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Reviews

'THE OCEAN OF STORY'

BY

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[*The Ocean of Story* being C. H. Tawney's Translation of Somadeva's *Kathā Sarit Sāgara* now edited with Introduction, Fresh Explanatory Notes and Terminal Essay by N. M. Penzer, M.A., F.R.G.S., F.G.S. in ten volumes. Vol. I with a Foreword by Sir Richard Carnac Temple, Bart.—(London). Privately printed for subscribers only. Crafton House, W. 1. 1924.]

THIS handsome, beautifully printed volume is the first instalment of what bids fair to be a very prominent and substantial contribution to oriental literature in general and the study of Indian fiction and folklore in particular, and at the same time a splendid tribute to the memory of that eminent Sanskritist, C. H. Tawney, who in his position as Professor and Principal in the Pesidency College had so many grateful and devoted Indian pupils and later on, Chief Librarian of the Indian Office, did so much to assist and promote the researches of his brother Sanskrit scholars of all countries. Tawney's bulky translation of the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, which being out of print is being re-edited by Mr. Penzer in the *Ocean of Story*, is his *magnum opus*, in which he has succeeded in reproducing the elegant verses of the Sanskrit original in good English prose, without taking liberties with the text. Indeed it has been 'literally translated into English prose', like Tawney's previous translation of the drama *Mālavikāgnimitra* (1875).

The importance of this vast collection of tales, composed by the Kashmirian poet Somadeva about 1070 A.D., for the study of Indian civilization in all its aspects, in religion, law and usage, court life, gambling and drinking habits, need not be dwelt upon. It is equally important for comparative folklore, as showing 'what a great debt the western tales owed to the East', which latter point has been well brought out in Mr. Penzer's Introduction and is also mentioned as one of the various possibilities regarding the origin of the tales hinted at in the thoughtful foreword supplied by Sir R. C. Temple. The latter writer has particularly referred to the non-Aryan origin of certain tales in this collection. 'Even if we trace a tale or an idea to the *Jātakas* or to the very Vedas themselves, that does not make it

Indian in origin.' Thus Śiva's necklace of skulls corresponds to the Andamanese custom to wear skulls of deceased relatives. The Andamanese, whose usages have been explored by Sir R. Temple himself, may be taken to be among the most untouched aborigines in existence. On the other hand, the likeness of so many Slavonic superstitions to those of India, e.g., in the case of the Vetāla-vampire, is attributed by Sir R. Temple to the Aryan migration eastwards from Southern Russia to India.

Mr. Penzer has not confined himself to bringing Professor Tawney's translation thoroughly up to date; he has added to it several long appendices and notes and a large number of footnotes, in which an enormous amount of antiquarian and folklore information is contained, so that his work, infinitely exceeding in bulk the original edition as it does, might almost serve as a complete manual of Indian antiquities and folkore. Thus the first volume contains four appendices, on the mythical beings mentioned in the *Ocean of Story*, on the use of collyrium and kohl in India, ancient Egypt and the Moslem East, on the craving of the pregnant woman as a motif in Indian fiction, and on sacred prostitution. The long notes at the end of a chapter refer to the magical articles motif in foklore, the entrapped suitors motif, *Gāndharva* form of marriage, the *Paisāchi* language, the *Garuḍa* bird, the external soul motif, the chastity index motif, the story of Devasmitā, and Deisul or circumambulation. The footnotes treat of the world-egg, the admiration for moles, cakes of phallic form, gold-producing articles or animals, the entering another's body motif, the laughing fish motif, the letter of death motif, the custom of *suttee*, *śrāddhas*, the sacred *darhha* grass, the history of the *dīnāra*, the austerities of Hindu ascetics, sign-language, bath of blood, stories of the greatful snake, names of famous swords, poison detectors, the hiding of men in imitation animals, tales of precocious children, and other subjects.

Many of the questions treated by Mr. Penzer are so vast that it would be easy to make this or that addition to his learned notes. Thus the remark [1] that Hindus are very cautious about waking up a sleeping friend lest his soul be absent, might have been corroborated by a reference to legal Sanskrit literature, which contains a general

[1] p. 37.

prohibition to wake a person sleeping.[1] The entrapped suitors motif has been effectively traced throughout both Asia and Europe [2] but no example of it having been quoted from German literature, we may be allowed to refer to a Fastnachtsspiel entitled *Die ehrlich Beckin mit ihren drei vermeinten Bulen*, by Jacob Ayrer, the Nürnberg dramatist of about 1600. The three gallants entrapped by the baker's wife have in this play been turned into a goldsmith, a tailor, and a shoemaker, but otherwise correspond to the domestic priest, head magistrate and minister of the Indian story of Upakōśā in the *Ocean of Story*. The baker arrives, when his wife makes the three suitors enter the oven and creep into three sacks. The baker threatens to heat the oven. The sacks are finally brought into the market-place to be sold and are bought by the respective wives of the three gallants. The sacks and the oven may be compared to the large trunk and the lamp-black used for smearing the gallants in the Indian story. The interesting note on the language of signs [3] might have been enriched by a reference to the valuable works of Colonel Mallery on the sign-language of the North American Indians, also to those passages of the Kauṭiliya *Arthaśāstra* in which communication by signs is referred to. The latter work (I. 20) might also have been quoted on the subject of detectors of poison [4] where it states that certain plants serve to keep away poisonous snakes and that certain birds shriek or swoon or feel uncomfortable or die or have their eyes reddened in the vicinity of poison. Regarding the practice of circumambulation of an object of reverence with the right hand towards it, there is a characteristic passage in the *Code of Manu* [5] to the effect that a man should pass by a mound of earth, a cow, an idol, a Brahman, clarified butter, honey, a crossway, and well-known trees, turning his right hand towards them. Dohada, the craving of a pregnant woman, has been rightly explained as meaning 'two-heartedness', the pregnant woman having two hearts and two wills in her body.[6] This craving is supposed to be connected, as medical Sanskrit texts show, with transmigration which invests the embryo with all the sensations and tendencies peculiar to it in a previous existence. It is to be hoped that the promised nine other volumes will follow in due time and will make equally fascinating reading as the present volume.

[1] See M. 4, 57 ; Y.I, 138 ; VI. LXXI, 56. [2] pp. 42-4.
[3] p. 80f. [4] p. 110 [5] iv. 39 [6] p. 221.