्	आमि	ज्येष्ठ	जेट्ट	जेट्टा
लवण	लेण	लून	तज	तज	तां
प्रश्नर	पश्नर	पाथर	स्नान	स्नान	नाहा
शुभान	ममान	ममान	सक्या	सक्या	सां
गृह	घर	घर	उपध्याय	उबज्ज्वाज	ओखा
सुत्र	खत्र	खत्र	यति	नटवी	लादि
चक्र	चक्र	चाका	भवति	होई	हर
कार्य	करज्ज	काज	करोति	करई	करे
आद्या	अज्ज	आज	व्यक्ति	बोलई	बले
मिथ्या	मिथा	मिथा	क्रीणाति	किणई	केने
बहुस	बहु	बाहा	बहुते	बहुडई	बाडे
काव्य	काव्य	काव	स्मरते	स्मरदि	स्मरे
हस्त	हस्त	हात	नुत्ताति	नछई	नाचे
विद्युत्	विज्जुली	विजली	कथरति	कहई	कहे
दंष्ट्रा	दांटा	दांटा	अस्ति	अच्छि	आछे

The affinity of languages is known, not so much by substantives and adjectives, which change forms constantly, but by verbs and particles, and the subjoined list shews how closely the Prakṛita verbs resemble the Bengali. One would feel some hesitation, probably, to trace such Bengali words as হয় বলে কহে and মলে from such Sankrit words as ভবতি ব্যক্তি কথয়তি and যদনতি but that the corresponding Prakṛita words হোই বোলাই কহই and মলদি step in and at once point out the connexion. Close as the resemblance between the Prakṛita and Bengali verbs now appears, it was still closer at the time of Vidyapati and Chandidas.

When was the Bengali language derived from the Prakṛita? This question does not admit of any definite answer. Such transformation is always slow, and is wrought out in centuries. We have elsewhere remarked that the earlier poets and writers of Bengal disdained to write in the spoken or vulgar tongue, and chose rather to imitate the great Sanskrit authors of old in their own feeble Sanskrit. No early work therefore in Bengali has come down to us, and we are therefore at a loss to conjecture as to when the Prakṛita language was transformed into the Bengali. It may probably be assumed that the introduction of the Bengali alphabet was contemporaneous with the formation of the Bengali language, and we

সংস্কৃত	প্রাকৃত	বাল্লা	সংস্কৃত	প্রাকৃত	বাল্লা
বাহিঃ	বাহির	বাহির	কিপতি	কেলাদি	কেলে
বধু	বহু	বো	পঠতি	পড়ই	পড়ে
চন্দ্র	চন্দ	চাঁদ	পততি	পড়ই	পড়ে
মধ্য	মজ্ব	মাঝ	যদতি	মলাদি	মলে,

have a description of the Bengali alphabet in such an old work as the *Kamdhenu Tantra*. We may therefore consider the language of Bengal to be of some antiquity.

We have seen in a previous chapter, that the literature of Bengal may be divided into three distinct epochs. For reasons stated above, the language in these three epochs also present marked distinctions. The language of the period of lyrical poetry, as represented by the poetry of Chandidas, (for Bidyapati, as an inhabitant of Tirhut, did not write in Bengali, properly speaking), underwent some change during the next period. The language of this mediæval period, *i. e.*, the period of classical influence, also shews a degree of consolidation unknown before, a vast admixture of Persian words, a closer approach to the Sanskrit, and a borrowing of numerous Sanskrit words. As a natural result of the Sanskrit study which characterized this period, numerous Prakṛita words or corruptions of Sanskrit words were rejected, and their Sanskrit equivalents adopted.

As in literature, even so in language, the British conquest of Bengal has caused another change in the Bengali; and the spirit of this change (in the *language*) consists in our going still further back towards the Sanskrit. Whoever has taken pains to compare the works of our best known living authors with the works of the last century, must have seen that the Sanskrit element has vastly increased in the Bengali of the present day; and this change,—and we consider it a change in the right direction—is attributable to a variety of causes. The spread of European culture created the necessity of prose writing.

Our earlier students began to be familiarized with ideas which could not find expression in verse; philosophy, the sciences, and sober reasoning, came within the category of public tuition, and were fast learnt by an ever-increasing circle of students; and when they wanted to give expression to such ideas in their native tongue they found out its inadequacy. Philosophy and the sciences were for a long time past cultivated in the academies of Nuddea, but they were cultivated only by a few, and those few never conceived the idea of popularizing and spreading such knowledge; and so the necessity of a channel for expression in the popular language of the country was never felt. A more liberal spirit however was imbibed from the West, and those who imbibed such notions felt bound to spread and popularize the knowledge they had obtained. One of the first and foremost too who imbibed such notions was the great Raja Ram Mohan Raja whose life was devoted to preaching; and he made the first efforts to form Bengali prose. The first attempts were necessarily awkward, and the great Raja's Bengali works (পৌত্তলিক দিগের ধর্মপ্রণালী, বেদান্তের অম্বুবাদ, পঞ্চপ্রদান &c.) are certainly not considered specimens of good style. And yet we should not forget that Ram Mohan Rai is the father of Prose Literature in Bengal. His example was not lost on his countrymen; newspapers were started and efforts at prose writing began to increase.

It was then that two great authors Akkhay Kumar Datta and Iswar Chandra Vidyāsagar, took up the subject, and it may be asserted truly that as Ram

Mohan Rai has formed the Prose literature of Bengal, Iswar Chandra and Akkhay Kumar have wonderfully developed it and given it its modern dress. They had few or no instruments to work with, they had no style before them on which to base their own, none to follow or imitate. Under such circumstances they turned their eyes to that vast storehouse of knowledge, that mine of erudition, the Sanskrit language. That wonderful language is rich at once in scientific works and in polite literature, and the twin workers borrowed vastly from this store and formed Bengali prose. Vidyāsagar formed the style of light literature, Akkhay Kumar created the scientific style in Bengali. Their example has subsequently been followed with ease, and the prose literature of Bengal is a *fait accompli*. These facts will partly account for the large proportion of Sanskrit in the Bengali language of the present day.

Since that time the same causes have been continuing to operate. New ideas are daily imported from the West, and are entering into the spirit of our indigenous literature. In old works we seek in vain for expressions suited to such ideas; we naturally turn more and more to the Sanskrit, and borrow more and more from that language. The language thus has undergone a radical change, and even in poetry we find Madhu Sudan Datta and Hem Chandra Banerjea resorting to a purer and more classical style than what we can find in the works of any poet of past centuries. Except in dramas, colloquial words are being left out one by one, and their Sanskrit equivalents are adopted. A compari-

son of any piece of poetry of the present century with one of the past century will shew the difference. Such words as ধরম, করম, which were almost invariably used before, are now rejected altogether in prose, and seldom used in poetry; their Sanskrit equivalents are adopted; and even where both forms are allowed, এ স্থানে is preferred in prose to এখানে and এই ক্ষেত্রে to এখন, and possibly the latter forms will be obsolete fifty years hence.

We open a book before us at random, and find a poem entitled উষা in the Sraban number of the *Banga-Darsana*.^{*} It begins thus—

অদিতি নন্দিনী উষা বিনোদিনী,
প্রফুল্ল বদনা, মধুর ভাষিণী,
আলোক বসন, কুমুম মালিনী,
এস তুমি দেবি, অবনীতলে,

With the exception of two words only এস and তুমি, all the rest are pure Sanskrit words,—prefix, affix and all.

We turn over a few pages and come to another poem entitled দেব নিজ্জা in the Bhadra number. It begins thus—

কোন মহামতি মানব সন্তান,
বুঝিতে বিধির শাসন বিধান,
অধীর হইল বাসনানলে
অবনী ভাঙ্গিয়া অমর আলয়ে,
প্রবেশি দেখিব দেবতা নিচরে,
দেব পুরন্দর, রবি, হুতাশন,
বায়ু, হরি, হর, মরাল বাহন,
দেখিব ভাসিছে কারণ জলে।

^{*} This Chapter was written in July 1874, and the quotations therefore are from the *Banga Darsan* of 1280 B. E.

In these eight lines there are only four words which are not Sanskrit—কোন, বুঝিতে, হইল and দেখিব. All the other words are pure Sanskrit, though some of them have Bengali terminations. Even the four words above mentioned are very nearly connected with, and are immediately derived from, Sanskrit roots.

The Aswin number has no poetry, and we therefore turn to the Kartik number. The poem on বায়ু begins thus:—

জন্ম মম সূর্য্য ভেঙ্গে,
অনন্ত আকাশ মণ্ডলে,
যথা ডাকে মেঘরাশি,
হাসিয়া বিকট হাসি,
বিজলি জ্বলে।

In these lines only two words ডাকে and বিজলি are not Sanskrit, besides হাসি which is not Sanskrit, হাস being Sanskrit. The terminations are Bengali of course.

In the seventeen lines which we have quoted above, there are only six or seven words which are not Sanskrit, and these lines are from ordinary Magazine poetry selected at random. We may go over the entire range of our literature previous to the 19th century, without finding any seventeen consecutive lines in which there are only six non-Sanskrit words. Kirtibas, Kasi Ram Das, Makunda Ram, Bharat Chandra, all wrote in colloquial Bengali.

If we progress in this direction a century longer, the Bengali language will be distinguishable from the Sanskrit only by the case terminations, and mood and tense terminations, which rarely or never change. It

will then perhaps be asserted that the Bengali language is derived from the Sanskrit direct, and has no connexion with the Prakrita!

The reader will be greatly mistaken if he carries away the impression that we are imitating the Sanskrit style. We have shewn in another chapter that the reverse is rather the case; our notions, our ideas, our ways of thinking, our style of writing are day by day diverging from the classical Sanskrit model, and tending towards the European. It is words only that we are borrowing from the Sanskrit. Thus, at the same time, we are borrowing from two widely different sources.

CHAPTER IV.

BIDYAPATI THAKUR AND CHANDIDAS THAKUR.

The student, as we have had occasion to remark elsewhere, who peruses with pleasure the polished works of Vidyasagar or Bankim Chandra, or recites the stirring lays of Madhusudan or Hem Chandra, will scarcely suppose that the stream of Bengali literature, which has only in recent days attained such purity and expanse, began to flow as early as the fourteenth century of the Christian era. He will scarcely think that a century and half after the conquest of Bengal by Bukhtiar Khiliji, and a century and a half previous to the invasion of India by the great Baber, were seen the first glimmerings of that literature which has in our days

expanded into such brilliant sun-light. Lastly, he will scarcely think that Chaucer of England and Bidyapati, the Chaucer of Bengal, were well nigh contemporaneous writers; that five hundred years have rolled away since Bidyapati first wrote and sang; or, calculating twenty-five years to a generation, that twenty generations have chanted the lays and ditties of this Father of Bengali literature.

And yet how little do we know of his life and actions. The date of his birth, the place where he lived and sang, the very caste to which he belonged, have long been matters of dispute. But a recent article in the *Banga Darsan* (Jyestā 1282 B. S.) has shed a flood of light on the subject. Two most important documents help us in ascertaining the date and the country in which Bidyapati lived. The descendants of the poet still possess the village of Bapsi in Tirhut by virtue of a deed of gift from Siva Sinha to the poet dated 293 of the era of Lakshman Sen *i. e.*, 1400 A. D. In this document Bidyapati has been described as a *Sukabi* or a poet of merit, so that he must have made his mark before 1400 A. D. A still more important document is the *Panji* or annals of Tirhut. It is an authentic history of that province, and began to be written in 1248 *Saka, i. e.*, 1325 A. D. The *Panji* gives an account of Bidyapati who is described to be the son of Ganapati and a courtier of king Siva Sinha who ascended the throne in 1369 *Saka, i. e.*, 1446 A. D. and who therefore must have given away Bapsi to the poet during the life time of his old father who reigned no less than 61 years. We further

learn from the *Panjī* that Siva Sinha had three wives, Padmabati, Lakhima Devi and Biswa Devi who after the death of their husband successively reigned for 18 months, nine years and 12 years.

When to these facts are added others, *viz.*, that Siva Sinha and Lakhima Devi find frequent mention in the songs of Bidyapati, that the descendants of Bidyapati still live at Tirhut, that that province is replete with traditions and tales about Bidyapati, and lastly that the language of Bidyapati is that of Behar, whereas that of his contemporary Chandidas is pure Bengali,—there cannot we believe, be the least doubt that Bidyapati was born in Tirhut in the 14th century A. D., and adorned the Court of King Siva Sinha by whom his talents were recognized and richly rewarded.

There are other evidences too to shew that Bidyapati wrote in the 14th and 15th centuries, A. D.

The fame of Bidyapati as a poet was established and spread throughout Bengal at the time of Chaitanya, and Chaitanya in his early youth was edified and amused with reading the poetry of Bidyapati and Chandidas.

Glory to Jayadeva, the king and ornament of poets, and to Bidyapati the source of sweetness; glory to Chandidas, for sweetness unequalled in the world, whose sweet and pure strains in prose and verse my Master Gour Chandra (Chaitanya) relished with Shroop Rai.*

* জয় জয়দেব কবি নৃপতি শিরোমণি বিদ্যাপতি রসধাম ।
জয় জয় চণ্ডীদাস রস শেখর অখিল ভুবনে অহুপম ॥
চকর রচিত মধুর রস নিরমল গদ্য পদ্যময় গীত ।
প্রভু মোর গৌরচন্দ্র আশ্বাদিলা রায় স্বরূপ সহিত ॥

Pada Kalpataru.

Again,

The Great Master (Chaitanya) with Ramananda Sen sings and hears day and night the songs of Chandidas and Bidyapati, and the sweet Gita Govinda.*

These and other facts have led those who have attempted investigations into this subject to fix the date of Bidyapati and Chandidas at a century previous to the date of Chaitanya.

That Bidyapati was a Brahman by caste has sometimes been disputed, but admits of no doubt. He used to be called Bidyapati Bhattacharjya, and indeed the knowledge of Sanskrit, which he has displayed in his works, in those days was a monopoly of the Brahmans.

The only other thing that we shall notice in connexion with the life of Bidyapati is about Lakshmi Devi or Lakhima Devi, the wife of Siva Singha. She is very often spoken of in Bidyapati's poems. Tradition has it that the intimacy between the princess and the poet was closer than was altogether justifiable, that he paid her secret visits through a secret passage, and that Bidyapati's death was caused by this illicit love. We shall not build up any theories on such tales, but shall reject them altogether as the invention of later days. Bidyapati wrote some works in Sanscrit of which *Purusha Pariksha* is still extant and has been rendered into Bengali by Hara Prasad Rai.

* চণ্ডীদাস বিদ্যাপতি, রায়ের নাটক গীত,
কর্ণায়ত জীগীত গোবিন্দ ।
স্বরূপ রামানন্দ সনে, মহাপ্রভু রাত্রিদিনে,
গান শুনেন পরম আনন্দ ।

Charitamrita.

We next come to Chandidas the contemporary of Bidyapati. Chandidas was a native of the village of Nanur, in the District of Birbhum, about 24 miles to the east of Suri, and was a Brahman by caste. That he was contemporaneous with Bidyapati and met him, is sufficiently proved by several poems which have come down to us, of which the following is the most noted :—

Chandidas heard of Bidyapati's qualifications, and became anxious to see him. Bidyapati heard of Chandidas's qualifications and became anxious to see him. Both became curious. Bidyapati went off with Rup Narain alone for his companion. Chandidas too could not stay, but went off to see Bidyapati. In the way both sung each other's praise, and their hearts remained anxious for each other. Suddenly they met each other, but neither recognized the other, though they knew each other when they heard each other's name.*

The traditions current about the life of Chandidas give us some clue to the nature of the contest that was even then going on between the Vaishnava and Sákta or Tántrika religions. Chandidas, as his name implies, was by birth a Sákta, *i. e.*, a worshipper of Chandi, Durga or Sakti, as the goddess is variously called. In his early youth he seems to have contracted the prevailing vices of

* চণ্ডীদাস শুনি, বিদ্যাপতি গুণ, দরশনে ভেল অমুরাগ ।
বিদ্যাপতি শুনি, চণ্ডীদাস গুণ, দরশনে ভেল অমুরাগ ॥
দুহু উৎকর্ষিত ভেল ।
সঙ্গহি রূপনারায়ণ কেবল বিদ্যাপতি চলি গেল ॥
চণ্ডীদাস ভবু রহই না পারই, চলল দরশন লাগি ।
পহু হি দুহু জন, দুহু গুণ গাওত, দুহু হিরে দুহু রহু জাগি ॥
দৈবহি দুহু দৌষা দরশন পাওল, লখই ন পারই কোই ।
দুহু দৌষা নাম অবগে ভহি জানল, রূপ নারায়ণ গোই ॥

Pada Kalpataru.

the Tantrikas, and was a libertine and a drunkard. It appears that these have been the prevailing vices of the Saktas from very remote times to the present day; and as we shall go downward in the history of Bengali literature, we shall have frequent occasions to point out the connection. Sakta poets have sung the praises of spiritual drinking, *i. e.* being drunk with the faith of Sakti; and the essence of their religion is a total disregard of the world and worldly affairs, a deep and complete abstraction of the soul from all sublunary things, an intoxication with the faith of Sakti. These are very high and impracticable tenets; and in practice therefore, the spiritual intoxication is exchanged for drunkenness, and a sense of the vanity of all we see around us, such as the Sakta faith teaches, often leads to utter disregard of all rules of society and morality. And yet, by a strange combination, these vices are often found combined with great candour, kindness of heart, and an overwhelming love and faith in Sakti. These are among the most notable vices and virtues that distinguish, as we shall see hereafter, the Tantrikas and their religion.

In his early youth, Chandidas worshipped an image of Sakti which was called Bishalakshmi, and the poet often apostrophizes the goddess in his works. As may well be imagined, the conversion of Chandidas to Vaishnavism is connected with many tales. It is said that, on a certain day, he saw a beautiful flower floating on the river where he had gone to bathe. He took it up and went to worship Bishalakshmi. The goddess appeared in person, and asked for the flower that she might place it

on her head. The worshipper was awe-struck, and enquired what strange virtue the flower could possess, so as to induce the goddess to appear in person, and to wish to keep it on her head, instead of allowing the poet to place it at her feet, as usual. The goddess replied, "Foolish child, my Master has been worshipped with that flower, it is not fit for my feet, let me hold it on my head." "And who may thy Master be?" enquired the poet. *Krishna*, was the reply; and from that day the poet exchanged the worship of the inferior goddess for that of Krishna.

It is scarcely necessary to add, that later Vaishnava writers have taken hold of the opportunity of Chandidas's conversion to prove the superiority of their favourite deity, and have, with such an intention, invented this fable. One thing however is plain, namely, that the contest between the two religions began from very remote times.

Another and a similar story is told about the same subject. Chandidas, it is said, was excessively fond of smoking. One night he was going to another village for fire as there was none in his own. He was misled by a false light which moved before him, and when the light disappeared, Bhagavati appeared in person, and ordered him to sing of Krishna; and of Krishna the poet sang to the end of his life.

One of the preposterous maxims of the Tantrika religion in its worst phase, is, that Siva is present in every man and Sakti in every woman.* Intimacy, therefore, between man and woman, however promis-

* যত্র জীব স্তত্র শিবঃ যত্র নারী স্তত্র গৌরী।

cuous, is union between the god and the goddess, and can therefore never be sinful, but is an act of virtue. The Vaishnavas, too, of the period borrowed this hateful idea; and imitated the acts of Krishna under the abominable idea that Krishna and Radha, being present in every man and woman, enjoyed the loves of their followers and worshippers. It was such ideas that led to all the mystic practices called *Sadhan* by the early Vaishnavas, which was performed by man and woman together; and then they both became *Siddha* persons. Bidyapati is said to have performed such practices with Lakshmi Devi the princess, and Chandidas with a washerwoman named Rami of whom we shall speak below. We need only remark that it was such notions as these that brought on a loud protest and reaction under the leadership of the great Chaitanya, a century after.

Chandidas has immortalized the washerwoman Rami in his poems. Numerous are the stories told about their loves. The poet was informed that he could not perform *Sadhan* till he had a fair companion,—not by marriage,—not for money,—but one to whom his heart would be spontaneously drawn at the first sight. Our poet went out in search of such a person, and it was not long before he found one. A washerwoman was washing clothes on the river side, the poet saw her and was fascinated. Day after day he would go to the river side with a fishing rod, as a pretext, and sat there, gazing entranced on the maiden. Words followed, and love ensued; and the poet left his home and parents, and ever afterwards lived with Rami, a washerwoman as she was by caste.

His parents were scandalized, and sent for him ; but in vain. At last the mother of Chandidas went to Rami's house and forced the poet to come back. A ceremony was then commenced, and Brahmans were fed in order that Chandidas might be taken into his caste again. The feasting was going on, Chandidas was personally distributing food, when lo ! Rami appeared, and said " Wretch ! wilt thou leave me and get back to thy caste ? " The lover's heart relented, and he rushed to her embrace. The girl's hands were engaged in holding her clothes, and Chandidas too was holding the food he was distributing. Suddenly each found a pair of new hands to embrace each other. The guests were struck with wonder, and took Chandidas back to his caste, without compelling him to leave Rami the washerwoman.

Chandidas was a renowned singer. One day he went to a neighbouring village Matipur to sing with his paramour, and when they were returning, the house in which they had taken shelter crumbled down, and they were both crushed and died in each other's arms. It is said the ruins of the house are still to be seen. We now turn to the works of these poets.

Bidyapati was a learned poet. The Sanskrit was the store from which he borrowed his ideas and images, and there are some passages in his works which are almost a translation from Jayadeva. The subjoined passages will serve as an instance.*

* হৃদি বিষলতা হারো নায়ং ভুজঙ্গম নায়কঃ
কুবলয় দল জেণী কণ্ঠে নাসা গরল দু্যতিঃ ।

We need scarcely remark that this relates to the eternal enmity between Siva and the god of love, and Radha entreats the latter not to mistake her for Siva, his ancient foe.

But there are more essential differences between Bidyapati and Chandidas. Both are poets of a high order, both sang of the amours of Krishna and Radha, both are noted for the excessive sweetness of their songs ; but here the parallel ends. Bidyapati excels in the richness of his imagery, the wide range of his ideas, the skill and art displayed in his varied similes. Chandidas has but his native, simple, excessive sweetness in place of all these qualities. Bidyapati ransacks the unbounded stores of Nature and of Art to embellish his poetry ; Chandidas looks within, and records the fond workings of a feeling, loving heart in simple strains. In Chandidas's

মলয়জ রঞ্জনেন্দং ভঙ্গপ্রিয়া রহিতে ময়ি
প্রহর নহর আন্ত্যানঙ্গ ক্রুধা কিমু ধাবসি ॥

Jayadeva.

কতিছ মদন তনু দহসি হামারি ।
হাম নহ শঙ্কর, হু বরনারী ॥
নহ জটা ইহ, বেণী বিভঙ্গ ।
মালতি মাল, ইহ, শিরে নহ গঙ্গ ॥
মোতিম বন্ধু, মৌলি নহ ইন্দু !
ভালে নয়ন নহ, সিন্দুর বিন্দু ॥
কণ্ঠে গরল নহ, যুগমদ সার ।
নহ কণিরাজ ইহ, উরে মণিহার ॥
নীল পটায়র, নহ বাঘছাল ।
কোল কমল ইহ, নহেত কপাল ॥
বিদ্যাপতি কহে এ হেন সুহন্দ ।
অঙ্গে ভসম নহ, মলয়জ পঙ্ক ॥

Bidyapati.

poetry there is intense feeling and deep pathos; Bidyapati combines these qualifications with a quick fancy, a varied imagery, an exuberance of grace and ornament, The faults of the two poets are also characteristic. Chandidas is cloying, and sometimes monotonous, Bidyapati too artistic, too abstract, in his images and ideas. At the same time both display the profoundest knowledge of the workings of a lover's heart, both sympathise deeply with, and portray feelingly and minutely its various phases, the first troubled impressions of love, its resistless force as the tide increases, the bitter pangs of separation and the bitterer woes of jealousy, the fond workings of hope, the ghastly effects of despair.

We shall try to illustrate our remarks with a few extracts. There is no English version of either Bidyapati or Chandidas, and we have therefore for our English readers ventured to render into English verse the extracts made from the poets. We need scarcely remark that our version will very often fail to convey the deep feeling which characterizes the poems.

We make an extract,—quite at random from Bidyapati,* which we thus venture to render into English. It

* সজনি ভাল করি পেখন না ভেল ।
মেঘমালা সঙ্গ তড়িত লতা জহু হৃদয়ে শেল দেই গেল ॥
আধ আচল খসি, আধ বদনে হাসি, আধই নয়ন তরঙ্গ ।
আধ উরজ হেরি, আধ আচর ভরি, তব ধরি দগধে অনঙ্গ ॥
একে ভুল গৌরা, কনয় কটোরা, অতনু কাঁচল উপাম ।
হরি হরি কহ মন, জহু বুঝি প্রেছন, কাস পসারল কাম ॥
দশন মুকুতা পাতি, অধর মিলায়ত, যহু যহু কহ তাহি ভাষা ।
বিদ্যাপতি কহ, অতয়ে সে ছুঃখ রহ, হেরি হেরি না পুরলো আশা ॥

describes the first troubled impressions of love in the heart of Krishna, on seeing a vision of beauty, as it were, in Radha.

Friend! 'twas a hurried view!
A cloud-wrapped lightning sent a dart
Upon my troubled heart!
Scarce half removed was her veil,
Played on her lips scarce half a smile,
From half her eye a glance she shed,
And half her bosom was displayed,
And half was hid in veil,
I gazed and felt my senses reel!

Her pearly teeth were sweetly set
Her ruby lips upon,
And soft and sweet she spoke,—I gazed,—
Insatiate gazed again!

Our readers must be struck with the *art* and the *graces* of the poet, the similes and figures with which the small poem is so beautifully embellished, we had almost said, so thickly crowded. In this Bidyapati is in his own element. Nature and her vast works are spread before him, Art displays before him her untold treasures, and Bidyapati, in the wide range of his imagination, expatiates from flower to flower, from the flowers of Nature to the flowers of Art, gathers honey, and pours it into the ear of the ravished reader. Not so Chandidas. He has neither the power nor the inclination to rove about. He feels deeply, and sings feelingly. We shall quote from his poems a converse passage, *i. e.*, where Radha is suddenly struck and entranced at hearing the very name of Krishna.*

* সেই কেশা শুনাইলে শ্যাম নাম,
কানের ভিতর দিয়া মরমে পশিল গো
আকুল করিয়া মৌর প্রাণ ॥

Friend! ah! who hath named that name?
Through my ear it steals,
My heart it thrills,
My life and soul it doth inflame!
Ah who shall tell,
What sweet doth dwell
In that beloved strain!
I name that name,
My soul's all flame!
Oh! will he come again?

In justice to the poet we are bound to confess, that we have spoilt the poem in translating, for the feeling in the original is so deep, so intense, that no translation probably can adequately express it in English. What we would point out to our readers, however, is the total want of figures or similes, a total ignoring as it were of all attempts at ornamentation. The poet strongly feels his subject and records it pathetically without any embellishments, without any attempts at adornment.

We shall extract a somewhat longer piece* from the

না জানি কতক মধু শ্যাম নামে আছে গো
বদনে ছাড়িতে নাহি পারে।
জপিতে জপিতে নাম অবলা করিল গো
কেমনে পাইব সেই তারে ॥

* বধু কি আর বলিব আমি।
মরণে জীবনে, জননে জনমে, প্রাণনাথ হইও তুমি ॥
তোমার চরণে, আমার পরাণে, বাঁধিল প্রেমের ফাঁসি।
সব সমপিয়া, এক মন লইয়া, নিশ্চয় হইলাম দাসি ॥
ভাবিয়া দেখিলাম, এ তিন ভুবনে, আর কেহ মোর আছে—
রাধা বলি কেহ, সুধাইতে নাই, দাঁড়াব কাহার কাছে—
একুলে ওকুলে, গকুলে ছুকুলে, আপনা বলিব কার।
শীতল বলিয়া, শরণ লইলাম, ও ছুটি কমল পায় ॥
না ঠেল না ঠেল ছলে, অবলা অথলে, যে হয় উচিত তোমার।
ভাষিয়া দেখিলাম, প্রাণনাথ বিনে, গর্ত যে দাহিক মোর ॥
অঁথির নিমিষে, যদি নাহি দেখি, তবে সে পরাণে মরি।
চণ্ডিদাসে কর, পরেশ রতন, গলায় গাঁথিয়া পরি ॥

same poet. It is a loving appeal from Radha to Krishna, and a more tender touching appeal (than the original and not our translation) it will be certainly difficult to find out anywhere.

Love! what more shall I say?
In life, in death, in after-life,
I'll be thy dutious wife.
Yes! to thy feet my heart is tied
By silken ties of love.
I offer all,—my heart and soul;
I'll be your doating slave!
I've thought if in this wide world
Another friend I own,
In loving tones to name my name.
Alas! alas! there's none!
In earth, in heaven, in after-world,
Alas! who loveth me?
O! to thy feet I turn for help,
To thee alone! to thee!
O! do not spurn me,—I am weak,
O! do not turn away
I've thought and felt, without thy help
I have no other way.
If for a moment thee I miss,
A death-like trance I own;
I'll keep and nurse thee on my heart
E'en as a precious stone!

The same intense feeling,—the same absence of all figures of speech, mark this poem. The lover must indeed have had a heart of steel who could resist an appeal breathing in its every line such thrilling tenderness, such deep devotion. We shall pass on and have done with Chandidas with another extract,* describing a wild-

* কি দারুণ বুকের ব্যথা।
সে দেশে যাইব, যে দেশে না শুনি, পাপ পিরীতের কথা ॥
সেই কে বলে পিরীতি ভাল।
হাসিতে হাসিতে পিরীতি করিয়া, কান্দিতে জনম গেল ॥
কুলবতি হইয়া, কুলে দাঁড়াঞা, যে ধনী পিরীতি করে।
ভুয়ের অনল, যেন লাজাইল, এমত পুড়িয়া মরে ॥

ness of despair from which poor Radha suffers in the absence of her beloved.

A cruel throb is in my heart !
I'll leave my home,
And thither roam,
Where never's known love's fatal art.

Friend ! who shall say that love's a blessing ?
I loved and smiled,
My heart's beguiled,
And what is left but life-long weeping ?

For love should e'er a damsel sigh,
O ! spare her shame,
In fire and flame,
A kinder death, O ! let her die !

O ! I have felt this bitter grief
My eye-balls shine
With ceaseless brine,
Says Chandidas, O ! for her life !

Seldom doth Bidyapati manifest such deep feeling and pathos. His strong point lies, as we have already pointed out, in fine imagery and embellishments. Even while describing scenes of sadness and woe Bidyapati relies on his vivid fancy, and seldom approaches Chandidas in intensity of feeling. On the other hand, in all sorts of descriptions which require a quick fancy and the *art* of poetry, Bidyapati leaves Chandidas far behind. Bidyapati is a learned and accomplished man, a writer with varied thoughts and far-reaching imagination,—a graceful poet. Chandidas has none of these accomplishments, but he feels deeply and passionately. He is the very child of Nature, and “warbles his native wood-notes wild,” and warbles them most feelingly.

হাম বিনোদিনী, এ দুঃখে ছুঃখিনী, প্রেমে ছল ছল অঁখি ।
চণ্ডীদাস কহে, সে গতি হইয়া, পরাণ সংশয় দেখি ॥

In some places, however, Bidyapati too manifests deep feelings, and the celebrated lines quoted below* are an instance to the point.

I've gazed and gazed on beauty's sheen,
E'er since my life began,
Insatiate still my eye-balls swim,
Fain would I gaze again !
I've heard his honey-dropping words
E'er since my life began,
Insatiate still my ear remains,
Fain would I hear again !
What happy nights with him I passed !
Unhappy yet I feel,
What years my heart I cooled on his,
Insatiate burns it still.

We have seen before that, about the time of Bidyapati and Chandidas, Krishna was looked upon rather as a *lover* than as a *deity*, and that faith in Krishna consisted rather in sympathy for his amours than veneration for his godhead. Hence most of the poems of the period are about the amours of Krishna. Yet his godhead was never denied, and a few songs of Bidyapati addressed to Krishna as the *deity* have come down to us. We shall conclude our notice of Bidyapati with extracting one of such.

* ক্রমম অবধি হাম, রূপ নিহারিল, নয়ন না তিরপিত ভেল ।
সেই মধুর বোল, শ্রবণে শুনলু, ক্রুতিপথে পরশন গেল ॥
কত মধুসামিনী, রতসে গৌরাইলু, না বুঝিলু কৈছন কেল ।
লাখ লাখ যুগ, হিরে হিরে রাখিলু, তবু হিয়া জুড়ন না গেল ॥
+ তাতিল সৈকত, বারিবিন্দুসম, স্তমিত মিত রমণী সমাধে ।
ভোহে বিসরি মন, তাহে সমাপিলু, অব মধু হব কোন কাজে ॥
মাধব মধু পরিণাম নিবাস ।
তহুজগতারণ, দীন দয়াময়, অচয়ে তোহারি বিশোয়াস ॥

Fleeting as a drop on sands
Are friends and wife and family,
Filled with their thoughts,—Thee I forgot,
Alas! my fate what shall it be?

O! Madhava! be our final stay,
The savior of the world Thou art,
In mercy beam upon the weak,
To Thee I turn with hopeful heart.

Half of my life in sleep has past,
In illness,—boy-hood years have gone,
In pleasure's vortex long I roamed
Alas! forgetting Thee alone!

Unnumbered beings lived and died,
They rise from thee and sink in thee,
(Thou increate and without end!)
Like ripples melting in the sea.

Sweet Bidyapati! sweet Chandidas! the earliest stars
in the firmament of Bengali literature! Long, long will
your strains be remembered and sung in Bengal!

We have supposed a hundred years to have elapsed
between the time of Bidyapati and that of Chaitanya.
Within these hundred years a host of poets of lesser note
flourished. A large number of poems stretching from the
time of Bidyapati to that of Chaitanya are ascribed to
Govinda Das. It is easy to perceive therefore that more
than one poet of that name flourished. Indeed *Govinda
Das* means servant of Krishna, and it is not unlikely that
most of the poets who wrote about the loves of that

আধ জনম হাম, নিদেঁ গেঙায়ল, জরা শিশু কত দিন গেলা ।
নিধুবনে রমণী রসরঙ্গে মাতলু, তোহে ভজব কোন বেলা ॥
কত চতুরানন, মরি মরি চাওত, নতুয়া আদি অবসানি ।
তোহে জননি পুন, তোহে সামাওত, সাগর লহর সমানি ॥

deity assumed that coveted name.* Balaram Das, Jnyan
Das, and a host of poets of lesser note, flourished during
that period.

Their poetry or rather songs have the same charac-
teristic qualities. They are always sweet and often
display a vivid fancy and considerable depth of feeling,
and they all relate to the amours of Radha and Krishna.
We have examined in detail the merits of the best poets
of the class, and we think it unnecessary therefore to go
over the entire field. Those who would make a close
acquaintance with such poets would find a tolerably good
collection of their works in the *Pada Kalpataru*, the
Pada Kalpātika, and similar books; and we can assure
them it will by no means be a waste of time to go over
these old authors, even from a literary point of view.
The admirer of modern Bengali literature will be surpris-
ed at the sweetness and beauty that pervade the oldest
works of our country. That they have been preserved
so long and so carefully is owing to the Vaishnavas alone,
and to them, therefore, Bengal owes an immense debt of
gratitude.

Thus closed the 15th century of the Christian era,
and with it closes the first of the three epochs of the
History of Bengali literature,—an epoch which may well
be termed the Period of Lyrical Poetry.

* Chandidas means servant of Chandi, and we have seen he was
a follower of Chandi in early years. Bidyapati means master of
learning, and we have seen he was a learned poet. He also got the
title of *Kavi Ranjana*.

THE PERIOD OF CLASSICAL INFLUENCE.

IN the beginning of the sixteenth century of the Christian era, Bengal witnessed one of those great revolutions in religious thought and feeling which have, from time to time, taken place in India. Of such revolutions the greatest in magnitude, and the most far-reaching in its effects, was undoubtedly the Buddhistic one in the sixth century before Christ. Like every other social and religious revolution, it had two special characteristics. It was brought about by social abuses and inequalities; and, secondly, it cleansed those abuses, and, like a thunderstorm, purified the moral atmosphere. The gross degeneracy of Hinduism, the oppressive distinctions and inequalities it sanctioned, the licentious freedom allowed to some classes and the cruel severity imposed on others, and the cumbrous and senseless rites and ceremonies which had crept into the once simple religion of the Hindus,—these were among the social evils that brought about the Buddhistic revolution, and these the revolution cleansed. The spread of a comparatively pure religion over a third portion of mankind, the revival of national energy in India, the revival of the arts of war and peace and government, of literature and science in India, the publication and administration of humane laws over the whole of Northern India, brought under the sway of a vigorous dynasty of kings,—these were among the great results that the revolution left behind.

IN a smaller scale, the social revolution of the 16th century in Bengal was produced by similar causes and left behind similar effects. Tantrikism and Vaishnavism as we have seen before, were the prevailing faiths in Bengal; but Tantrikism had degenerated into immoral dogmas and more immoral practices, and the Vaishnavism of the day consisted in the imitation of the libertinism of Krishna. Religion, we have more than once observed before, adapts itself to the spirit of the times and the bent of nations. Times were degenerated, and with the times both the religions of the land had lost their life and were corrupted.

That faith in Sakti, which impelled the Tantrika to forget the world and almost lose himself in his love of Sakti, had now translated itself into an ignoring of all worldly opinion, all ideas of decency, all precepts of morality. And the poetical conception of the amours of Krishna and Radha, which constituted the faith of the earlier Vaishnavas, had degenerated into libertinism. Hinduism in Bengal had these two prominent aspects, the Vaishnava and the Tantrika, and in both those aspects Hinduism was rotten to the core. A great revolution, a protest was at hand.

The great Chaitanya and his followers waged war against the Hinduism of the day. They openly denounced the Tantrika religion which had debased itself in the manner described above. They took up Vaishnavism, refined it of its dross, explained away the loves of Krishna, declared all rites and ceremonies as useless, ignored the inequalities of caste, and proclaimed the equality of

men in the eye of their Creator. Those ardent reformers literally hungered and thirsted after righteousness, and with a zeal which only fervent faith could inspire, braved persecution and personal dangers which were by no means small in those times, and proclaimed from house-tops the unity of the Godhead and the efficacy of illimitable faith in him, as the only means of salvation. Krishna was not the lover of Gokula, but the creator and preserver of the world; and a boundless, illimitable overwhelming faith in Krishna was the only means of salvation. These earnest workers wandered over the whole of Northern India, proclaimed the light that was in them among the rich and the poor, the Hindu and the Muhammadan, and welcomed proselytes from all castes and all ranks of society,—for in the eye of the Creator inequalities do not exist.

Such was the work of the great founders of the Vaishnava religion, such was the religious aspect of the great national awakening of the 16th century. But that awakening had other aspects. The national mind had been aroused from a lethargic sleep, and felt in itself renovated vigour; and traces of this vigour are to be found in every subject to which the mind applied itself. We have found traces of such vigour in the religious movements of the time, we find no less distinct traces of the same vigour and earnestness in the philosophical and literary movements. The celebrated school of Nadiya commenced its labors about this time under the auspices of the great philosopher Raghunath, and the abstrusest questions of law and philosophy were

treated with a degree of vigour and subtlety which recalled the days of Kanada and Kapila of ancient India. For three centuries these investigations were carried on in the Sanskrit language, and those only who have mastered that language can form an idea of the wonderful success achieved.

In literature, too, we mark the traces of the same vigour. The amorous songs of the preceding period were exchanged for more earnest works and loftier flights of poetry. The great epics of the Sanskrit language were translated into the vernacular tongue of the country, and the *Chandikavya* marked the dawning of a new era of poetical composition.

The *Period of Classical Influence* then commenced with an awakening of the national mind, and has three distinct aspects, *viz.*, the religious, the philosophical and the literary. In considering the religious movement we shall dwell at length on the life and labors of Chaitanya, his followers and his biographers. To trace the rise and progress of the Nadiya school of philosophy does not fall within the province of the present work, and we must therefore pass on without noticing the philosophical movement of the 16th century. And, lastly, in considering the literary movement, we shall go over the entire range of literature of the three centuries included in this period, from the works of Kirtibas and Makunda Ram to those of Ram Prasad and Bharat Chandra Ray.

CHAPTER VI.

CHAITANYA.

It were indeed a thankless task to attempt to write a history of Bengali literature if the sayings and doings of all our great men had been lost in the mist and obscurity of ages. Fortunately, however, a tolerably full account of the actions of one of the greatest men that Bengal has ever produced, has been preserved to us. Krishna Das Kaviraj and Vrindavan Das have left us copious accounts of the life and work of their great master, and though, as staunch Vaishnavas, they believed Chaitanya to be an incarnation of Krishna, and have ascribed to him numberless miracles, yet it is not a difficult or a profitless task to glean from their accounts the real facts connected with the life of the great reformer of the sixteenth century. To this task we now address ourselves.

About the middle of the 15th century, Upendra Misra, a wealthy and learned Vaishnava, lived in Sylhet. He had seven sons of whom Jagannath Misra migrated to the town of Navadwipa or Nadiya. He had eight daughters by his wife Sachi, but none of them lived long. At last Sachi bore him two sons; the elder was named Viswarupa, and the younger was the future reformer of Bengal.

He was born in Navadwipa in the year 1485 A. D., that is about the time when the great Luther was born in Europe. The women of the family and the neighbourhood came to see and bless the infant, and named it

Nimai, and notwithstanding that the learned men of the locality gave the child the more pompous name of Viswambhar, Nimai the child was called by all who knew him. Later in life he was called Gauranga, or the fair-complexioned, Krishna Chaitanya, or the incarnation of Krishna, and sometimes Gaur Hari, that is, the fair Krishna,—Chaitanya being of a very fair complexion, while Krishna, whose incarnation he was supposed to be, was dark. Chaitanya is said to have been born in the evening, when there was an eclipse of the moon, and his poetic biographer explains the circumstance by arguing that there was no need for a spotted moon in the sky, when an unspotted moon had appeared on earth!

Various are the anecdotes recounted of the infancy and boyhood of Chaitanya, all tending to shew that he was an incarnate deity. While yet an infant, "puking and mewling in its mother's arm," Chaitanya seems to have been very troublesome, and to have never ceased crying, till the word *Hari* was shouted by the people around him,—thus causing the name of Krishna to be preached and proclaimed before the infant had yet learnt to speak. On one occasion the little child was licking an earthen toy, when Sachi came in, and reproved him for mistaking earth for food. "And what is food but earth and dust?" argued the lisping boy, "and what is our body but dust?" A restless and mischievous boy as he was, he teased the girls of the neighbourhood and quarrelled with other boys. When the girls came to the river-side with rice and other things to worship idols and gods, the little truant appropriated the food to his own

use, and bade them worship him as *he* was the great Master of the gods and goddesses they had come to worship. Flying from his enraged mother the little boy one day hid himself in an unclean vessel. This provoked Sachi who bade him instantly go and bathe in the Gauga (Hugli) to purify himself. The young sage, however, calmly replied that, uncleanliness dwelt not in outward things but in the mind. It may be easily imagined these and other anecdotes of a similar nature are invented by the followers of Chaitanya to prove the godhead of their great master; we may therefore reject them altogether.

Chaitanya commenced his studies with Ganga Das Pandit and shewed great intelligence and aptitude for learning. It was about this time that the parents of Chaitanya began to think of a suitable match for his elder brother Viswarupa, who was then in his early youth. Viswarupa, however, was otherwise inclined; and filled with religious fervour, he left his home and turned a Sanyasi. The disconsolate mother had a yet severer trial awaiting her. It was not long after, that Jagannath Misra paid the debt of nature, and Nimai therefore was the sole surviving stay and consolation to the bereaved widow.

In his earlier days, Chaitanya had made the acquaintance of a maiden named Lakshmi, daughter of Ballabhacharya, when she had come to the river-side to worship. The boy had eyed her with an eye of affection, and the maiden had forgotten her devotions when looking on Chaitanya. The young student now thought of marriage, and his widowed mother celebrated his marri-

age with Lakshmi with feelings of mingled joy and sorrow.

As Chaitanya advanced in years, he began to gather round him a large number of pupils, and his reputation as a scholar became great. The method in which philosophy, literature and science have always been cultivated among the Hindus up to the time of the English conquest, and even since then, is well known. There were no regular academies, no schools, no colleges, properly so called. The sages of ancient India, however, set themselves up as instructors, and gathered round them pupils varying in number. Such pupils lived with their tutor in his house as the members of the same family, looked on him as their father, and on his wife as their mother. Whatever might be their rank or status in society, they were all equal in his eyes, served him with equal fidelity during the period of their education, and vied with each other in obedience and respect towards their tutor. The tutor or sage received no fees, but the pupils looked to his cattle, milked his cows, procured for him wood from the forest and water from the well, served him as his menial servants, respected him as their father, and lived together in harmony and peace. When their education was completed, each pupil was expected to make a handsome present to his tutor, and this,—often a considerable sum of money,—was all that the *guru* received for his pains. Each pupil would then return to his own rank and status in life, a few of the more clever and advanced setting themselves up as new tutors and gathering pupils around them. Thus the ancient lore

of India has been handed down from generation to generation in this simple arcadian style, and vestiges of such institutions, somewhat altered and disorganized, are still to be found in Nadiya and many other parts of India. Thus, under the Hindu, the Muhammadan, and even the English rule, these quiet thinkers and professors have from century to century preserved and propounded the ancient lore of India, and often started new questions in philosophy or law, despising all exotic wisdom and foreign languages,—be it the Persian, the Arabic, or the English,—and forgetting, and forgotten by, a world of unquiet and aspiring statesmen and politicians, merchants, traders and men of the world.

Chaitanya, then, set himself up as a tutor, gathered pupils around him, and his fame as a man of deep learning increased day by day. His reputation spread throughout and beyond the limits of Nadiya. He baffled those (Digvijayi was one) who came to beat him in learned controversies, and satisfied others (Tapan Misra &c.,) who came in all humility to have their doubts explained. After winning the admiration of all in his native place, he left his country and travelled into Eastern Bengal (*Banga Desa*.) Thither too his fame had spread, and numbers of people flocked around him to have the benefit of his instructions. He reached the banks of the Padmavati (Padma?) and dwelt there for some months, instructing an ever-increasing circle of friends. He then returned to his native place, but before he reached it his beloved wife had breathed her last. Lakshmi loved

her lord with all the devotion of a Hindu wife, and expired soon after Chaitanya had left Nadiya.

Chaitanya now continued giving instruction to his pupils at Nadiya; He was now called Nimai Pandit or Viswambhar Pandit. He assembled his pupils early in the morning and gave instruction till about noon, after which he and his pupils went to the river-side together to bathe. Then, they parted, and met again in the evening, and continued their literary labors till a late hour in the night.

The mother of Chaitanya became anxious to marry his son again, and the young Pandit was married to Vishnu Priya, the accomplished daughter of Sanatana, whose learning had got for him the title of *Panditaraj*, or the prince of the learned. A pupil of Chaitanya, by name Buddhimanta, volunteered the expenses of his tutor's marriage, and the ceremony was performed with great pomp. Soon after Chaitanya again left his native place and visited Gaya.

The visit to Gaya was the great turning-point in the life of the reformer. An enthusiastic young man, and attached to the faith of Krishna from his early youth, Chaitanya had, up to this time, lived and learned and taught much in the same way as other men did. But the sanctity of the place he visited, his meeting there with Iswari Puri a devout Vaishnava, and a hundred local religious associations of the place, caused a thorough change in the character of the ardent young man. He had gone to Gaya a noted scholar and a religious man,—

he returned an enthusiastic and, we might say, a fanatic reformer.

Now, for the first time, were seen those violent outward manifestations of faith and feeling which characterized the ardent worshippers of Krishna of those times. Fired with unwonted zeal, they were now and then overtaken by paroxysms of faith, if we are allowed the expression, and wept and laughed and danced like madmen. Horripilation, violent perspiration, accompanied by frequent fits of fainting, marked these periods of religious ecstasy. The poor mother of Chaitanya trembled for her son, and marked with fear and concern the change in his demeanour, but it was beyond the power of domestic affection of any sort to make the reformer turn from the path he had chosen. It is not possible in the present age of reason to conceive the extent to which the mind can at times be subjected to the violent sway of religious feeling and fanaticism. Chaitanya was now a changed man; he fired in his followers and pupils an ardent faith in Krishna; he ignored all rites and ceremonies; he proclaimed from house tops that the salvation of man depended solely on faith in Krishna. The town of Navadvipa suddenly rang with the loud *Sankirtan* of Krishna.

Day after day, Chaitanya and his followers assembled together, and proclaimed and preached the faith of Krishna. They met in the house of Sribas, where Nityananda, Adyaita, Sridhara, and a number of other devout followers, anointed Chaitanya with water, sandal powder and flowers. Their number daily increased; people of

all classes were struck with the zeal and piety of the new sect; many joined it, and people of all castes and denominations were welcomed to seek salvation through faith in Krishna.

In the meanwhile, the rise of this sect raised violent opposition in many quarters. The Hindus looked with distrust and fear on a religion which ignored all rites and distinctions of caste, while the Muhammadan Kazi of the town ordered all *Sankirtans* to be forthwith stopped. Chaitanya, however, boldly met the Kazi, and the result of the interview (we are assured) was, that the Kazi himself pronounced the holy name of Krishna and was saved. Many miracles are ascribed to Chaitanya about this period; but we pass them by.

Thus passed the first twenty-four years of the life of Chaitanya; and now he felt within him a powerful call to proclaim the light that was in him through the length and breadth of India. It was the small still voice which he could not resist, it was the call of duty, and could not be silenced by the entreaties of friends or the tears of a mother. In vain did Sachi attempt with many tears to dissuade her only friend on earth from leaving her a forlorn helpless widow; in vain did even the devout followers of Chaitanya persuade him not to leave his native town. Chaitanya's heart was fixed and unmoved; early in 1509 A. D. (January or February) he became a Sanyasi, and left his native town never to return again. During the remaining twenty-four years of his life he wandered, as the apostle of Vaishnavism, and preached the faith of Krishna from the banks of the Cavery to

those of the Jumna. The biographers of Chaitanya have represented him as an incarnate *deity*, but let not their inflated language and vulgar errors prevent us from viewing with adequate admiration and respect the actions of a *man* who, when Hinduism was firmly established, could brave persecution and suffering, and call into question its fundamental tenets, rites and distinctions, who, at a time when travelling was attended with danger, preached the religion of Krishna through the length and breadth of India, who sacrificed every feeling and affection that was in him, and left mother, wife, friends and home for ever, to wage eternal war against Bhavanism and the other depraved forms of religion prevalent in the sixteenth century.

Chaitanya set out for Vrindavan, on the banks of the Jumna, accompanied by Nityananda, Ratna and Makunda, three of his followers. He crossed the Hugli, and, filled with enthusiasm, proclaimed the name of Krishna in every village through which he passed, to men, women and children. People were struck with his wild enthusiasm and strange manners, and it is no wonder if many, in a superstitious age, actually mistook the wild enthusiast for a deity. His follower Nityananda was one of those who would have liked to see his master always in his native town, it was not difficult to mislead Chaitanya from the right way to Vrindavan, and after three days' wanderings through several villages to the west of the Hugli, Nityananda brought back his master to the Hugli again. Chaitanya reproved his follower, but was obliged to cross the river and to rest

for a few days in the opposite town of Santipore. His follower Adyaita there received him with open arms and welcomed him to his house. News travelled to Navadvipa that the Reformer had come back to Santipur, and all his friends and followers came to see him. Affecting indeed was the meeting of Chaitanya with his faithful followers whom he had left behind, but still more affecting was his meeting with his forlorn mother, who came to Santipur to see his son once more. They insisted with many tears on his returning to Navadvipa, but Chaitanya had left his home as a Sanyasi and would not return. He consoled his mother however as best he could, assuring her that he would pass most of his time in Nilachala (Orissa), so that she would receive frequent news about him. To his followers he made the parting request that they should proclaim the name and religion of Krishna in their homes as he was going to proclaim it all over India. They parted once more, and Chaitanya set out on his travels.

Chaitanya now went southwards with Nityananda and others, passed through Jajpur, Katak and Kamalpur, visited the shrines of Sakshi Gopal, Bhuvaneswara and Kapoteswara, and at last reached Jagannath. This last is a place dedicated to Krishna, and the deep veneration and ecstasy with which Chaitanya viewed this place may easily be conceived. There too he met Sarvabhauma, a learned and venerable man and a devout Vaishnava, who received Chaitanya with open arms; and many and long were the religious controversies which they held together. From Jagannath Chaitanya resolved to travel southwards. Nityananda and others offered to accompany him, but

he wished to go alone, and was at last persuaded to take one Krishna Das a simple-minded Brahman as his sole companion. Southwards, then, went Chaitanya with Krishna Das, proclaiming the name of Krishna wherever he went. People flocked round him, and were struck with his sanctity and enthusiasm, listened to his instructions, and numbers became converts. They returned to their villages, and told the wonderful tale and converted others. Thus, says the biographer of Chaitanya, the name of Krishna deluged the land as with an inundation.

At Jiar, Chaitanya rested a few days in the house of Ramananda Raya, a venerable and learned man, whom he instructed in the truths of his religion, and soon fired with devout faith in Krishna. Thence he passed through numerous villages, everywhere making converts. Atheists, philosophers of different schools, Buddhists, Saivas, all yielded the palm to the new Reformer, and many were the converts he made. At last he reached the banks of the Cavery and rested four months at Sriranga, (Srirangapattan or Seringapatam.) We will not encumber our pages with the names of the numerous villages which Chaitanya visited,—names which we cannot identify with those of modern villages. With respect to some, however, we might make a guess. He visited the southern Mathura (Madura), and then Rameswar and Setubandha, the extreme southern point of India, whence Rama is said to have built a causeway which carried his army to Ceylon. Chaitanya also visited Kanya Kumari (Cape Comorin) and the Malaya or the Nilgiri Hills, and bathed in the Bhujangabhadra. Thence he travelled

northwards, crossed the Tapti and the Nurbudda, and visited Dandakaranya, Pampa, Panchabati and other places noted in the Ramayana. Near the sources of the Godaveri he was joined by his old friend Ramananda Raya who had come here to meet him. They travelled back to Orissa, and at Jagannath Chaitanya was met by most of his friends. His vows forbade him to return to his native place, but Krishna Das, the companion of all his travels, was sent to Navadwipa with the joyful tidings of his return, and it was with great joy that his followers came and met him once more in Nilachala.

Chaitanya and his followers remained at Jagannath during the Ratha festival, and great were their rejoicings on the occasion. Prataprudra, the king of the place, expressed a desire to see the Vaishnava leader, but the Sannyasi's vow he had taken, forbade him to see a king. A sort of compromise was effected, the king's son visited the Reformer, and Chaitanya blessed the father in the son, and they embraced his religion.

After a residence of a few months at Jagannath, Chaitanya resolved on visiting northern India. The king was distressed at this news, and Sarbabhauma, Ramananda and Nityananda, all tried to dissuade him from the undertaking. Their persuasion however was fruitless, and at the close of the rainy season, on the celebrated day of Bijaya Dasami, Chaitanya left Jagannath. He went northwards, through Bhubaneswar, Katak, Remuna and Panihaty, and came once more to Santipore. Affecting indeed was his meeting with his mother who

had come to Santipur from Navadwipa, and who embraced her son once more with tears of joy.

Chaitanya once more took leave of his friends, sent back his mother to Navadwipa, and left Santipur. Among his companions were the brothers Rupa and Sanatana, ministers of the Muhammadan ruler of Behar, of royal blood, and of high rank and much wealth, but who despised all these things in comparison to their love and veneration for the Reformer. Chaitanya's fame had now spread on all sides, and vast numbers of people gathered round him on his way towards Vrindavan. This was an inconvenience to a traveller, and Sanatana rightly advised him to part with all his companions if he wanted to proceed on his journey. The year however was far advanced, the rainy season had already commenced, Chaitanya therefore was compelled to remain a few months in Nilachala, to the great joy of king Prataprudra. At the close of the rains, he set out for Vrindavan with Balabhadra Bhattacharjya as his sole companion.

To avoid notice Chaitanya left the beaten path, and went through a forest. His poetic biographer waxes eloquent and says that, in the presence of the great master, the tiger embraced the deer, and danced with joy, that the name of Krishna, chanted by Chaitanya, made the flowers of the forest blossom, and the birds chirp with glee. We must however hasten over the remaining part of the Reformer's life, for even the poetic effusions of the biographer will scarcely prevent the reader from getting tired with this somewhat lengthy narration. He passed through Benares and Allahabad,

proclaiming the name of Krishna, and making numerous converts as he went along. Great indeed was his ecstasy when he at last gazed on the Jumna and visited Mathura and Vrindavan. His whole life had been spent in proclaiming the name of Krishna, and his fervour, his ardent love, his deep enthusiasm, reached their climax when he gazed on the scenes of Krishna's boyhood and early youth. His paroxysms of feeling came over him thick and frequent, and his life was endangered by the repeated fits of fainting that he underwent. From these scenes Chaitanya returned to Allahabad by the river. Here he was met by the brothers Rupa and Vallabha, who had sacrificed wealth, rank and royal favor, and become devout Vaishnavas. Their eldest brother Sanatana, however, had in the mean time got into a scrape. He too had resigned his service, but the king would not let him go so easily. Incensed at the conduct of Rupa and Vallabha, the king ordered Sanatana to be confined. Rupa had however managed to send a large sum of money to his brother, and Sanatana bribed his guard with 7,000 Rs. and escaped. A true Vaishnava, Sanatana escaped without a farthing in his pocket, but his attendant Isana had with him eight gold pieces. They were on the eve of being waylaid and murdered in the way for this sum, when Sanatana discovered that his attendant had some money with him, and ordered it to be paid to the very man who had intended to kill them. What was their surprize when the stranger accepted the sum, and assured them that he had intended to kill them that very night for the money, but that they

had saved themselves by this voluntary gift. Soon after Sanatana joined Chaitanya at Benares. Sanatana's brothers had been sent by Chaitanya to Vrindavan to preach the name of Krishna. Both Rupa and Sanatana were learned men and authors of note, as we shall see in a future chapter; and long and numerous were the religious dialogues between Chaitanya and Sanatana at Benares. Sanatana was then sent to join his brothers at Vrindavan, and Chaitanya once more returned to his loving friends at Nilachala.

The remaining years of his life, Chaitanya passed in Nilachala in meditations and preaching the name of Krishna. His devoted followers occasionally came to visit him, the brothers Rupa, Sanatana and Vallabha came from Vrindavan, and were received by Chaitanya with joy; but they were again sent back to Vrindavan. Raghunath Dass, another devout Vaishnava, was also sent to Vrindavan. Nityananda and others remained with Chaitanya in Nilachala.

A curious story is told of the death of Chaitanya. One evening, as he was wandering on the sea-beach with his friends, he was suddenly struck at seeing the bright moon-beams glittering on the blue waves of the sea. In one of those paroxysms which were so frequent with him, he mistook the brine for the blue waves of the Jumna. A hundred associations at once rushed into his heart, and he ran into the sea in ecstasy. Soon after he became insensible. His friends did not mark him running towards the sea. They missed him and searched for him everywhere; but not long after, a fisherman brought to the

disconsolate followers the carcass of their beloved master, which he had fished up from the sea.* Chaitanya died in 1533 at the early age of 48, three years after the death of Sultan Baber the Mogul conqueror of India.

We here conclude this chapter. In a future chapter we shall comment on the teachings of Chaitanya and point out the relation which his religion bears to Hinduism, and to the minor Indian religions.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COMPANIONS OF CHAITANYA.†

We have in the preceding chapter given a sketch of the life and works of Chaitanya. In the present chapter we shall very briefly review the works of some of the companions of the Reformer,—the Apostles, if we may so term them, of Vaishnavism in Bengal.

Among the followers of Chaitanya, Adyaita and Nityananda stand foremost. Indeed, the Vaishnavas of Bengal regard them as partial incarnations of Vishnu, as part and parcel of the spirit which had its full manifestation in Chaitanya.

In the preceding chapter we have had frequent occasion to notice the acts of these leaders, nor is there much

*The story goes on to say that Chaitanya revived into life, and disappeared in his proper time.

†For much of the information contained in this article we are indebted to Babu Ram Das Sen's paper on the works of the Vaishnava Leaders of Bengal.

to add. Adyaita was a wealthy and respected inhabitant of Santipur, and is said to have prophesied the birth of Chaitanya, and sent his wife to Navadwipa when the great Reformer was born. After Chaitanya had left his home as a Sanyasi, never to return again, the house of Adyaita at Santipur was more than once the rendezvous where the Vaishnavas of Bengal flocked to see their master, returned from his travels. All through his life Adyaita, though himself a wealthy and respected man, held the poor wandering Reformer in deep veneration, and the descendants of Adyaita still live in Santipur and are held by all Vaishnavas in the highest regard.

Nityananda was perhaps the most esteemed companion of Chaitanya. He was a wealthy inhabitant of Navadwipa, and is said to have been by no means indifferent to the good things of this life.* Yet Chaitanya held him in high respect and bestowed on him the title of *Prabhu*. His descendants are yet living. The Goswamis of Khardaha are descended from him by the male line, and those of Balágor, by the female line. Chaitanya, Adyaita and Nityananda are spoken of by the Vaishnavas of Bengal as the three *Prabhus*. They were all Brahmans by birth, and none of them seems to have written any books either in Sanskrit or in Bengali.

Next to these come in the six great writers who are known as the Vaishnavacharyas of Bengal. They are

* Babu Akhaya Kumar Datta, in his book on the Religious Sects of the Hindus, ascribes the following couplet to Nityananda:

মৎস্যের ঝোল কামিনীর কোল ।
আনন্দে ভোরা সবে হরি হরি ঝোল ॥

by name Rupa Goswami, Sanátana Goswami, Jiva Goswami, Gopal Bhatta, Raghunath Bhatta and Raghunath Dás. It is much to be regretted that they have all written in Sanskrit; the highest efforts of their genius (and some of them, at least, were men of undoubted genius) appear feeble and common-place because they are misdirected. High indeed, in the rolls of the early Bengali authors, had the names of Rupa and Sanátana stood, if they had written in their native tongue, and the Bengali language too had greatly benefited. As it is, their names are generally known only among Vaishnavas, and the proud position which they might have occupied, is ceded to Makunda Ram and Kirtibas, writers of the same century, of whom we shall speak hereafter. It is a lesson which has a special application in the present day.

We have already noticed the prominent facts in the lives of the brothers Rupa and Sanátana in the preceding chapter. They were of royal blood being descended from a king of the Carnatic, and held high positions under the Muhammadan king of Behar. We have also seen in the preceding chapter that a Hindu king of Orissa sought to be a follower of the Reformer. Fanatics and enthusiasts have always succeeded in gathering round them a number of ignorant and poor people, but the poor Reformer of the sixteenth century must have indeed had a strange power, to induce kings and courtiers descend from their high position in society, to be his humble followers. Rupa and Sanátana gave up their posts, sacrificed wealth, rank and royal favor, disregard-

ed royal wrath and braved persecution, to become humble Vaishnavas.

Rupa Goswami has written several books. *Ujwala Nilmani* is a book on Sanskrit rhetoric in prose and verse. Under the plea of describing the life and acts of Krishna, the writer discourses on love, piety and devotion in their various phases. *Hansa Duta* describes the mental state of Radha and the milk-maids of Gokula in the absence of Krishna. They at last sent a swan as a messenger to Krishna, and hence the name of the book. *Uddhava Sandesa* describes the agony of Krishna in the absence of Radhika, and the lover at last sent Uddhava as a messenger to the beloved; hence the name of the book. *Brindadevyastaka* describes the excellence of Brindá Devi. *Srirupa Chintamani* describes the beauty of Krishna, and *Mathura Mahatya*, as the name implies, the glory of Mathura. *Lalita Madhava Natak* describes the greatness of Krishna and Radhika. *Bhakti rasamrita-Sindhu* is a book on religious feelings by Rupa, to which Jiva Goswami has appended notes. *Chatu Pushpanjali* sings the praises of Radha, and *Srimukunda Muktavalistava* those of Krishna. *Vidadha Madhava Nataka*, *Haribhaktirasamrita Sinduravindu*, *Padyavali Nataka*, *Chandrika* and *Govindavaradavali* are also poems written by this voluminous versifier.

Sanátana Goswami has written very much less than his brother. His *Gitavali* describes Doljatra, Rása and other festivities held in honor of Krishna.

Jiva Goswami was the son of Ballabha, the brother of Rupa and Sanátana. His *Gopála-champa* describes the acts of Krishna. His great work is the *Shat Sandarbha* which, as its name signifies, is divided into six parts, and describes the various phases of religious and devotional feelings.

Gopal Bhatta was the son of Bankata Bhatta of the village Bhattamari. During his travels Chaitanya stopped for a period of four months in his house, and the deep religious fervour and instructions of the Reformer left an impression on the mind of the young Bhatta. Soon after the departure of Chaitanya, Gopála left home and family and turned a wanderer like his master. He stopped for a time at Benares with Prabodhananda Saraswati. Gopal became the pupil of his host, and turning a regular Sanyási went to Brindavana where he joined Rupa, Sanátana and other Vaishnava luminaries. He wrote several works, of which *Bhakti-vilasa* or *Haribhakti-vilasa* is the best known. It treats of the duties of Vaishnavas.

Raghunath Das was a Kayastha by birth, and the son of a wealthy man. The *Bhaktamála* states that he left property worth nine lacs, and a young wife of exceeding beauty and loveliness for his love of Chaitanya. He met the Reformer at Jagannatha, and Chaitanya held him in great esteem and love. Afterwards he went to Brindavana and lived with the celebrated Vaishnavas of that place. Though a Kayastha by birth, he received from Chaitanya the title of Acharjya, and lived with the five other Acharjyas. These last were all Brahmans by

birth, but neither Chaitanya nor his followers recognized caste inequalities. His *Vilapakusumanjali Stotra* is the prayer of a devout Vaishnava perplexed with the troubles of this world, and his *Manosiksha* treats of the training of the mind to the love of Krishna.

Krishna Das Kaviraj and Brindavan Das, the biographers of Chaitanya, though not, strictly speaking, his companions, may for want of a better place come in for a notice here. They have both written in Bengali, and their works are very popular with Vaishnavas. Both of them were thoroughly acquainted with the Sanskrit language and have crowded their pages with quotations from Sanskrit works to prove the purity and superiority of their religion.

Brindavan Das was the son of Narayani who, from her girlhood, was most devotedly attached to the faith of Chaitanya. Pandit Ramgati has erroneously supposed her to be the daughter of Srivas a follower of Chaitanya. The author informs us that his mother was the daughter of a brother of Srivas.* Anyhow it was in the house of Srivas that the little girl then four years old first saw the Reformer, and ever after, loved him and his religion. It appears from this fact that Brindavan Das wrote his book about the middle of the 16th century, and after the death of Chaitanya.

We confess we cannot discover much beauty or poetic excellence in his book *Chaitanya Mangala or Chaitanya Bhagavat*, and if it is a popular book with Vaishnavas

* Vide pp. 123 of *Chaitanya Bhagavat*.

we can only ascribe the fact to its being the first book describing the life and acts of Chaitanya. Krishna Das Kaviraj is lavish in his praise of Brindavan's work, and indeed compares Brindavan to the great Vyasa of ancient India. But we confess we turn with a sort of relief from Brindavan's stiff and affected style and dreary Sanskrit quotations and never-ending eulogiums on Vaishnavism and the Vaishnava leaders, to the simpler and less affected narrative of Krishna Das himself; and we are much mistaken if even with Vaishnavas the *Chaitanya Charitamrita* is not a more popular book than the *Chaitanya Bhagvat*. At the same time Brindavan, —except when writing about Vaishnavism,—is perspicuous, and sometimes eloquent.

Krishna Das Kaviraj was born at Jhamatpur near Cutwa in the district of Burdwan, and was a Vaidya by caste. He was a devout Vaishnava and travelled to Brindavan, in which place he probably composed his *Chaitanya Charitamrita*. The date of the book is not known. Very probably it was written about 20 or 25 years after Brindavan Das had written his book.

Of the poetical merits of the book we cannot say much, though it is, we think, in every respect superior to the work of Brindavan Das. The style is simple, and; here and there, we have glowing descriptions of joy or sorrow or religious fervour and enthusiasm. The writer apparently writes with feeling. The description of the rejoicings in Navadwipa at the birth of Chaitanya, the account of Sachj's parting with her beloved son, the description of the joy of the Vaishnavas at Jaggannath

at the Rathajatra ceremony, all these are instinct with feeling, if not with genuine poetry. At the same time, the author is often wearisome, and the book would have been much better from a literary point of view, if the long and learned disquisitions on Vaishnavism had been struck off.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RELIGION OF CHAITANYA, ITS PLACE IN THE SCALE OF INDIAN RELIGIONS.

SEVERAL thousand years ago there lived on the plains of Bactria, or in the valley of the Oxus or Amu, an ancient race of shepherds and cultivators who even in that early age cultivated with success many of the arts of peace. The Hindus and the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans, the ancient Saxons and Germans, and through them all the modern nations of western Europe, are descended from this ancient race.

Every student of the science of language knows the sources from which we derive our knowledge regarding this ancient Aryan race. We know that these our remote ancestors developed to a high degree social and domestic virtues, that they built not only huts and villages but houses and cities among them. We know they cultivated the arts of tilling, weaving, carpentry, distilling liquors, and working in silver, iron and other metals.

They had kings and queens among them, they tended sheep, kine and other animals; they constructed boats and carried on a rude sort of trade; and lastly, they were more civilized than the surrounding nations whom they designated barbarians. Among this ancient race the father protected the family, the mother superintended domestic affairs and measured out the daily food, and the daughter milked the cows and did the menial duties of the house.

What was the prevailing faith among these our remote Aryan ancestors? Not the worship of one God, as some antiquarians assume, but the worship of the heavens and the elements. A little insight into the principles of human nature will convince us that the conception of one Deity does not in the first instance suggest itself to the human mind in its crude and untutored state. Our conceptions of a deity or deities arise from our aptitude to suppose an actor in every instance in which an action arrests our attention or strikes our imagination; and the barbarian sees in the roaring tempest, the bursting thunder, and the lashing waves, not the various manifestations of the wrath of one deity, but the agencies of a variety of angry gods, each acting in a particular way. It is only after the mind is considerably elevated and is capable of discovering, faintly and dimly at first, a harmony in the various phenomena of nature, that it can attribute such changing and apparently contradictory events to the agency of one Being. And though the Aryans of Central Asia were not by any means barbarians, yet the traces

that we have of them clearly shew that they had not yet arrived at that high degree of civilization at which the conception of one God is possible.

We can substantiate these arguments by adducing facts. There is evidence to shew that the sky was worshipped by these ancient Aryans under the name of Dyaus, whence the Devas of the later Hindus, the Zeus of the Greeks, and the first syllable of the Latin Jupiter. Varuna, the Uranus of the Greeks, was also another of the deities of this ancient race.

Time rolled on, and large masses of these Aryans seem to have left their homes from time to time and migrated westwards, sword in hand, to conquer and settle in new countries. Greece, Italy, and the fairest portions of Europe, were thus colonized in pre-historic times by this adventurous people. Centuries passed on, and another grand division took place. For reasons which are hidden in the obscurity of ages, the Aryans were divided among themselves; there was a long and disastrous war, and one section of the people migrated to Persia, and another entered upon the fertile plains of India.

Both the Hindus and the Parsis have records of a great war between the Devas and the Asuras, but while the Hindus worship the Devas and vilify the thrice-beaten Asuras, the Parsis do the reverse and worship the Asuras. By a coincidence which at first sight appears strange, but is nothing but natural, some of the very Asuras who are the most abused in the Vedas are represented as the chief gods in the Zendavasta. It is

not difficult to discern that both the Hindus and the Parsis simply describe in mythological stories the great war which ended in the separation of the two races, that the former represent the gods and chiefs of the Parsis as Asuras, and the latter abuse and vilify the Hindus and their gods as Devas. Now, then, commences the history of the Hindus as a distinct race,—inhabiting the plains of the Punjab, and worshipping deified elements and probably the heroes of the late great war, with fire and Somarasa, and loudly chanted hymns which were subsequently compiled as the Vedas. Here, then, commences the first, that is, the Vedic age of the Hindus.

The Vedas are respected by Hindus as the Bible is by Christians, yet nothing can be more dissimilar than the Hinduism as represented in the Vedas, and the Hinduism of the present day. The gorgeous and poetical myths of the present day find no place in the Vedas; Durga, Kali, and the other most popular deities of these times were unknown in those days, and the very division of the people into castes, which forms the most essential principle of modern Hinduism, was unknown to the first Aryan conquerors of India. The Vedic religion was merely the worship of elements, and probably of some deified heroes. Whatever phenomena struck the imagination or arrested the attention of this noble race of conquerors found a place in their religion. The rising sun, dispelling darkness and vivifying the earth; Indra hurling the thunder, and shaking the earth and the heavens, and compelling the reluctant clouds (so it was believed) to give rain for the good of men; Varuna,

or the sky eternally bending over the fertile earth, always changing in light and shade yet eternally the same; the beautiful moon, fire, air and the elements,—these and such like deities were invoked to bestow health and comfort, to increase cattle and prosper the crops, and above all to help the white men (Aryans) against the black aborigines (Dasyus) in the great war which continued for ages, and which ended in the conquest of the whole of India by the nobler race. This was polytheism, no doubt, but it was not of a debasing nature; on the contrary we find some of the earliest hymns of the Vedas instinct with fire and devotion, such as almost rival the Psalms of David who worshipped one God. There was no priesthood, there were no religious inequalities, here was no offering up prayers in an unknown tongue, or through the agency of hired persons. No. Each bold patriarch looked with respect and awe, but also with the dignity of a man, to the great heavens above him, each offered his sacrifices to the object of his worship, and craved for blessings on himself, his children, his race. Such was the religion of our ancestors,—such the first aspect of the Hindu religion.

From this simple faith of a simple race to the gorgeous and endless mythology of later days, the vast and immutable inequalities of caste, the endless customs, rites and superstitious observances—in one word, from the Hinduism of the Vedas to the Hinduism of the Puranas and the Tantras,—what a wide leap, what an astounding change! This was not, however, brought about in a day; and though we have no account left of the

events as they took place, it is not difficult to imagine how they came about. Division of labor is always seen to progress with the progress of civilization. Each barbarian warrior is often found to build his fishing boat, to make his arrows and to sew together his clothes; but with the progress of civilization, fighting and ship-building, tailoring and arrow-making become different departments of industry. Something of the sort must have taken place with the Hindus as they progressed in civilization, and something of what took place has been left to us. In the Vedic times the patriarch tended his flocks and tilled his lands, fought his battles and worshipped his gods. But as the struggle for conquest and even for existence thickened, the art of war improved, and men found it necessary to devote their life-time to the learning of war. But the worship of the ancient gods could not be given up altogether, and so the warriors found it expedient to offer up prayers, not personally, but through sages and learned men,—in a word, through professional priests. As a natural consequence, while all real power remained with the warriors, the Kshatriyas, who were the kings all over India, the priests or Brahmans assumed loftier functions, and, moved by a strong *esprit de corps*, multiplied rites and religious observances, till it actually became impossible for any one to perform such rites except such as had devoted their life-time to the subject. This division was not brought about in a day; long disputes and civil wars, of which we find obscure but certain records in the Upanishads as well as in some of the ancient myths, were carried on between the Kshatriyas

and the Brahmans before the latter gave up all real power, and the former allowed the priests to domineer in religious matters. The common people continued to till the land, and tend the flocks, and as trade and commerce were developed with the progress of civilization, rose in influence and formed a new class, the Vaisyas; while those of the aborigines who, driven to the last extremes of misery, at last gave up their hitherto unconquered independence, and consented to serve under the stern conquerors, were treated with a rigour proportionate to the long hostility that had been carried on, and formed the low class or caste of Sudras.

Such, we believe, is the simple and true origin of the caste system of India, about which so many big but fictitious theories have been framed by philosophers and antiquarians. The distinction between different trades and professions is well marked in all countries, and even in western Europe, where the life of nations consists of ceaseless changes and revolutions, a well-born lady will not willingly marry a person of the trading classes. Is it a wonder then that among all ancient and patriarchal nations, the Egyptians, the Indians, &c., this very distinction should be still more marked and defined? We have already seen that rites and religious observances multiplied as soon as hereditary priests were set apart for their performance. Other things however were also caused by the same institution. The Brahmans wrote religious works, and under the pretence of commenting on the Vedas, formed volumes of social and religious laws, suited to the more advanced state of society in which they

lived. With the gradual development of society this class of religio-social literature increased, for new needs and exigencies of advancing civilization had to be daily met,—and the Smritis are still recognized as sacred books by the Hindus.

While the people were thus settling down after a long and harassing war, other agencies were at work. Professor Max Müller calls mythology the effect and reaction of language on the human mind. A poet in early ages describes the golden dawn as a blushing beauty flying from the embraces of the lusty sun. Generations pass away, and the tale is handed down through centuries till the real sense of the simile is lost, and Apollo is represented as a deity, in love with a certain coy goddess Daphne, who is chary of her gifts and flies from her lover. No doubt some portion of the mythology of nations owes its origin to their vivid and poetical imagination, and what Max Müller calls the effect of language on the mind; and some of the myths of the Hindus may be traced and have been traced to such sources. But the question naturally arises, as to whether the language of the poet is converted into a belief, or whether the belief really exists from the beginning in the imaginative mind of rude peoples. Ushá or the Dawn is described as having arms of gold. It may be argued that the poetical description of the first streaks of light as golden arms eventually settles down into a belief, but it is perhaps more philosophic to suppose, that the ignorant and imaginative barbarian really believes, from the first moment, the long streaks of light to be the arms of some deity.

Those who have carefully observed how old men among the imaginative people of India still point to every striking natural phenomenon, as special manifestations of divinity and divine action, will not doubt for a moment that this is the true source of myths and mythology. But probably a still larger portion of mythology relates to the deeds of heroes, of which accounts are handed down and exaggerated from generation to generation, till the heroes are turned into gods. Both these causes acted with full vigour in India. In the first place, the Aryans were an imaginative people, and India with her lofty and snowy peaks, her trackless woods, her mighty rivers overflowing entire villages and countries, her vast deserts, and her fierce wild animals, and wild men still more fierce, developed to the highest possible extent the imagination of her new conquerors. And in the second place, the harassing wars with the aborigines, which continued for centuries, furnished poets with deeds which were preserved in songs and handed down with additional coloring, till the skies, or rather the imagination of the people, were filled with three hundred and thirty millions of gods and goddesses. The character of the religion was so entirely changed that it is difficult at the present time to suppose the religion of the Vedas and that of the Puranas as belonging to one and the same people.

The briefest attempt to trace the course of religious changes in India would fill volumes, and our readers will excuse us if we desist from that task, and content ourselves with simply indicating the causes and processes at work, which developed the caste system, and changed the

simple religion of the Vedas to the pompous mythology of the Puranas. The same causes continued to work for centuries together. The youthful vigour and pride of the Hindu race passed away, weakness and dissensions followed, and the Puranas, which betray signs of such a weak and enervated state of society, were themselves still further degenerated into the Tantras. New gods were added to the list, new rites were developed, and dark and obscene rites came into vogue.

It may very naturally be supposed that based, as it is, on such a variety of religious works, modern Hinduism is a very complex religion. In no two provinces is it exactly the same. The Hinduism of Bengal differs materially from the Hinduism of the N.-W. Provinces, and the Cashmerians are Hindus of a different stamp from the people of the Carnatic. Still, however, there is much in common, and the connecting link consists in this fact, that everywhere, Hinduism is based on some one or more of the four sacred works or rather series of works above named, *viz.*, the Vedas, the Smritis, the Puranas and the Tantras. These works present a variety of deities and forms of worship, and the people of every province, while recognizing the sanctity of the whole, judge for themselves which specially to accept for their use, and which to reject. We have elsewhere seen that in this choice they are guided by natural predilections and idiosyncracies, and while the feeble Bengali chooses a mother goddess Sakti for worship; the hardy people of the North-West naturally venerate the warrior god Rama and his stalwart companion Hanuman; and the Cashmerian pays

eneration to that god of Kailasa whose image is daily presented to their eyes in the peaks and snows of the everlasting mountains.

We have thus traced the course of the Hindu religion in its various phases, turnings and developments, from its earliest origin in the plains of Bactria to its present state. But our work is only half done. The Vedas, the Smritis, the Puranas and the Tantras, represent only the conservative phase of the Aryan religious mind;—there have been religious radicals and republicans who have dared to question, from time to time, the authority of these sacred works, who have preached doctrines repugnant to the first principles of the Hindu religion, and have founded sects which still flourish side by side with the followers of orthodox or conservative Hinduism. The religious annals of India would not be complete unless the history of radical Hinduism were recorded as well as that of conservative Hinduism; the activity of the Aryan mind in India would not be sufficiently understood unless along with the progress of Hinduism, properly so called, were also traced the history of the numerous religious outbreaks and revolutions which have disturbed the placid stream of religion from the time of the Buddhism of the sixth century before Christ, to that of the Brahmaism of the nineteenth century after Christ. The religion of Chaitanya was one of such outbreaks and revolutions, and certainly the most important one that has taken place in Bengal within historic times.

We certainly do not intend in the present article to give a sketch of these revolutions which have been more nu-

merous than one would at first suppose; but we shall make a few general remarks with regard to them. In most of these reactions some one deity from the storehouse of Hindu mythology was selected for worship; the worshippers identified the deity with the one God, and in deep veneration for that deity ignored most or all of the fundamental rites and principles of the Hindu religion. Baboo Akhay Kumar Datta, in his work on the religious sects of the Hindus, classifies them under five distinct heads, *viz.*, those who choose Vishnu, Sakti, Siva, Durga and Ganesha respectively, as the special deity of their worship. Chaitanyaism, being the worship of Krishna, or Vishnu, falls under the first head. One would at first imagine that such a variety of religious reactions would weaken the mother religion, Hinduism, but the result has been just the reverse. The vast absorbing power of the Hindu religion enables it to extend its limits with the rise of each new sect, and every new sect therefore, though originally a reaction against Hinduism, is finally incorporated with that religion, and thus gives additional strength to the ancient faith, instead of being a cause of its weakness. Vaishnavism, Saktism, and all other faiths of India, are inside the pale of the ancient religion, and may be styled, as we have styled them, the radical phases of Hinduism.

These remarks do not at all apply either to Buddhism or the Brahmaism of the present day. Buddhism did not choose its deity from the Hindu mythology, and as Hinduism could not incorporate the new religion with itself, it chased the new faith out of India. Brahmaism,

pretending to be a new phase of the ancient Vedantism of India, in reality chose its Deity from the faiths of western Europe. One is not certain regarding the future of this new faith, but it already shews a decided tendency to be finally incorporated with the old Hindu religion.

The religion of Chaitanya then is a part and parcel of Hinduism, and belongs to the radical portion of that varied religion. It began as a reaction against the prevailing faith of Bengal of that time, and chose, out of the store-house of the Hindu mythology, Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, for the deity of its worship. It ignores the caste system, and even makes Muhammadan proselytes. In the present day, however, all respectable Vaishnavas have partly adopted Hinduism and recognize the caste system, and it is only in villages, and among low classes of people that the religion of Chaitanya is found to prevail in its integrity.

Since the time of Chaitanya other sects have risen in Bengal, most of them choosing Krishna, as the special deity of their worship, and distinguished by an overwhelming, we may almost say, a fanatical degree of zeal for their faith. Most of these, however, like the best known of them, the Kartabhaja system, founded by Aulé Chand not very long ago, have degenerated into low systems of debauchery.

CHAPTER IX.

KIRTIBAS OJHA.

Kirtibas and Makundaram are the two great poets of the 16th century. Previous to their time, the poetry of Bengal consisted merely of short simple feeling songs, composed mostly by the followers of Krishna, of whom Bidyapati and Chandidas, as we have seen, are the most celebrated. Poetry, as well as every other department of human thought, received great development under the influence of the mighty causes at work during the 16th century; and in place of love songs and small didactic pieces we find in the 16th century the greatest epic poem of the Sanskrit language translated by one author, and an original epic poem of no small merit composed by another. This is the great characteristic feature of the literature of the 16th century.

We know nothing of the life of Kirtibas, except that he was a Brahman by birth, and was born at Fulia near Santipur in the district of Nuddea; and lastly that he was the grandson of one Murari Ojha. We have often complained of the scanty knowledge we possess of the lives and doings of our early writers, but in no instance can the complaint be more justly made than in the case of the author, who was the first to leave the beaten path of lyrical compositions, who first opened out to us the store-house of Sanskrit poetry, and whose work, we may

add, is without exception the most popular among all classes of the Hindu community to the present day. Tradition itself is entirely silent as to the incidents of Kirtibas's life, and does not hand down to us one fable or story of his doings in the absence of authentic accounts.

Turning to his works, the first thing that strikes us is that the Bengali Ramayana we have is not Kirtibas's Ramayana. It is well known that our Burtollah editors have always been but too busy in improving upon the old authors; and the only reason why the songs of Chāndidas, Govindadas and other writers have been preserved to us in their original shape is, that they are considered sacred things by the Vaishnavas, and have been preserved by them with care. One at once suspects that a work like the Bengali Ramayana must be considerably altered by mischievous editors in the course of time, and this suspicion is confirmed as soon as an old edition of the work is compared with the book as it exists now. Pandit Ramgati Nayayaratna has succeeded in getting hold of a copy nearly two hundred years old. It was written (not printed) in 1099 B. E., *i. e.*, in 1693 A. D. or over a hundred years after the work was originally composed by Kirtibas. How very much the edition of A. D. 1693 differs from the editions of our day will be at once seen by comparing the passages given below,* for which we

* তাঁরা বলে রাম তুমি জন্মিল উত্তম কুলে।
আমি পতি কাটিল তুমি পাইয়া কোন ছলে ॥
দেখি মারিতে যদি বুঝিতে প্রতাপ।
আদে মারিলে প্রভু বড় পাইলু তাপ।

are indebted to Pandit Ramgati's work on Bengali Literature.

প্রভু মোর শাপ না দিলেন করুণ হৃদয়।
মুঞি শাপ দিব যেন হয় ত নিশ্চয় ॥
সীতা উদ্ধারিবে তুমি আপন বিক্রমে।
সীতা যরে আসিবেন অনেক পরিশ্রমে ॥
সীতা লইয়া যর করিবে হেন মনে আশ।
কত দিন বহি সীতা ছাড়িবে তোমার পাশ ॥
তুমি যেমন কান্দাইলে বানরের নারী।
তোমা কান্দাইয়া সীতা বাবেন পাতাল পুরী ॥

Edition of 1693, A. D.

তাঁরা বলে রাম তব জন্ম রঘুকুলে।
আমার স্বামীকে কেন বিনাশিলে ছলে ॥
সম্মুখে মারিতে যদি দেখিতে প্রতাপ।
লুকাইয়া মারিলে পাইলাম বড় তাপ ॥
জীরাম তোমারে সবে বলে দয়াবান।
ভাল দেখাইলে আজি তাহার প্রমাণ ॥
একেবারে আমার করিতে সর্বনাশ।
স্বপ্নীবে প্রতী দয়া করিলে প্রকাশ ॥
বিচ্ছেদ যাতনা যত জানহ আপনি।
তবে কেন আমারে হে দিলে রঘুমণি ॥
প্রভু শাপ না দিলেন সদয় হৃদয়।
আমি শাপ দিব তাহা কলিবে নিশ্চয় ॥
সীতা উদ্ধারিবে রাম আপন বিক্রমে।
সীতারে আনিবে বটে বহু পরিশ্রমে ॥
কিন্তু সীতা না রহিবে সদা তব পাশ।
কিছু দিন থাকিয়া করিবে স্বর্গবাস ॥
কান্দাইলা যেমন এ কিস্কিন্দা নগরী।
কান্দাইয়া তোমারে যাইবে স্বর্গপুরী ॥
আমি যদি সত্য হই ভারত ভিতরে।
কান্দিবে সীতার হেতু কে খণ্ডিতে পারে ॥

Calcutta Edition of the present day.

A comparison of these two passages suggests some facts. The later editors we have previously referred to, have, in the first place, tried to shew off their own learning by adding a couplet wherever it was found convenient to do so; and secondly, they have put the rather loosely composed lines of Kirtibas into correct metre, and for that purpose have freely changed the words. The more correct metres are no doubt more palatable to modern readers, but we do not by any means think that the original work was unmusical. On the contrary, our readers, by attentively reading the extract given, will see that it has the true poetical ring. And when we remember that poetry in those days was oftener recited and heard in large assemblies than read by the student in his closet, we at once understand that the style of composition adopted by Kirtibas, though not correct versification, fully answered its own purpose.

And if the work has not improved in "ring and rhythm" it certainly has not done so in beauty. Those, who have so anxiously tried to improve on the original work, have not probably added one poetical idea, one beautiful thought. The thought, the poetry, all belongs to Kirtibas, the simplicity and beauty and pathos which we admire so much in the Bengali version of the Ramayana are all Kirtibas's own; the later editors have only lengthened the poem and elaborated certain passages, thereby rendering the effect weaker. We have hopes some one will yet give us a reprint of the oldest edition available. The undertaking will not probably be a paying one, and will be of small interest to the general reader

who will continue to prefer the more correct metre of the "improved" editions; but it will be of great antiquarian value by placing in the hands of the public the genuine work of Kirtibas.

Another question of interest connected with the work of the poet is, whether the translator had a correct knowledge of Sanskrit. The poet himself has told us, in several places, that he has composed the work after hearing the story recited; and considering that in those days tales from the Puranas and Sastras were constantly recited by *Kathaks* in large assemblies on every occasion of festivity, that these recitals were often the only means of teaching the unlettered public in religious tales, and impressing on their minds not only the Puranic stories, but also the morals with which they are instinct, there is nothing improbable in the supposition that our poet should have composed his long poem after such recitals, intending no doubt that his poem too should be recited in the usual manner. This, as we have seen before, explains also the looseness in his metre. The Bengali version contains, too, several stories such as those of Mahiravana and Ahiravana, of which not a trace is to be found in the Sanskrit work. All these facts would lead us to suppose that Kirtibas, whether he knew Sanskrit or not, composed his work from recitals and not from the Sanskrit work.

Regarding the merits of the work we need say but little. To vast powers of writing in an easy fluent style and rapid and pleasing versification, our poet added the rarer qualities of deep pathos and glowing description.

There are few natives of Bengal who cannot recall to mind the juvenile days, when they felt themselves as under a charm when listening to the strains of Kirtibas, when they lamented with the broken-hearted Dasaratha, or wept with the suffering Sita. No work probably is so extensively and universally read in Bengal as the Ramayana of Kirtibas, none is so intermingled with our innermost thoughts and feelings, and exercises so potent an influence on our juvenile education, as this earliest and best specimen of narrative poetry in our language.

The special merit of Kirtibas's poetry consists in his familiar, feeling descriptions of nature and man, with which it is impossible for any reader not to be struck. The weak point of the work consists in the fact, that the poet has entirely failed to reproduce the heroic spirit and the stirring descriptions of war which characterize the Sanskrit work, and which Mr. Griffith has in certain passages only, succeeded in reproducing in his English translation. The Bengali language was not yet prepared for stirring descriptions of wars and combats, and Kirtibas's descriptions therefore strike the reader as vapid and wanting in fire and reality. The reader does not "smell gunpowder," does not feel as if he was in the midst of real heroes; and Rama and Lakshmana appear to us to be accomplished princes and good men, doing a vast amount of fighting work, but without the fire and the energy of warriors. This however was a fault of the times and the people rather than of the poet. No Bengali poet previous to the time of Madhu

Sudan Datta has evinced in any degree the power of reproducing in poetical descriptions the real spirit of war.

CHAPTER X.

MAKUNDA RAM CHAKRAVARTI.

Contemporaneous with Kirtibas Ojha lived Makunda Ram Chakravarti at the close of the sixteenth century, who has fortunately left us a more detailed account of himself and his times than almost any other Bengali poet. He was born in the village of Damunya, in the Thana of Selimabad, in the District of Burdwan, and was the son of Hridaya Misra, and the grandson of Jagannath Misra; and he had an elder brother of the name of Kabi Chandra. He tells us that when Mansing became the ruler of Bengal, the oppression of the subordinate Muhammadan officers drove him from his home, and that after long wanderings he found a kind protector in Bankura Deb, Zemindar of the Pargana of Brahmanbhumi in the District of Midnapur. The seat of this Zemindar was in the village of Anra, and he engaged the learned guest as a tutor to his son, Raghunath, who subsequently succeeded his father in the estate, and finds frequent mention in the poet's work.

It is so seldom that a poet leaves us an account of himself and his times, the account which Makunda Ram has left us is so graphic and minute, that we cannot re-

sist the temptation of quoting the whole of this celebrated passage in a note.* We shall give the substance of it in English.

* গ্রন্থ উপস্থিত কারণ।

শুন ভাই সত্যজন, কবিত্বের বিবরণ।
এই গীত হৈল যেন যতে।
উরিয়া মায়ের বেশে, কবির শিয়র দেশে,
চণ্ডিকা বসিলা আচম্বিতে ॥
সহর সিলিমাবাদ, বাহাতে সজ্জন রাজ,
নিবসে নিয়োগী গোপীনাথ।
তাহার ভালুকে বসি, দামিন্যাতে চাষ-চাষি,
নিবাস পুরুষ ছয় সাত ॥
খন্য রাজা মানসিংহ, বিষ্ণুপদে যেবা ভুঙ্গ,
গোড় বজ উৎকল মহীপ।
রাজা মানসিংহের কালে, প্রজার পাঁপের ফলে,
জীহাদার মায়ুদ সরিপ ॥
উজির হইলা রায় জানা, বেপারিরে দেয় খেদ,
ত্রাঙ্কণ বৈষ্ণবের হইল অরি।
কোণে কোণে দিয়া দড়া, পনর কাঠার কুড়া,
নাহি শুনে প্রজার গোহারি ॥
সরকার হইলা কাল, খিল ভূমি লেখে লাল,
বিনা উপকারে খায় ধুতি।
পোদ্দার হইল যম, টাকা আড়াই আনা কম,
পাই লভ্য লয় দিন প্রতি ॥
ডিহিদার অবোধ খোজ, কড়ি দিলে নাহি রোজ,
ধান্য গোরু কেহ নাহি কেনে।
প্রভু গোপীনাথ নন্দী, বিপাকে হইলা বন্দী,
হেতু কিছু নাহি পরিত্রাণে ॥
আমিন্দার প্রতীত আছে, প্রজারা পলায় পাছে,
দুয়ার চাপিয়া দেয় খানা।
প্রজা হইল ব্যাকুলি, বেচে ঘরের কুড়ালি,
টাকার জব্য বেচে দশ আনা ॥

The ancestors of Makunda Ram to the sixth or seventh generation lived in the petty village of Damunya engaged in agricultural pursuits. It appears that, when Mansing became the ruler of Bengal, Muhammad Sharif, an oppressive man, was invested with power and influence, and as a consequence the people were grievously oppressed. Brahmans and Vaishnavas, traders and

সহায় জীমন্ত খাঁ, চণ্ডী বাঢ়ি যার গাঁ,
যুক্তি কৈলা মুনিব হার মনে।
দামিন্যা ছাড়িয়া যাই, সঙ্গে রমানাথ ভাই,
পথে চণ্ডী দিলা দরশনে ॥
ভেটরায় উপনীত, রূপ রায় নিল বিত্ত,
বহু কুণ্ডু তিনি কৈলা রক্ষা।
দিয়া আপনার ঘর, নিবারণ কৈল ডর,
দিবস তিনের দিন ভিক্ষা ॥
বাহিয়া ঘরাই নদী, সদাই স্মরণে বিধি,
নেউটিয়া হইল উপনীত।
দারকেশ্বর তারি, পাইল পাণ্ডুর পুরি,
গজাদাস বড় কৈল হিত ॥
নারায়ণ পরাসর, এড়াইল দামোদর,
উপনীত কুচট্যা নগর।
তৈল বিনা কৈল স্নান, করিল উদক পান,
শিশু কান্দে ওদনের তরে ॥
আশ্রম পুথরি আড়া, নৈবেদ্য শালুক পোড়া,
পুজা কৈল কুমুদ প্রস্থনে।
ক্ষুধার পরিশ্রমে, নিদ্রা যাই সেই ধামে,
চণ্ডী দেখা দিলেন স্বপনে ॥
হাতে লইয়া পত্র মসী, আপনি কলমে বসি,
নানা ছন্দে লিখেন কবিত্ত।
পড়েছি অনেক তন্ত্র, নাহি জানি কোন মন্ত্র,
আজ্ঞা দিলা জপি নিত্য নিত্য ॥