

THE HINDU TRIAD

THE HINDU

HISTORY
OF
THE HINDU TRIAD,
(BRAHMA, VISHNU, AND SIVA)
AS DESCRIBED
IN
THE SACRED BOOKS OF THE HINDUS.

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HISTORY

THE HINDU TRIAD

(TRANSLATED FROM THE SANSKRIT)

BY THE AUTHOR

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under

THE HINDU TRIAD.

INTRODUCTION.

Carlyle says: "Of a man or of a nation we inquire first of all: What religion they had? Answering this question is giving us the soul of the history of the man or of the nation. The thoughts they had were the parents of the actions they did; their feelings were the parents of their thoughts: it was the unseen and spiritual in them that determined the outward and the actual; their religion, as I say, was the great fact about them."

Man is a religious being: *he will worship*. In whatever part of the world he may be found, however degraded in many respects, he has a religion of some kind or another. This not only holds good at present; but, so far as we know, it has been the case in all ages of the world. Few nations are more religious, in their way, than the people of India. The *Calcutta Review* says: "A Hindu is the most religious being in existence. He gets up from his bed religiously, anoints his body religiously, washes religiously, dresses religiously, sits religiously, stands religiously, eats religiously, drinks religiously, sleeps religiously, learns religiously, remains ignorant religiously, and becomes irreligious religiously."

It is well known that we become like those with whom we associate. If our chosen friends are wise and good men, we are likely to follow their example; on the other hand, if the foolish and wicked are our companions, we are almost certain to imitate them.

The higher a person is the greater is his influence. That of a king is very powerful over his subjects. The Bhagavad Gita says: "The man of lower degree followeth the example of him who is above him, and doeth that which he doeth." Krishna says in the same book: "If I were not vigilantly to attend to these duties, all men would presently follow my example." As God is considered greater than the most powerful earthly monarch, His influence over His worshippers should be far stronger than the latter over his subjects. *Yatha devah, tatha bhaktah*, 'As is the god, so is the worshipper.' There is no more important question for a nation than this, What is the nature of the God it worships?

"The worshipper looks upon the character of the object which he worships as the standard of perfection. He therefore condemns everything in himself which is unlike, and approves of everything which is like that character. The tendency of this is to lead him to abandon everything in himself and in his course of life, which is condemned by the character

and precepts of his god, and to conform himself to that standard which is approved by the same criterion. The worshipper desires the favour of the object worshipped, and this, reason dictates, can be obtained only by conformity to the will and the character of that object. To become assimilated to the image of the object worshipped must be the end of desire with the worshipper. His aspirations, therefore, every time he worships, do, from the nature of the case, assimilate his character more and more to the model of the object that receives his homage.

"To this fact the whole history of the world bears testimony. Without an exception, the character of every nation and tribe of the human family has been formed and modified in a great degree, by the character attributed to their gods."*

Among the gods of the Greeks and Romans there were a few names in the early period of their history, to which some virtuous attributes were attached; but the conduct and character generally ascribed to their gods were marked deeply with such traits as heroism, vengeance, caprice, and lust. Pope's lines rightly describe them:

"Gods partial, changeful, passionate, unjust;
Whose attributes were rage, revenge, and lust."

India furnishes other illustrations of the same truth.

The highest object of worship is the Paramâtman, the Supreme Spirit, the *nirguna* Brahma. In Vedic times the Aryans enjoyed life; after settlement for some centuries in the hot climate of India, a gloomy view was taken of the world, and existence was considered a curse. The *nirguna* Brahma was considered to be free from all troubles, and to exist in a state of dreamless sleep. Hence his earnest worshippers sometimes went into forests, refraining from all actions good or bad, and endeavouring by yoga exercises to cease from all thought, and become assimilated to Brahma.

Krishna is represented in the Bhagavata Purana as dancing and sporting with the gopis. The Maharajas, scattered over India, claim to be incarnations of Krishna, and are supposed to be privileged to act as he did. Men and women prostrate themselves at their feet, offering them incense, fruits, and flowers, and holding lights before them. It is believed that the best way of propitiating Krishna in heaven is by ministering to the sensual appetites of the Maharajas. Body, soul, and property (*tan, man, dhan*) are to be wholly made over to them. Women are taught to believe that the highest bliss will be secured to themselves and their families by intercourse with the Maharajas. To secure this, large sums are paid.

Siva, as an ascetic, is said to have gone about naked, besmeared with ashes, wandering among burning grounds, intoxicated with bhang. There are sannyasis who profess to follow his example.

* *Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation.*

Kali is the most bloodthirsty deity of the Hindu pantheon. She is supposed to be especially delighted with human sacrifices. The Thugs were her worshippers, and claimed that she had given them permission to strangle people. Wandering about in disguise, they talked and joked with a traveller, offering him betel; but suddenly, when they came to a lonely place, they threw a noose around his neck and strangled him.

If men's hearts are to be purified, it must be by tearing their affections from gods delighting in cruelty and lust, and fixing them upon a righteous and holy Being as the proper object of reverence. As an impure object of worship would necessarily degrade and corrupt the soul, so, on the contrary, a holy object worshipped would necessarily elevate and purify the nature of man.

It is a very important inquiry, What has been the character of the gods worshipped in India, who have succeeded one another like dynasties of kings? An attempt will be made to trace the history of the three principal gods as described in the sacred books of the Hindus, beginning with the Vedas, and gradually taking up the later writings. The earlier gods, however, will first be briefly noticed.

DYAUS PITAR.

Max Müller says, "There is a monotheism which precedes the polytheism of the Vedas and even in the invocation of their innumerable gods, the remembrance of a god, one and infinite, breaks through the mist of an idolatrous phraseology, like the blue sky that is hidden by passing clouds."

The oldest Aryan Religion may best be explained in the words of the same writer:

"Thousands of years ago, before Greek was Greek, and Sanskrit was Sanskrit, the ancestors of the Aryan races dwelt together in the high lands of Central Asia, speaking one common language.

"The Aryans were then no longer dwellers in tents, but builders of permanent houses. As the name for king is the same in Sanskrit, Latin, Teutonic, and Celtic, we know that kingly government was established and recognized by the Aryans at the prehistoric period. They also worshipped an unseen Being, under the self-same name."*

"If I were asked what I consider the most important discovery which has been made during the nineteenth century with respect to the ancient history of mankind, I should answer by the following short line:

"Sanskrit DYAUSH-PITAR=Greek ZETΣΠATHP (ZEUS PATER)=Latin JUPITER—Old Norse TYR.

"Think what this equation implies! It implies not only that our own ancestors and the ancestors of Homer and Cicero (the Greeks and

* *Nineteenth Century*, Oct, 1885, pp. 626, 627.

Romans) spoke the same language as the people of India—this is a discovery which, however incredible it sounded at first, has long ceased to cause any surprise—but it implies and proves that they all had once the same faith, and worshipped for a time the same supreme Deity under exactly the same name—a name which meant Heaven-Father.

“Thousands of years have passed away since the Aryan nations separated to travel to the North and the South, the West and the East: they have each formed their languages, they have each founded empires and philosophies, they have each built temples and razed them to the ground; they have all grown older, and it may be wiser and better; but when they search for a name for that which is most exalted and yet most dear to every one of us, when they wish to express both awe and love, the infinite and the finite, they can but do what their old fathers did when gazing up the eternal sky, and feeling the presence of a Being as far as far and as near as near can be; they can but combine the self-same words and utter once more the primeval Aryan prayer, Heaven Father, in that form which will endure for ever, “Our Father, which art in heaven.”

At an early period, however, the earth, under the name of Prithivi, was associated with Dyaus. The Aitareya Brahmana mentions their marriage: “The gods then brought the two (Heaven and Earth) together, and when they came together, they performed a wedding of the gods.”

The ancient Greeks had the same ideas. The Earth is addressed as, “Mother of gods, the wife of the starry Heaven.” Their marriage, too, is described.

In the Veda Dyaus is chiefly invoked in connection with the Earth. “He is invoked by himself also, but he is a vanishing god, and his place is taken in most of the Vedic poems by the younger and more active god, Indra.”*

VARUNA.

Varuna, like Dyaus, is another representative of the highest heaven, as encompassing all things. The name is derived from *var*, to cover, and is identical with the Greek *Ouranos*, heaven.

“Varuna,” says the Rig-Veda, “stemmed asunder the wide firmaments; he lifted on high the bright and glorious heaven; he stretched out apart the starry sky and the earth.” In the Athara-Veda, illimitable knowledge is ascribed to him:

Varuna, says Max Müller, “is one of the most interesting creations of the Hindu mind, because though we can still perceive the physical background from which he rises, the vast, starry, brilliant expanse above, his features more than those of any of the Vedic gods have been completely transfigured; and he stands before us as a god who watches over the world, punishes the evil doer, and even forgives the sins of those who implore his pardon.”†

* *Indra: What it can teach us?* p. 195.

† *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 212.

Varuna is the only Vedic deity to whom a high moral character is attributed. Whitney says :

“ In the Puranas, Varuna is stripped of all his majestic attributes, and represented as a mere god of the ocean.”

INDRA.

“ In Sanskrit,” says Max Müller, “ the drops of rain are called *ind-u*, masculine themselves ; he who sends them is called *Ind-ra* the rainer, the irrigator, and in the Veda the name of the principal deity worshipped by the Aryan settlers in India. The name of Indra is peculiar to India, and must have been formed after the separation of the great Aryan family had taken place, for we find it neither in Greek, nor in Latin, nor in German.”*

The gods of the Hindus are somewhat like kings who reign for a time, and then give place to successors. The first struggle for supremacy in the Hindu pantheon is between Heaven and Earth and Indra.

Dyaus and Varuna, representing the bright blue sky or the starry heavens, were the highest deities of the Aryans in their original home. In India they came to a country where for months together the earth is exposed to the scorching rays of the sun, sometimes without a single shower, so that it is impossible for the fields to be ploughed or the seed to be sown. It is not surprising, therefore, that a god in whose hands are the thunder and lightning, at whose command the refreshing showers fall to render the earth fruitful, should most frequently be appealed to, and that the most laudatory songs should be addressed to him. Indra is the most popular deity of the Vedas.

Different accounts are given of his parentage. In one hymn Ekashtaka is said to be his mother ; in another he is said to have sprung from the mouth of Purusha ; while a third makes him to have been generated by Soma. According to the Mahabharata, Indra is one of the sons of Kasyapa.

Indra is exalted above Dyaus. “ The divine Dyaus bowed before Indra, before Indra the great Earth bowed with her wide spaces.” “ At the birth of thy splendour, Dyaus trembled, the Earth trembled for fear of thy anger.”

In the Vedas, Indra is characterised by his fondness for war and the intoxicating soma juice.

Even as an infant, Indra is said to have manifested his warlike tendencies. “ As soon as he was born, the slayer of Vritra grasped his arrow, and asked his mother, Who are they that are renowned as fierce warriors ?” “ His love of the soma juice was shown as

* *Indra : What can it teach us ?* p. 182.

early." "On the day that thou was born, thou didst, from love of it, drink the mountain-grown juice of the soma plants."

A frequent epithet of Indra is *somapa*, soma-drinker.

While the Aryans were engaged in fierce contests with the aborigines, Indra held the highest rank. When the latter had been reduced to subjection, Indra gave place to other deities. In the Puranas he reigns over Swarga; but is often in fear lest he should be dethroned. Many instances are recorded of his adultery. According to the Mahabharata, he seduced Ahalya, the wife of Gautama, his spiritual teacher. By the curse of the sage, Indra's body was impressed by a thousand marks, so that he was called Sa-yoni; but these marks were afterwards changed to eyes, and he is hence called 'the thousand-eyed.'

AGNI.

Agni is the god of fire, the Latin *ignis*, fire. He is one of the most prominent deities of the Rig-Veda, as far more hymns are addressed to him than to any other divinity except Indra.

Fire is very necessary for human existence. In early times, when lucifer matches were unknown, fire was looked upon with somewhat like religious awe. The production of fire by the friction of wood or its sudden descent from the sky in the form of lightning, seemed as marvellous as the birth of a child. In the hymns of the Vedas fire is praised and worshipped as the best and kindest of the gods, the only god who had come down from heaven to live on earth, the friend of man, the messenger of the gods, the mediator between gods and men, the immortal among mortals. Various accounts are given of the origin of Agni. He was worshipped in the fire kindled in the morning. The whole family gathered around it, regarding it with love and awe, as at once a friend and a priest. It was a visible god conveying the oblation of mortals to all gods.

Agni's proper offering is ghee. When this is sprinkled into the flame, it mounts higher and glows more fiercely; the god has devoured the gift, and thus testifies his satisfaction and pleasure. Several of his epithets describe his fondness for butter.

The first hymn of the Rig-Veda is addressed to Agni, and all the other books, except two, begin with hymns to him.

SURYA.

Surya, the sun god, is in one hymn styled the son of Dyaus; in another he is called the son of Aditi. Ushas is in one place said to be his wife, while in another she is described as his mother. He moves in a car which is sometimes said to be drawn by one and

sometimes by seven fleet and ruddy horses. Pushan goes as his messenger with his golden ships, which sail in the aerial ocean. Surya is the preserver and soul of all things stationary and moving; enlivened by him men perform their work; he is far-seeing, all-seeing; beholds all creatures, and the good and bad deeds of mortals. By his greatness he is the divine leader of the gods. The epithets architect of the universe and possessed of all divine attributes, are applied to him.

In many passages, however, the dependent position of Surya is asserted. He is said to have been caused to shine by Indra, who also once carried off one of the wheels of his chariot. Mitra and Varuna sometimes conceal him by clouds and rain.*

In the Ramayana, Sanjna, the daughter of Visvakarma, is the wife of Surya. As his brightness was too great for his wife, Visvakarma cut part of him away. The fragments fell blazing to the earth, and from them Visvakarma formed the discus of Vishnu, the trident of Siva, and the weapons of the other gods!

VISVAKARMAN.

VISVAKARMAN, 'all-maker,' is mentioned in two hymns of the Rig-Veda as the great architect of the universe. The 81st Hymn of Book X. thus describes him:

2. What was the place whereon he took his station? What was it that supported him? How was it?
Whence Visvakarman, seeing all, producing the earth, with mighty power disclosed the heavens.
3. He who hath eyes on all sides round about him, a mouth on all sides, arms and feet on all sides.
He, the sole god, producing earth and heaven, weldeth them, with his arms as wings, together.
4. What was the tree, what wood in sooth produced it, from which they fashioned out the earth and heaven?
Ye thoughtful men inquire within your spirit whereon he stood when he established all things.

In the Epic Poems and Puranas, Visvakarman appears as the artificer of the gods. The Mahabharata says: "Then was born the illustrious Visvakarma, the lord of the arts, executor of a thousand handicrafts, the carpenter of the gods, the fashioner of all ornaments, the most eminent of artisans, who formed the celestial chariots of the deities; on whom craftsmen subsist, and whom, a great and immortal god, they continually worship." In the Ramayana Visvakarman is represented as having built the city of Lanka for the Rakshasas.

HIRANYAGARBHA.

HIRANYAGARBHA, 'golden womb,' is thus mentioned in the Rig-Veda :

1. In the beginning rose Hiranyagarbha, born only lord of all created beings.
He fixed and holdeth up this earth and heaven. What god shall we adore with our oblation ?
2. Giver of vital breath, of power and vigour, he whose commandments all the gods acknowledge :
Whose shade is death, whose lustre makes immortal. What god shall we adore with our oblation ?
3. Who by his grandeur hath become sole ruler of all the moving world that breathes and slumbers ;
He who is lord of men and lord of cattle. What god shall we adore with our oblation ? Book X. 121.

As each verse ends with the question, "What god shall we adore?" *Ka*, who, the interrogative pronoun was in later times acknowledged as a god, with a genealogy of his own.

Hiranyagarbha is supposed to denote the Sun-god as the great power of the universe, from which all other existences are derived. According to Manu, Hiranyagarbha was Brahma, the first male, formed in a golden egg, resplendent as the sun.

PRAJAPATI.

PRAJAPATI, 'lord of creatures,' says Max Müller, is in many respects identical with Visvakarman, the maker of all things. The hymn quoted above, beginning with Hiranyagarbha, ends thus :

Prajapati, thou only comprehendest all these created things, and none beside thee.

Grant us our hearts' desire when we invoke thee : may we have store of riches in possession.

The name Prajapati occurs as an epithet both of Savitri, the sun god and Soma Pavamana. In the Rig-Veda Prajapati is invoked as bestowing children.

"Now and then" says Max Müller "in reading certain chapters of the Brahmanas, one imagines that the craving after one supreme personal God has at last found its satisfaction in Prajapati, the lord of all living things, and that all the other gods would vanish before this new radiance. Thus we read :

"Prajapati alone was all this in the beginning, Prajapati is Bharata, the supporter, for he supports all this. Prajapati created living creatures. From his higher vital breath he created the gods ; from his lower vital breath he created men. Afterwards he created death as one who should be a devourer for all living creatures. Of that Prajapati one

half was mortal, the other immortal, and with that half which was mortal he was afraid of death." Satapatha Brahmana, x, 1, 3, 1.

But it was not so.

CREATION.

Vedic Ideas of Creation.—These are thus described by Gough:—

"But in the midst of this life of the primitive Hindu in communion with the gods of nature, there are discernable the first stirrings of reflection. Questions began to be asked in the hymns of the Rishis in regard to the origin of earth and sky. Sometimes they said they were made by the gods or by one or other of the gods, working after the fashion of a human artificer. At other times they said the gods begot them. One of the Rishis asks about the earth and sky, 'which of these was first; and which was later? You wise, which of you knows?' Another asks, 'what was the forest, what the tree, they cut the sky and earth out of, that abide and wear not out, while the days and many dawns have worn away?' In one hymn earth and sky are the work of Visvakarman. In another it is Hiranyagarbha, the Golden Germ, that arose in the beginning, the lord of things that are, that establishes the sky and the earth, that is the giver of life and breath. In another it is Varuna, either alone or associated with Mitra, who fixes the heavens, measures out the earth, and dwells as ruler in all the worlds. Agni is sometimes the son of Earth and Sky; at other times he is said to have stretched out the earth and sky, to have inlaid the sky with stars, and to have made all that flies or walks, or stands, or moves. In other places it is Indra that has begotten the sun, the sky, the dawn; that has set up lights in the sky, that upholds the two worlds, the waters, the plains, the hills, and the sky.

"Elsewhere it is Soma, the deified moon-plant, that generates the earth and sky, that puts light into the sun, and stretches out the atmosphere. In another hymn Aditi, the endless visible expanse, is all that is: 'Aditi is sky, Aditi is air, Aditi is mother, father, son. Aditi is whatever has been born, Aditi is whatever shall be born.'

"In Rig-veda X. 72, 2 we read: 'Brahmanaspati has forged these births of the gods as a blacksmith fans his flame; in the primal age of the gods entity came forth out of nonentity.'

"In the Purushasūkta, Rig-Veda X. 90, the world is made,—the Rik, the Saman, and the Yajush, the three Vedic aggregates, the Brahman, Rajanya, Vaisya, and Sudra, the four orders of people in the Hindu pale are produced,—out of Purusha, the highest deity, the personality that permeates all living beings, offered up by the gods, the Sadhyas and the Rishis, as a sacrificial victim. Here the idea of the emanation of the world from a divine spirit internal to all embodied sentiences is presented in a form gross, obscure and almost unintelligible to the modern mind. Purusha has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet. He compasses the earth on every side, and stands ten fingers' breadth beyond. Purusha is all this; he is that which has been, and that which

is to be ; the lord also of immortality, and the lord of that which grows up with food." pp. 13-15.

"The effusions of awakening reflection reach their highest energy in the celebrated *Násadiyasúkta*, *Rig-Veda* X. 129." It is thus translated by Griffith.

There was not non-existent nor existent : there was no realm of air, no sky beyond it.

What covered in, and where ? and what gave shelter ? Was water there, unfathomed depth of water ?

Death was not then, nor was there aught immortal : no sign was there, the day's and night's divider.

That One Thing,* breathless, breathed by its own nature : apart from it was nothing whatsoever.

Darkness there was : at first concealed in darkness this All was indiscriminated chaos.

All that existed then was void and formless : by the great power of Warmth was born that Unit.

Thereafter rose Desire in the beginning, Desire, the primal seed and germ of Spirit.

Who verily knows and who can here declare it, whence it was born and whence comes this creation ?

The gods are later than this world's production. Who knows then whence it first came into being ?

He, the first origin of this creation, whether he formed it all or did not form it,

Whose eye controls this world in highest heaven, he verily knows it, or perhaps he knows not.

"It is in this hymn," says Gough, "that is first suggested the primitive type of Indian thought, the thesis of all the Upanishads, viz., the emanation of the world and of all the forms of life that successively people it, out of the sole reality, the self that permeates and vitalises all things, through the agency of the unreality that overspread it, the self-feigned fiction, the cosmical illusion *Máyá*."

"There was not non-existent nor existent" or as it may be rendered "It was not entity, nor was it nonentity." "The cosmical illusion neither is nor is not ; it is a self-feigned fiction, a spurious semblance of being, for it is self alone, that is. And yet it is not merely nothing, for then the world of experience would not be here and everywhere, for living souls to pass through."†

Later Conceptions of Creation.—The following account is abridged from the *Satapatha Brahmana* :

"In the beginning this universe was nothing but water. The waters desired, 'how can we be reproduced ?' So saying they toiled, they performed austerity. While they were performing austerity, a golden egg came into existence. Being produced, it then became a year. Wherefore this golden egg floated about for the period of a year.

* The vanity out of which the world was developed.

† *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, p. 15.

From it in a year a male (*purusha*) came into existence who was Prajapati. He divided this golden egg. There was then no resting-place for him. He therefore floated about for the space of a year, occupying this golden egg. In a year he desired to speak. He uttered 'bhur,' which became this earth; 'bhuvah' which became the firmament; and 'svar,' which became that sky. Desiring offspring, he went on worshipping and toiling. He conceived progeny in himself; with his mouth he created the gods. Then from this lower breath he created the asuras. These (following) gods were created from Prajapati.—Agni, Indra, Soma and Parameshthin, son of Prajapati.*

In the above Prajapati is said to have brought forth the gods. In another part of the same book, "The gods are represented as the creators of Prajapati, who in his turn is stated to have generated the waters, which he entered, and from which sprang the mundane egg."†

Prajapati accused of Incest.—The germ of this legend is found in the Rig-Veda. X. 61. The following account is abridged from the Aitareya Brahmana :

"Prajapati thought of cohabiting with his own daughter, whom some call 'Heaven', others 'Dawn' (Ushas). He transformed himself into a buck, whilst his daughter assumed the shape of a female deer. He approached her. The gods saw it, crying, 'Prajapati commits an act never done before.' They then put the most fearful bodies of theirs in one called Bhūtavan, who attacked Prajapati and pierced him with an arrow. Prajapati, when pierced, sprang up and became the constellation Mriga i.e., deer (stars in Orion); while the female deer (*rohit*) into which his daughter had been transformed became the constellation Rohini."‡

The above story was understood literally, and became a great stumbling-block to the worshippers of Prajapati. Afterwards the explanation was offered that Prajapati represents the sun which follows the dawn.

In Manu Brahmā is the Prajapati. The name is also given to Manu Svayambhuva himself as the son of Brahma, and as the secondary Creator of the ten Rishis, or 'mind-born' sons of Brahma, from whom mankind has descended. It is to these ten rishis, as fathers of the human race, that the name Prajapati is most commonly given. The number and names of the Prajapatis vary in different authorities; the Mahabharata makes them 21.§

"Prajapati" says Muir, "may thus be said to have two characters, which, however, are not kept distinct in the Brahmanas. On the one hand, he is the result of one of the efforts of the Indian intellect to conceive and express the idea of deity in the abstract as the great first cause of all things; while, on the other hand, he is sometimes described

* Satapatha Brahmana xi. i.—14 (abridged) Muir's *Sanskrit Texts*, IV. 25, 26.

† Muir's *Sanskrit Text*, Vol. iv. pp. 23, 24.

‡ Haug's Translation : Vol. II. pp. 217-219.

§ Dowson's *Hindu Mythology*, p. 239.



as only a secondary and subordinate divinity, and even treated as only one of the 33 deities.*

PROGRESS TOWARDS ABSTRACT CONCEPTIONS OF THE DEITY.

The following remarks on this point are abridged from Muir's *Sanskrit Texts*, Vol. V. 350—354.

"In the oldest portions of the Vedic hymns we discover few traces of abstract conceptions of the Deity. They disclose a much more primitive stage of religious belief. They are the production of simple men who, under the influence of the most impressive phenomena of nature, saw everywhere the presence and agency of divine power. Each of the great provinces of the universe was directed and animated by its own separate deity. A clear idea of one supreme creator and governor of all things had not yet arisen. This is shown, not only by the special functions assigned to particular gods, but in many cases by the very names which they bear, corresponding to those of some of the elements or of the celestial luminaries. Thus, according to the belief of the ancient rishis, Agni was the divine being who resides and operates in fire; Sūrya the god who dwells and shines in the sun, and Indra the regent of the atmosphere, who clears the clouds with his thunderbolts and dispenses rain. While, however, in most parts of the Rig-Veda, we find such gods as Agni, Indra, and Sūrya are considered as distinct from one another, there are other hymns in which a tendency to identifications is perceptible, and traces are found of one uniform power being conceived to underlie the various manifestations of divine energy. Thus Agni is represented as having a threefold existence, by which may be intended, first in his familiar form on earth; secondly, as lightning in the atmosphere; and thirdly, as the sun in the heavens. In other passages where the same god is identified with Vishnu, Varuna, Mitra and others, it is not clear whether this identifications may not arise from a desire to magnify Agni rather than from any idea of his essential oneness with other deities with whom he is connected. In another hymn where Indra is represented as the same with Varuna, the design of the writer may have been to place the former god on an equality with the latter.

"There are however other passages which show that the writers had begun to regard the principal divinities as something more than mere regents of the different provinces of nature. Varuna, Indra, Surya, and Agni are described in strains more suitable to the supreme deity than to inferior divinities exercising a limited dominion. Although the epithets may have been given in momentary fervour, they indicate an advance towards the idea of one sovereign deity. A further step was taken by speaking of the deity under such new names as Visvakarman and Prajapati, not designating any limited function, but the more general notion of divine power, operating in the production and government of the universe. It is, perhaps, in names such as these that we may discover the point of transition from polytheistic to monotheistic ideas. There are passages in the Rig-Veda in which a monotheistic or a pantheistic tendency is clearly manifested. A long mystical hymn

* *Sanskrit Texts*, Vol. V. 393.

(i. 64) though considered to be addressed to Agni or Surya, represents the deities, though differently named, as one in reality. 'They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni; and (he is) the celestial, well-winged Garumat. Sages name variously that which is but one.' Another hymn (x. 114) says, 'The wise in their hymns represent under many forms the well-winged (deity) who is but one.' On the other hand, hymn i. 89 suggests a pantheistic sense, as it asserts all things to be manifestations of one all-pervading principle: 'Aditi is the sky, Aditi is the air, Aditi is the mother and father and son. Aditi is all the gods and the five classes of men. Aditi is whatever has been born. Aditi is whatever shall be born.'"

Pantheism triumphed in the end. *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma* 'All this (universe) is Brahma.' *Ekamevadvitīyam*, 'One only without a second.'

RISE OF HINDU PESSIMISM.

The hymns of the Rig Veda take a cheerful view of life. The early Aryans had come from a cold bracing climate, encouraging labour. Dr. K. M. Banerjea says:

"The Brahmins when they first settled on the fertile plains of Hindustan, were far from pronouncing the world to be a phantom, or sensuous life to be an essential evil. In their earliest literature, the *Mantras* of the Vedas, we do not see any traces of such a doctrine. We see hymns and prayers addressed to divinities. The things prayed for are all such as belong to our common every-day life. Offspring, cattle, lands, houses,—such are the boons which the gods are requested to bestow on their votaries. No impatience of life, no description of the world as an assembly of evils,—much less as a mere phantom or *māyā*,—no aspirations after release from corporeal existence, are found there."

"In the Brahmana period Hindu society was regularly formed,—the institution of caste was matured,—the Brahmins were recognised as the repositories of learning and ministers for the performance of rites and ceremonies. We notice a tendency towards identifying the universe and deified impersonations with the Supreme Brahma. But we do not see any marked condemnation of the world because of the evils of disease and death. We do not see it denounced as an assembly of essential evils incapable of remedy. We do not find any impatience of life and embodied existence. We do not hear of the necessity of getting rid of transmigrations. We are not told that supreme felicity consists in the separation of the soul from body and mind, or that the functions of body and mind inevitably lead to misery. We do not learn that *pravṛtti* or activity is an evil itself,—or that our chief good can only be found in a state in which the soul will be deprived of its capacities of thought, feeling and action."*

After the Aryans had settled in India for some time, they began to feel the influence of the hot, enervating climate. Labour

* *Preface to Dialogues on the Hindu Philosophy*, pp. x. xi.

was a burden; undisturbed repose seemed the highest bliss. A belief in transmigration also arose, and swayed the minds of the Hindus with tremendous power. The series of births is virtually endless; the common statement is that it rises to 84 lakhs.

Gough says :

"Every one of the countless modes of life that perpetually replace each other is a new form of misery, or at least of fleeting pleasure tainted with pain, and nothing else is to be looked for in all the varieties of untried being. In every stream of lives there is the varied anguish of birth, of care, hunger, weariness, bereavement, sickness, decay, and death, through embodiment after embodiment, and through æon after æon. Evil thoughts, evil words, and evil deeds push the doer downward in the scale of sentiences, and into temporary places of torment. Good thoughts, good words and good deeds push the doer upwards into higher embodiments and into a temporary paradises. It is the same wearisome journey above and below, miseries and tainted pleasures, that make way for new miseries and no end to it all. Good no less than evil activity is an imperfection, for it only prolongs the stream of lives. Action is the root of evil."*

"With the Upanishads commences that great wail of sorrow which, for countless ages, has in India been rising up to heaven." It was intensified by Buddha. The first of the "four noble truths," which he professed to have discovered, is, that "Existence is suffering." As a devout Buddhist counts his beads, he mutters *Anitya, Dukha, Anatta*, "Transience, Sorrow, Unreality."

Prince Mahanama thus describes to his brother Anuradha the alternate happiness and misery of life :—

"The being who is still subject to birth may at one time sport in the beautiful garden of a dewa-loka, and at another be cut to a thousand pieces in hell; at one time he may be Maha Brahma, and at another a degraded outcaste; at one time he may eat the food of the devas, and at another he may have molten lead poured down his throat; at one time he may sip nectar, and at another he may be made to drink blood. Alternately, he may repose on a couch with the dewas, and writhe on a bed of red hot iron; enjoy the society of the dewas, and be dragged through a thicket of thorns; bathe in a celestial river, and be plunged in the briny ocean of hell; become wild with pleasure, and then mad with pain; reside in a mansion of gold, and be exposed on a burning mountain; sit on the throne of the dewas, and be impaled with hungry dogs around; drawn in a chariot of the dewas, and dragged in a chariot of fire; he may now be a king who can receive countless gems by the mere clapping of his hands, and now a mendicant, taking a skull from door to door to seek alms."

The grand inquiry of the Hindus was, Is there nothing that rests inert and impassive, untouched with all the miseries of transmigration? The result was the concept of Brahma, which will now be described.

BRAHMA, OR BRAHMAN, THE SUPREME SPIRIT.

There is an important distinction between *Brahmā*, and *Brahmā*. The former, also called Brahman, is neuter, and denotes the Supreme Soul of the universe, self-existent, all-pervading, and eternal. The latter is masculine, and represents the first member of the Hindu triad; the Supreme Spirit manifested as the active creator of the universe.

"It is interesting," says Monier Williams, "to trace the crystallization of the rudimentary doctrines of Brahmanism into definite shape. In Vedic times there was a feeling after one Supreme Being, if haply He might be found. The hymn-composers gave expression to man's craving for some perception of the infinite. To satisfy this craving they turned to personifications of the Sky, Fire, Air, Water, Earth.

"What the deepest thinkers, even at that early period, felt with ever-increasing intensity was that a Spirit (*A'tman*), beyond the cognizance of sense permeated and breathed through all material things. They bethought them with awe of this same spirit vivifying their own bodies with the breath of life—of this mysterious presence enshrined in their own consciences. Then they identified this same Spirit with the divine afflatus thrilling through the imaginations of their own hymn-composers, with the spiritual efficacy of the hymns themselves, with the mystic power inherent in divine knowledge and prayer. This mysterious, all-pervading vague spiritual Power and presence, which was wholly unbounded by limitations of personality and individuality became at last a reality.

"The etymology of *A'tman* is doubtful. Some derive it from *at*, to move; others from *ah*, connected with *aham*, I; others from *vā*, to blow as the wind; and others from *an*, to breathe. No doubt *ātman* was originally the breath of life—the breath that animates the Universe and man's living soul—the power in which and by which man lives, and moves, and has his being. This Breath of life (*A'tman*) was afterwards called Brahman. (nominal neuter *Brahmā*, from the root *brih*, 'to expand'), because it expanded itself through all space. It was a pure essence which not only diffused itself everywhere, but constituted everything. Men, gods, and the visible world were merely its manifestations.

"It is worthy of note that *A'tman* (which is the earlier word for the one Spirit of the universe) is masculine, while Brahman, the later word, is neuter. The name Brahman was at first connected with the spiritual power inherent in the Vedic hymns and prayers. The Veda itself is often called *Brahma*, and described as the breath (*ucchvasita*) of the Supreme."^{*}

According to Vedantism nothing really exists but the one impersonal spirit, called *A'tman*, Brahman, or *Brahma*. This self-existent, eternal, impersonal spirit is absolutely One; but he is described by three attributes, pure existence, (*Sat*), pure knowledge (*Chit*), and pure bliss (*Ananda*). The meaning of these attributes,

* *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, pp. 20, 21, 95.

however, requires to be clearly understood. Brahman is not conscious of his own existence; Brahman is knowledge, not *has* knowledge; Brahman is not bliss in the ordinary sense of the word. It is bliss only in the negation of non-bliss and in freedom from the miseries incident to life and transmigration; it is bliss likened to dreamless sleep. The Brihadaranyaka says: "As in dreamless sleep the soul knows, but knows not this or that, so in knowing the Self (or Brahma) knows not."*

In the above condition Brahman is said to be *nirguna*—not bound by the *gunas*.

Although Brahman is the only real existence, it is held that from all eternity an inexplicable principle of unreality has been associated with him, called *Máyá* (Illusion or *Acidya*, Ignorance). From the union of the two, all the migratory forms of life proceed. But as such existence is unreal, and the whole evolved world unreal too, it follows that nothing really exists but Brahman, or all is identical with Brahman.

Monier Williams says:

"A Vedantist believes in one impersonal Spirit, who by association with Illusion becomes the one supreme personal God (Paramesvara) of the world (of illusion), and it is that personal God who, when he engages in the creation, preservation, and dissolution of an illusion universe is called Saguna because believed to be associated with the three *gunas* which are held to be substances (*dravya*) and are supposed constituents of his causal body, identified, as it is, with Ignorance. These three *gunas* are the same as those which in the Sāṅkhyan system are the constituent essences or ingredients of Prakṛiti, resulting in the three conditions of activity, goodness, and apathy or darkness, called *Rajas*, *Sattva*, *Tamas*.

"It is by reason, then, of association with Illusion or Ignorance (made up of the three *gunas* or conditions), that the supreme spirit (Paramâtman) enshrined in the personal God, and the living spirit (jivâtman) enshrined in the personal man, believe in their own individuality, mistaking it and the world for realities, just as a rope in a dark night might be mistaken for a snake. When the personalized spirit sets itself free from the power of Illusion, the consciousness of its own identity and of the identity of the whole universe with the one impersonal Spirit is re-established."†

"All the stir of daily life" says Gough: "all the feverish pleasure and pains of life after life, are the phantasmagory (vain appearances) of a waking dream. For the soul that wakes to its own nature these things cease to be, and, what is more, have never so much as been."‡

Ramanuja or Vishishtadwaita Sect.—Hinduism as expounded by Sankara may be regarded as the orthodox system. There are Vaishnava Sects of some importance. The principal of them was

* Gough's *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, p. 42.

† *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, pp. 36, 37.

‡ *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, p. 481.

founded by Ramanuja, born about 1017 A. D., at Sri Perambadur, a town about 26 miles west of Madras. He is known to have taught at Conjeveram; to have travelled twice through India, and to have finally settled at Srirangam, near Trichinopoly. The sect he founded is called *Visishtádwaita*, qualified 'non-duality.' The non-duality of the Supreme Spirit is qualified by its connexion with *cit* and *a-cit*. Ramanuja taught the existence of three principles: 1. The Supreme Spirit (Para-Brahman or Isvara); 2. The separate spirits (*cit*) of men; and 3. non-spirit (*a-cit*). Vishnu is the Supreme Being; individual beings are separate spirits; the visible world (*drisyam*) is non-spirit. All the three have an eternal existence and are inseparable, yet *cit* and *a-cit* are different from Isvara and dependent on Isvara.

"In the Sarva-darsana-Sangraha it is stated that Ramanuja's teaching, regarded from different points of view, was open to the charge of admitting the three ideas of unity, duality, and plurality. Unity, it alleges, was admitted by him in saying that all living beings and visible forms constitute the body of the one Supreme Spirit. Duality was admitted in saying that the Spirit of God and of man are distinct. Plurality was admitted in saying that the Spirit of God, the spirits of men which are multitudinous and the visible world are distinct. The first of these admissions is said to amount to qualified unity, and hence the name Visishtádwaita."

"Ramanuja also held that at the great periodical dissolutions of the Universe human spirits and the world are re-absorbed into God, but without losing their separate identity and consciousness."*

The sect is divided into the *Vadakalai* and the *Tenkalai*, or the Northern and Southern divisions. The former attach great value to Sanskrit literature. The white mark they wear on their foreheads is like the English letter U. The Tenkalai attach more importance to the Tamil sacred book, called *Divyaprabandha*, and its commentaries, than to Sanskrit writings. Their white mark is like the English letter Y.†

An important difference of doctrine separates the two parties. The Vadagalais say that the human spirit lays hold of the Supreme Being by its own will, act, and effort, just as the young monkey clings to its mother. This is called, the monkey theory (*markatanyāya*). The Tengalais maintain 'the cat-hold theory' (*mānjāranāya*). The human a spirit, they argue, remains passive and helpless until acted on by the Supreme Spirit, just as the kitten remains helpless until seized and transported by the mother cat.‡

The Christian doctrine may be called the "man-hold theory"—a combination of both. We stretch out our arms, and God embraces us.

* *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, p. 122.

† *Catechism of the Visishtádwaita Philosophy*, by Sri Ramanuja Charya, Published by the Theosophical Society, Madras.

‡ *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, p. 125.

Madhava or Dwaita Sect.—This sect is next in importance. It was founded by a Kanarese Brahman, named Madhava,—otherwise called Anandatīrtha. He is said to have been born about 1200 A.D., at Udipi, in South Kanara, 60 miles north of Mangalore.

Madhava, like Ramanuġa, taught that there was only one God, whose principal name was Vishnu (or Hari), and who was the one eternal Supreme Being, all other gods being subject to the law of universal periodical dissolution.

The chief distinctive feature of Madhava's teaching was that there are two separate eternal principles, related as independent and dependent. The independent principle is God (identified with Vishnu); the other is the dependent principle, consisting of human spirits. It was Madhava's unqualified denial of the unity of the Supreme and human spirits which made him the opponent of the followers of Sankara. This doctrine is commonly called Duality (Dwaita).

"The Supreme Lord," says Madhava, "differs from the individual spirit because the Lord is the object of its obedience. A subject who obeys a king, differs from a king. In their eager desire to be one with the Supreme Being, the followers of Sankara lay claim to the glory of his excellence. This is a mere mirage."*

BRAHMA, THE FIRST OF THE HINDU TRIAD.

The difference between Brahma and Brahmā has already been described.

Origin of Brahma.—One account has been given from the Satapatha Brahmana in which it is stated that at first nothing but water existed. The waters having desired, toiled, and performed austerities, produced a golden egg from which Brahma, called Prajapati, arose (p. 10).

The same Brahmana elsewhere represents the gods as the creators of Prajapati, who, in his turn, is said to have generated the waters which he entered, and from which sprang the golden egg.

Manu gives the following account :

"5. This universe was enveloped in darkness, unperceived, undistinguishable, undiscoverable, unknowable, as it were entirely sunk in sleep. 6. Then the irresistible self-existent Lord, undiscerned, causing this universe with the five elements and all other things, to become discernible, was manifested, dispelling the gloom. 7. He who is beyond the cognizance of the senses, subtle, undiscernible, eternal, who is the essence of all beings and inconceivable, himself shone forth. 8. He, desiring, seeking to produce various creatures from his own body, first created the waters, and deposited in them a seed. 9. This (seed) became a golden egg, resplendent as the sun, in which he himself was born as Brahma, the progenitor of all the world. 10. The waters are called 'nārāh,'

* *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, pp. 130, 131.

because they are the offspring of Nara; and since they were formerly the place of his movement (*ayana*), he is therefore called *Nārāyana*. 11. Being formed by that First Cause, undiscernible, eternal, which is both existent and non-existent, that Male (*purusha*), is known in the world as *Brahmā*. 12. That lord having continued a year in the egg, divided it into two parts by his mere thought. 13. With these two shells, he formed the heavens and the earth; and in the middle he placed the sky, the eight regions, and the eternal abode of the waters.”*

The older version of the *Ramayana* thus describes the origin of *Brahma* :

“*Vasishtha* says : ‘Lord of the people, understand from me this (account of) the origin of the world. 3. All was water only, in which the earth was formed. Thence arose *Brahmā*, the self-existent, with the deities. 4. He then becoming a boar raised up the earth, and created the whole world with the saints, his sons.’”†

In the two preceding extracts, it will be observed that the appellation *Narayana* is applied to *Brahma*, and that no mention is made of *Vishnu*. It is *Brahma* who assumes the form of a boar to raise up the earth from under the ocean. The name and office at a later period were transferred to *Vishnu*.

The *Mahabharata* represents *Brahma* as springing from the navel of *Vishnu* or from a lotus which grew thereout; hence he is called *Nābhi-ja*, ‘navel-born;’ *Ranja*, ‘the lotus;’ *Ranja-ja*, ‘lotus born,’ etc. This is the view taken by the *Vaishnavas*.

The *Saivite Skanda Purana* claims that *Siva* had a share in *Brahma*’s birth. *Siva*, addressing *Vishnu*, said, “When the first *Brahma* died, I came and had blissful commerce with you. Did you not then becoming a mother give birth through your navel to this (present) *Brahma*?”

Origin of *Brahma*’s Five Heads.—*Brahma* is said to be of a red colour. Originally he had five heads. The *Matsya Purana* gives the following account of their formation :

“*Brahma* next formed from his own immaculate substance a female who is celebrated under the name of *Satarupā*, *Savitri*, *Sarasvati*, *Gāyatri*, and *Brāhmani*. Beholding his daughter, born from his body, *Brahma* became wounded with the arrows of love, and exclaimed, ‘How surpassingly lovely she is!’ *Satarupa* turned to the right side from his gaze; but as *Brahma* wished to look after her, a second head issued from his body; as she passed to the left and behind him, to avoid his amorous glances, two other heads successively appeared. At length she sprang into the sky; and as *Brahma* was anxious to gaze after her there, a fifth head was immediately formed. *Brahma* then said to his daughter, ‘Let us produce all kinds of animated beings, men, suras, (gods) and asuras (demons)’. Hearing this she descended, and *Brahma* having espoused her, they withdrew to a secluded spot

* *Muir’s Sanskrit Texts*, Vol. IV. p. 31.

† Quoted in *Wilkin’s Hindu Mythology*, p. 86.

where they dwelt together for one hundred divine years, at the expiration of which time was born Manu, who is also called Swayambhuva and Viraj.”*

How Brahma lost his Fifth Head.—Several conflicting accounts are given. One explanation is as follows :

Once when the holy sages were assembled on the top of Meru, they asked Brahma to declare the true nature of the Godhead. Brahma, influenced by spiritual darkness, said, “I am the womb of the universe, without beginning or end, and the sole self-existent lord ; and he who does not worship me, shall never obtain beatitude.” Upon this, Narayana smiling, said : “I am the framer of the universe ; had I not willed it, creation would not have taken place.”

Thus Vishnu and Brahma disputed, and at length they agreed to allow the matter to be decided by the Vedas. The Vedas declared that Siva was creator, preserver, destroyer. Against this decision Brahma and Vishnu, bewildered by the darkness of delusion, protested. Suddenly Siva appeared in human form, vast, uncreated of a dark hue. On seeing him the fifth head of Brahma glowed with anger. He said that Siva had sprung from his forehead, and was called Rudra, because he wept. “Hasten then to seek the refuge of my feet, and I will protect thee, O my son !” At the proud words of Brahma, Siva was incensed ; and from his anger sprang into existence a terrific form (Bhairava), whom he then addressed : ‘Chastise this lotus-born !’ No sooner did Bhairava receive this order, then instantly he cut off the head of Brahma with the thumb of his left hand.

The same Purana gives a different account of the transaction. When all things, movable and immovable, had been destroyed, nothing remained but one boundless ocean, covered with impenetrable darkness, one being alone, Maha Kāla (Siva) pervaded all space. Being desirous of creation, he churned his left arm with his right forefinger, upon which a bubble issued, which increasing in size became an egg resembling gold. This egg Maha Kāla divided with his hand. Of the upper part he formed the heavens, and of the lower half the earth. In the centre of it appeared Brahma with 5 heads and 4 arms, to whom Maha Kāla thus said, “Through my favour, effect creation.” Having thus spoken he disappeared. Brahma having propitiated this lord Bhava with severe *tapas*, obtained from him the four Vedas, and was thus enabled to become the creator.

Brahma, from the impurity of his nature, became immensed in spiritual darkness, and thought that it was by his own power alone that he had effected creation, and there was no other god equal to

* Quoted in Wilkin's *Hindu Mythology*, p. 86.

him. His fifth head also having read the Vedas, which the other four heads had delivered, acquired a splendour which neither gods nor asuras could endure.

The Padma Purana thus concludes this story: "Unable therefore to approach or behold it, they determined to apply to Siva for relief. Being propitiated by them Siva granted their request, and proceeded with them to where Brahma remained inflated with pride. On seeing Siva, Brahma did not pay him the customary honour. Siva, seeing Brahma's fifth head inflicting distress on the universe by its effulgent beams brighter than a thousand suns, approached him and said: "Oh! this head shines with too much splendour!" and immediately cut it off with the nail of his left thumb, with as much ease as a man cuts off the stem of a plantain tree.*

A third explanation is that it was because of Brahma's attempting to seduce his own daughter that Siva struck off his fifth head. This crime was attempted when in a fit of intoxication: hence Brahma pronounced a curse upon the gods who should hereafter drink spirits.

Creation by Brahma.—There are several contradictory accounts. The following is abridged from the Vishnu Purana Book I.:

Brahma being desirous of creating the four orders of beings, termed gods, demons, progenitors, and men, collected his mind into itself. While this concentrated, the quality of darkness pervaded his body; and thence the Asuras were first born from his thigh. Continuing to create, but assuming different shapes, he experienced pleasure; and thence from his mouth proceeded the gods, endowed with the quality of goodness. The form abandoned by him became day, in which the good quality predominates; and hence by day the gods are most powerful, and by night the demons. Thinking of himself as the father of the world, the pitris were born from his side. Assuming the quality of passion, men were produced, in whom foulness predominates.

Next Brahma in darkness put forth beings of hideous aspects. Those beings hastened to the deity. Some who exclaimed, "Oh preserve us," were called Rakshasas (from *raksha*, to preserve). Others who cried out, "Let us eat," were called Yakshas (from *yaksha*, to eat). Beholding them so disgusting, the hairs of Brahma were shrivelled up, and falling from his head they became serpents. Birds he formed from his vital vigour; sheep from his heart; goats from his mouth; kine from his belly and sides; and horses, elephants, deer, camels and other animals from his feet; whilst from the hairs of his body sprang herbs, roots and fruits.

From his eastern mouth Brahma created the Rig-Veda; from his southern mouth, the Yajur Veda; from his western mouth, the

* Kennedy's *Hindu Mythology*, p. 276.

Sama Veda; and from his northern mouth, the Atharva Veda. Chap. V.

Brahma desirous of creating the world, there sprang from his mouth beings especially endowed with the quality of goodness; others from his breast, pervaded by the quality of foulness, others from his thighs, in whom foulness and darkness prevailed; and others from his feet, in whom the quality of darkness predominated. Thus were, in succession, beings of the several castes, Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras, produced from the mouth, the breast, the thighs, and the feet of Brahma. These he created for the performance of sacrifices. By sacrifices the gods are nourished; and by the rain which they bestow mankind are supported. Chap. VI.

Brahma created several mind-born sons, like himself; namely Brigu, Pulastya, Kratu, Marachi, Daksha, Atri, Vasistha, etc., the nine Rishis celebrated in the Puranas. Brahma was filled with wrath at their being undesirous of progeny, and from his forehead sprang Rudra, of vast bulk, half male, half female. Brahma said to him "Separate yourself." Then Rudra became two-fold, disjoining his male and female natures which he multiplied.

Then Brahma created the Manu Swayambhuva, identical with himself, for the protection of created beings; and the female portion of himself he constituted Satarupa, whom the divine Manu took to wife. Their numerous descendants are afterwards mentioned. Chap. VII.

In the very next chapter of the Vishnu Purana a different account is given of the origin of Rudra. In the beginning of the Kalpa when Brahma purposed to create a son like himself, a youth of a purple complexion appeared crying. Brahma said to him, "Why dost thou weep?" "Give me a name," replied the boy, "Rudra be the name," said Brahma. As the boy still wept 7 times, Brahma gave him 7 other names; and to these 8 persons, regions, wives, and posterity belong. The 8 manifestations are Rudra, Bhava, Sarva, Isana, Pasupati, Bhima, Ugra and Mahadeva. Among their sons were Saturn, Venus, Mars, Hanuman, and Mercury.

Saraswati, the Wife of Brahma.—As nearly all Hindus marry, they thought it necessary to provide wives for their deities. Saraswati means 'watery, elegant.' In the Vedas, Saraswati is primarily a river, but is celebrated in the hymns both as a river and a deity. The Saraswati river was one boundary of Brahmavartta, the home of the early Aryans, and was then in all likelihood, a sacred river, as the Ganges has long been to their descendants. As a river goddess, Saraswati is lauded for the fertilising and purifying powers of her waters, and as the bestower of fertility, fatness, and wealth. Her position as Vách, the goddess of speech, finds no mention in the Rig-Veda, as it is recognised in the Brahmanas and the Mahabharata. In later times Saraswati is the wife of Brahma, the



goddess of speech and learning, inventress of the Sanskrit language and Deva-nagari letters, and patroness of the arts and sciences. Wilson says that "she is represented as of a white colour, without any superfluity of limbs, and not unfrequently of a graceful figure, wearing a slender crescent on her brow and sitting on a lotus."

The river is now called Sarsuti. It falls from the Himalayas, and is lost in the sands of the desert. In ancient times it flowed into the sea. The Mahabharata describes how this happened. A Brahman, named Utathya, married Bhadra, daughter of Soma, a woman of great beauty. The god Varuna carried her off from Utathya's hermitage and would not give her up to Narada, who was sent to bring her back. Utathya, greatly enraged, drank up the sea: still Varuna would not let her go. Utathya then said, "Sarasvati, disappear into the deserts, and let the land, deserted by thee, become impure." After the country had become dried up, Varuna brought back Bhadra. The sage, pleased to get back his wife, released both the world and Varuna from their sufferings.

Brahma's Heaven.—Brahma's heaven is called Brahma-loka, or Satya-loka. Translation to this world is said to exempt from future births. At the end of a hundred of Brahma's years, it is destroyed with himself.

Incidents in Brahma's History.—In the Vishnu Purana Brahma is described as worshipping Vishnu, and joining the gods in asking him to save the earth from its load of sorrow. In answer to this, Vishnu was incarnated as Krishna. The Ramayana represents Brahma as informing Rama of his divinity, and bestowing boons on that hero while still on earth. He extended his favour also to Ravana and other Rakshasas, who were descendants of his son Pulastya. In the Puranas likewise he appears as a patron

of the Asuras, and it was by his favour that the Daitya king, Bali, obtained that almost universal dominion which required the incarnation of Vishnu as the dwarf to repress. He is further represented in the Ramayana as the creator of the beautiful Ahalya, whom he gave as wife to the sage Gautama.

The Vaishnavas represent Brahma as giving homage and praise to Vishnu himself and to his form Krishna; but they make him superior to Rudra, who, they say, sprang from his forehead. The Saivas make Mahadeva or Rudra to be the creator of Brahma, and represent Brahma as worshipping the Linga and as acting as the charioteer of Rudra.

Brahma was the father of Daksha, who is said to have sprung from his thumb, and he was present at the sacrifice of that patriarch, which was disturbed by Rudra. There he had humbly to submit and appease the offended god.*

Brahma condemned to be no longer Worshipped.—There are said to be only two temples dedicated to Brahma in India, one at Lake Pushkara, near Aimore in Rajputana, the other near Idar, not far from Mount Abu. Two contradictory accounts are given of the reasons why that sentence was pronounced upon Brahma.

In the Skanda Purana there is a very indecent story about Brahma telling a lie and calling upon the wild pine to bear witness that it was true. Upon this Siva said, "Sire, as thou hast childishly and with weak understanding asserted a falsehood, let no one henceforth worship thee."

Another account is as follows:

Narada was one of the seven great Rishis. Conflicting accounts are given of his birth. One authority states that he sprang from the forehead of Brahma; the Vishnu Purana makes him a son of Kasyapa and one of Daksha's daughters. The Narada-pancharatra relates that Brahma advised his son Narada to marry. Narada censured his father as a false teacher, because devotion to Krishna was the only true means of felicity. Brahma then cursed Narada to lead a life of sensuality in subjection to women. Hearing his father's words, the Muni Narada became angry. He immediately cursed his father saying, "Thou shalt be unadored in the world, thou shalt have no votaries. Thou shalt be a prey to unlawful lusts."

As every *tirtha* in India is declared by the Brahmans in charge to be the holiest of all, it is not surprising that the same claim is made on behalf of the small lake Pushkara. It is said that Brahma having once performed a particular sacrifice there, the waters were so sanctified that the greatest sinner has only to bathe in them to be at once purified and rendered fit for admission into Brahma's heaven. The Mahabharata, Vana Parva, asserts that

a person who goes to Pushkara becomes equal to that greatly exalted deity (the god of gods). "The lotus-seated, illustrious grand-sire (Brahma) always dwells in great pleasure in this *tirtha*".*

The following are some of epithets applied to Brahma: Srashtri, 'Creator'; Dhátri, 'sustainer'; Pitámaha, 'the great father'; Lokesa, 'lord of the world'; Adi-kavi, 'the first poet.'

VISHNU.

Vishnu is considered the second of the Hindu triad, but he is not supposed to be in any way inferior to Brahma. On the contrary, his votaries claim him to be the great Cause of all. The name Vishnu is said to be derived from *vish*, to pervade. Williams supposes that the primary idea was the personification of the infinite heavenly space. Creation is ascribed to Brahma; Vishnu's special work is preservation.

Vishnu in the Rig-Veda.—Vishnu is the only one of the great gods of the Hindu triad who makes his appearance under the same name in the Veda. In the Veda, however, he is not in the first rank of gods. He is the sun in his three stations of rise, zenith, and setting. This the Vedic poets conceive of as striding through heaven at three steps. This is Vishnu's great deed, which in all his hymns is sung to his praise. It constitutes the only peculiar trait belonging to him. Concerning these steps it is said that two of them are near the habitation of men. The third none can attain, not even the bird in its flight. He took them for the benefit of mortals, that all might live safe and happy under them. The middle station, the zenith, is called Vishnu's place.†

Among the hymns in the Rig-Veda relating to Vishnu, Muir quotes the following :

16. May the gods preserve us from the place from which Vishnu strode over the seven regions of the earth. 17. Vishnu strode over this (universe); in three places he planted his step; (the world or his step was) enveloped in his dust. 18. Vishnu, the unconquerable preserver, strode three steps, thereby maintaining fixed ordinances. Book I. 22.‡

Another explanation of his three strides is that Vishnu is manifested in a three-fold form, as Agni on earth, as Indra or Vayu in the atmosphere, and as the sun in the heavens. The Aitaraya Brahmana commences with the following statement :

"Fire (Agni) has the lowest place among the gods, Vishnu the highest; between them stand all the other deities.

* Dutt's Translation, p. 121.

† Whitney's *Oriental and Linguistic Studies* 1st Ser. pp. 41,

‡ *Sanskrit Texts*, Vol. iv. pp. 63, 64.

Muir has the following remarks on the subordinate position occupied by Vishnu in the Rig-Veda :

“Vishnu’s three strides are usually understood to denote the rising, culmination, and the setting of the sun. The chief epithet applied to him is “wide-stepping” or “wide-striding.”

“Some other acts of a higher character are attributed to Vishnu. He is said to have established the heavens and the earth, to contain all the worlds in his strides ; to have with Indra made the atmosphere wide, stretched out the worlds, produced the sun, the dawn, and fire : his greatness is described as having no limit. The attributes ascribed to Vishnu in some passages are such that if these latter stood alone in the Rig-Veda, they might lead us to suppose that this deity was regarded by the Vedic Rishis as the chief of all the gods. Numerous texts, however, ascribe to Indra, Varuna, and other gods, the same high and awful attributes and functions which are spoken of as belonging to Vishnu. The hymns and verses dedicated to the praise of Indra, Agni, Mitra, Varuna etc., are extremely numerous, whilst the entire hymns and separate verses in which Vishnu is celebrated are much fewer. In many hymns Vishnu is introduced as the subject of laudation among a great crowd of other divinities, from whom he is there in no way distinguished as being in any respect superior.”*

Vishnu in the Brahmanas.—The Brahmanas, supposed to come next to the Vedas in antiquity, contain the germs of later developments.

The Dwarf Incarnation is thus related in the Satapatha Brahmana : The gods and asuras strove together. The gods were worsted, and the asuras thought ‘This world is now certainly ours.’ The gods, with Vishnu at their head, asked for a share of the earth. The asuras offered as much as Vishnu, who was a dwarf, could live upon. Vishnu expanded so that the whole earth belonged to the gods.

The same work describes how Vishnu lost his head. The gods were present at a sacrifice. Vishnu was acknowledged to be the most eminent. As he stood resting his head on the end of his bended bow, ants gnawed the bowstring, upon which the ends of the bow, starting asunder, cut off the head of Vishnu. With this headless sacrifice the gods went on worshipping and toiling.

Vishnu in the Mahabharata.—Goldstücker says :

“In the Mahabharata Vishnu is often identified with the Supreme Spirit ; but while in some portions of this poem—the different parts of which belong to different epochs of Hindu antiquity—he is regarded as the most exalted deity ; he is again, in others, represented as paying homage to Siva, and acknowledging the superiority of that god over himself. Taking, therefore, the Mahabharata as a whole, he does not occupy in this epos the exclusive supremacy which is assigned to him in the Ramayana—and still more in the Puranas especially devoted to his praise.”†

* Muir’s *Sanskrit Texts*, Vol. IV. 97, 98.

† Chambers’s *Encyclopædia*.

Vishnu in the Ramayana and Vaishnava Puranas.—In these Vishnu is exalted to be the Supreme Spirit. When the gods are in distress, with Brahma at their head, they implore the help of Vishnu. The last chapter of the Vishnu Purana says: "The world was produced from Vishnu; it exists in him; he is the cause of its continuance and cessation; he is the world." A hymn then commences as follows: "Glory to the unchangeable, holy, eternal supreme Vishnu, of one universal nature, the mighty over all; to him who is Hiranyagarbha, Hari and Sankara; the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of the world."

The Padma Purana says:

"In the beginning of creation, the great Vishnu, desirous of creating the whole world, became three fold; Creator, Preserver, Destroyer. In order to create this world, the Supreme Spirit produced from the right side of his body himself as Brahma; then, in order to preserve the world, he produced from his left side Vishnu; and in order to destroy the world, he produced from the middle of his body the eternal Siva. Some worship Brahma, others Vishnu, others Siva; but Vishnu, one yet three-fold, creates, preserves, and destroys; therefore let the pious make no difference between the three."

The same Vaishnava Purana represents Siva as admitting the superiority of Vishnu. Addressing his wife he says:

"I will acquaint thee with the real essence and form of Vishnu; know then that he is in truth Narayana, the Supreme Spirit, and Parabrahma (the great Brahma), without beginning or end, omniscient, and omnipresent, eternal, unchangeable, and supremely happy. He is Siva, Hiranyagarbha, and Surya; he is more excellent than all the gods, even than I myself. But it is impossible for me, or Brahma, or the gods to declare the greatness of Vāsudeva, the originator and lord of the universe."*

It has been shown that the term Narayana was applied by Manu to Brahma. In the Puranas the Vaishnavas have appropriated it, and even claimed that Brahma sprang from Vishnu. The following extract is from the Varaha Purana:

"The supreme god Narayana having conceived the thought of creating this universe, considered also that it was necessary that it should be protected after it was created; 'but as it is impossible for an incorporeal being to exert action, let me produce from my own essence a corporeal being, by means of whom I may protect the world.' Having thus reflected, the pre-existing Narayana created from his own substance an ungenerated and divine form on whom he bestowed these blessings:— 'Be thou the framer of all things O Vishnu! Be thou always the protector of the three worlds and the adored of all men. Be thou omniscient and almighty; and do thou at all times accomplish the wishes of Brahma and the gods.' The Supreme Spirit then resumed his essential nature. Vishnu, as he meditated on the purpose for which he had been

produced, sank into a mysterious slumber; and as in his sleep he imagined the production of various things, a lotus sprang from his navel. In the centre of that lotus Brahma appeared; and Vishnu beholding the production of his body was delighted.”*

Representations of Vishnu, etc.—Vishnu is represented as a black man, with four arms. In one hand he holds a club, in another a conch shell; in a third a chakra or discus with which he slays his enemies; in the fourth, a lotus. He wears a yellow robe and rides upon Garuda, half man, half bird. Vishnu's wife is Lakshmi, the goddess of fortune. There are different accounts of her origin. The one commonly received is that given in the Ramayana, which describes her as produced at the churning of the Milk Sea.

Vaikuntha, Vishnu's heaven, is sometimes described as on Mount Meru and at others as in the Northern Ocean. It is made entirely of gold, and is 80,000 miles in circumference. The waters of the Ganges fall from the higher heaven on the head of Dhruva, the Polar Star; from thence into the hair of the seven Rishis, and from thence they fall and form a river. On a seat glorious as the meridian sun, sitting on white lotuses, is Vishnu; and on his right hand Lakshmi, from whose body the fragrance of the lotus extends 800 miles.†

Vishnu as Mohini.—The incidents in Vishnu's history are chiefly connected with his avatars. At the churning of the ocean he is said to have assumed a very beautiful female form, called Mohini, to fascinate the asuras while the gods drank the amrit. It is related in the Bhagavata that Vishnu, at the request of Siva, again assumed the form of Mohini. Siva lusted after her, and from their union was born a son called Aiyana or Harihara putra.

AVATARAS OF VISHNU.

Goldstücker has the following general remarks on this subject:

“The large circle of myths relating to Vishnu in the epic poems and Puranas is distinguished by a feature, which, though not quite absent from the mythological history of Siva, especially characterises that of Vishnu. It arose from the idea, that whenever a great disorder, physical or moral, disturbed the world, Vishnu descended in a small portion of his essence to set it right, to restore the law, and thus to preserve the creation. Such descents of the god are called his *Avatāras* (from *ava* down and *tri* descend); and they consist in Vishnu's being supposed to have either assumed the form of some wonderful animal or superhuman being, or to have been born of human parents, in a human form, always, of course, possessed of miraculous properties. Some of

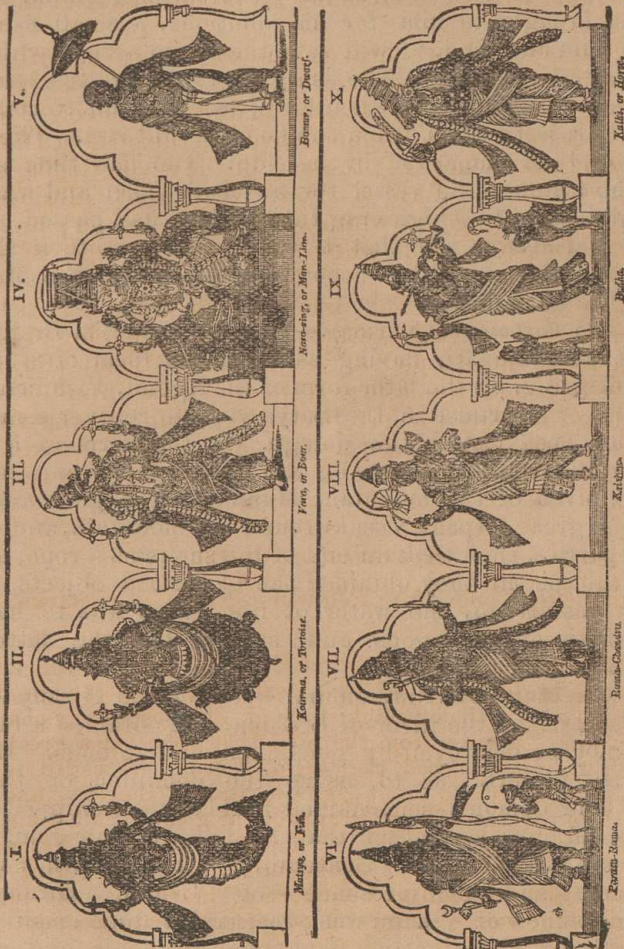
* Isidore's *Hindu Mythology*.

† Ward, from the Mahabharata.

these Avatāras are of an entirely cosmical* character; others, however, are probably based on historical events, the leading personage of which was gradually endowed with divine attributes, until he was regarded as an incarnation of the deity itself. With the exception of the last, all these Avatāras belong to the past; the last, however, has yet to come."†

The ten best known avatāras will now be described:—

1. **The Boar** (Varāha).—There are several contradictory accounts of this. The Satapatha Brahmana says that Prajapati, or Brahma, took the form of a boar to raise the earth out of the boundless waters. In the Taittiriya Aranya it is said that the earth was raised by a black boar with a hundred arms.



* Relating to the universe.

† Chambers's Encyclopædia.

In later times the Vaishnavas claimed that the boar was Vishnu. One version is that the Daitya Hiranyaksha, 'golden-eye,' dragged the earth to the bottom of the ocean. Vishnu infused part of his essence into a huge boar, dived down into the abyss, and after a contest of a thousand years slew the demon and raised up the earth. The Vana Parva of the Mahabharata, on the other hand, states that the earth was pressed down and sunk by an ever-increasing population, until the boar descended into the waters, upheaved it on one of his tusks, and made it fit to be re-inhabited.

2. **The Fish (Matsya).**—This is first mentioned in the Satapatha Brahmana. Vaivaswata, the seventh Manu, found in the water brought to him for his ablutions, a small fish, which spoke to him and said, 'I will save thee from a flood which shall sweep away all creatures'. The fish grew to a large size and had to be consigned to the Ocean, when he directed Manu to construct a ship and to resort to him when the flood should rise. The deluge came and Manu embarked in the ship. The fish then swam to Manu, who fastened the vessel to the fish's horn and was drawn along and secured to a high crag till the flood had passed.

The Vaishnavas say that it was Vishnu who took the form of a fish and thus saved, on account of his piety, the Manu, the father of the human race.

3. **The Tortoise (Kūrma).**—In the Satapatha Brahmana it is said that Prajapati, having assumed the form of a tortoise, created offspring. In the later form of the legend, Vishnu appeared in the form of a tortoise in the Satya-yuga to recover some things which had been lost in the deluge. In the form of a tortoise he placed himself at bottom of the sea of milk, and made his back the pivot of the mountain Mandara. The gods and asuras twisted the great serpent Vasuki round the mountain, and dividing into two parties, each took an end of the snake as a rope, and then churned the sea till they obtained the 14 desired objects, the first of which was *amrita*, the water of life. This was to have been divided between the gods and asuras, but the latter were defrauded of their portion.

4. **The Man-lion (Nara-simha).**—The demon Hiranya-Kasipu, 'golden dress,' by the favor of Brahma, had obtained a boon that he could not be destroyed by gods, men, and animals. Hence he became so powerful as to usurp the dominion of the three worlds. The demon's son, named Prahlada, worshipped Vishnu, which so enraged his father that he tried to kill him, but his efforts were all in vain. Contending with his son as to the omnipotence and omnipresence of Vishnu, Hiranyakasipu demanded to know of Vishnu was present in a stone of pillar in the hall, and struck it violently. To avenge Prahlada and vindicate his own majesty, Vishnu came forth from the pillar as the Nara-

simha, half-man and half-lion, and tore the arrogant Daitya king to pieces.

These four incarnations are supposed to have appeared in the first age of the world.

5. **The Dwarf** (Vámana).—The origin of this incarnation is "the three strides of Vishnu," spoken of in the Rig-Veda. In the Treta-yuga, or second age, the Daitya King Bali had, by his devotions and austerities, acquired the dominion of the three worlds, and the gods were shorn of their power and dignity. To remedy this, Vishnu was born as a diminutive son of Kasyapa and Aditi. The dwarf appeared before Bali, and begged of him as much land as he could step over in three paces. When his request was granted, the dwarf's form expanded, and he took two strides over heaven and earth. Respecting the virtues of the king, he then stopped, leaving the dominion of Pátála to Bali.

In the next three incarnations we have the heroic element.

6. **Parasu-rama** (Rama with the axe).—He was so called from an axe, *parasu*, said to have been given to him by Siva. He was a Brahman, the son of Jamadagni and Renuká. Kartavirya, a Kshatriya king, had a thousand arms. The king visited the hermitage of Jamadagni in the absence of the sage and was hospitably entertained by his wife, but when he departed he carried off a sacrificial calf. Parasu-rama enraged at this, pursued Karta-virya and slew him. In retaliation the sons of Karta-virya killed Jamadagni. Parasurama then vowed vengeance against them and the whole Kshatriya race. Thrice seven times did he clear the earth of the Kshatriya caste, and he filled with their blood the five large lakes of Samanta-panchaka. He then gave the earth to Kasyapa, and retired to the Mahendra mountain.

In the Ramayana Parasu-rama challenges Rama to a trial of strength, but is defeated.

7. **Rama-chandra** (The moon-like* Rama).—Rama, the hero of the Ramayana, is the son of Dasaratha, king of Ayodhya, of the Solar race, and was born in the Treta-yuga for the purpose of destroying Ravana, the tyrant demon who reigned in Ceylon.

In the Ramayana, as originally written, Rama is only a hero, endued with superhuman powers. He frankly confesses that he believes himself to be only a mortal. In the Yuddha-Kanda Brahma thus addresses Rama: "Thou art the god, the glorious lord Narayana, armed with the discus. Thou art the one-horned boar, the conqueror of thy foes, past and future, the true imperishable Brahma, both in the middle and end; Sita is Lakshmi." In the Uttara Kanda Brahma again says, "Enter thine own body as Vishnu. For thou art the abode of the worlds." Such passages are considered by Oriental scholars to be later additions.

* Chandra is often added names to express beauty.

8. **Krishna** (The Black).—This is the most popular of all the later deities, and has obtained such pre-eminence that his votaries look upon him, not simply as an incarnation, but as a perfect manifestation of Vishnu. This descent, at the end of the *Dvāpar*, or third age of the world, was for the destruction of the tyrant Kansa, the representative of the principle of evil as Ravana was in the previous incarnation.

Goldstücker says :

“Krishna is the most interesting incarnation of Vishnu, both on account of the opportunity which it affords to trace in Hindu antiquity the gradual transformation of mortal heroes into representatives of God, and on account of the numerous legends connected with it as well as the influence which it exercised on the Vaishnavacult. In the *Mahabharata* Krishna is sometimes represented as paying homage to Siva, and therefore acknowledging his own inferiority to that deity, or as recommending the worship of Uma, the consort of Siva, and as receiving boons from both these deities. In some passages, again, he bears merely the character of a hero endowed with extraordinary powers, and in others his divine nature is even disputed or denied by adversaries, though they are eventually punished for their unbelief. As the intimate ally of Arjuna, he claims the rank of the supreme deity ; but there are other passages, again, in the *Mahabharata* in which the same claim of Siva is admitted, and an attempt is made at compromising their rival claims, by declaring both deities one and the same. Sometimes, moreover, Krishna is in this Epos declared to represent merely a very small portion—‘a portion of a portion’ as it is called—of the divine essence of Vishnu. In the *Mahabharata*, therefore, which is silent also regarding many adventures in Krishna’s life fully detailed in the *Puranas*, the worship of Vishnu in this incarnation was by no means so generally admitted or settled as it is in many *Puranas* of the Vaishnava Sect ; nor was there at that period that consistency in the conception of a Krishna Avatara which is traceable in the late works.”*

In the *Anusāsana Parva* (verses 1002—1018) Krishna lauds Siva as the supreme Deity. Siva then told him to choose eight boons. Among those asked by Krishna were a lakh of sons. Uma next offered Krishna eight boons ; in addition to conferring which she superadded 16,000 wives. In the same *Parva* *Vāsudeva* says : “There is nothing, O king, which exists superior to Mahadeva ; for he is the most excellent of beings in all these worlds.”

On the other hand in the *Vana Parva* Arjuna says to Krishna : “At the commencement of the yuga, Brahma, the chief of things movable and immovable, sprang from the lotus issuing from his navel. From the forehead of Hari was produced Samba (Siva), wielding the trident and three eyes. Thus even those two lords of the gods (Brahma and Siva) are sprung from thy body and they execute thy commands.”

Krishna appears in two very different characters. The popular

* *Chambers's Encyclopædia.*

idea of him is found in the Bhagavat Purana. He is represented as mischievous and disobedient as a child, guilty of theft and lying, stealing the clothes of the gopis and sporting with them, as having 8 queens and 16,100 wives, who burnt up Kasi, destroying its inhabitants, and who finished his course by slaying a great number of his 180,000 sons.

In the Bhagavad Gita, included in the Bishma Parva of the Mahabharata, there is no reference to the disgraceful conduct of Krishna as described in the Puranas; but he discourses to Arjuna on the Vedanta philosophy, and reveals himself as the Supreme Being with a lustre greater than that of a thousand suns bursting forth at once into the sky.

"According to some," says Monier Williams, "Krishna ought not to be reckoned as one of the ten avataras or descents of portions of Vishnu's essence; for he was nothing short of Vishnu's whole essence. Those who hold this doctrine substitute Balarama, 'The strong Rama', the elder brother of Krishna, as the eighth incarnation of Vishnu. This Balarama is more usually regarded as an incarnation of the great serpent Sesha."*

9. **Buddha.**—"This incarnation of Vishnu", says Goldstücker, "is originally foreign to the cycle of the avataras of Vishnu, and therefore is only briefly alluded to in some of the Puranas. Where this is done, the intention must have been to effect a compromise between Brahmanism and Buddhism, by trying to represent the latter religion as not irreconcilably antagonistic to the former." "The Brahmanical writers were far too shrewd to admit that one who could influence men as Buddha did could be other than an incarnation of deity; and as his influence was in favor of teaching opposed to their own, which was for a time prohibited throughout the country, they cleverly say that it was to mislead the enemies of the gods that Buddha promulgated his doctrine, that they, becoming weak and wicked through their errors, might fall an easy prey."†

One theory was that Vishnu, in his compassion for animals, descended as the sceptical Buddha that he might bring discredit on Vedic sacrifices. A second was that wicked men might bring destruction on themselves by accepting Buddhism, and denying the supremacy of the gods.

The Brahmins appropriated Buddha as far as it suited their own purpose.

10. **Kalki or Kalkin.**—This descent is not to appear till the close of the Kali age, when the world has become wholly depraved. He is then to be revealed in the sky, seated on a white horse, with a drawn sword blazing like a comet, for the final destruction of the wicked, for the redemption of the gods, for the renovation of all creation, and restoration of the Satya Yuga.

* *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, p. 112. † Wilkins' *Hindu Mythology*, p. 190.

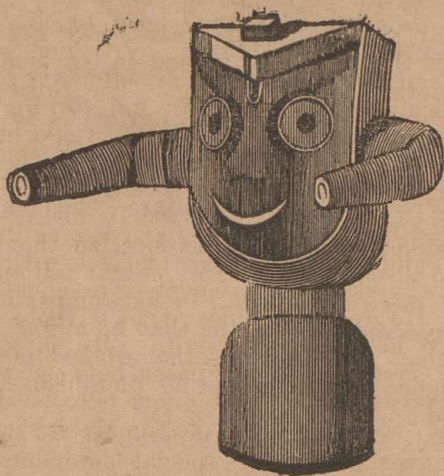
It is a remarkable fact that a belief in a coming Redeemer seems to exist in all the great religions. In Buddhism there is the future Buddha; in Islam, the Mahdi; in Christianity, Jesus Christ.

The above are the usually recognised Avataras, but the number is sometimes extended. The Bhagavad Purana enumerates 22 incarnations; but adds, "The incarnations of Vishnu are innumerable, like the rivulets flowing from an inexhaustible lake. Rishis, Manus, sons of Manus, Prajapatis, are all portions of him."

JAGANNATH.

JAGANNATH, 'Lord of the world,' is a form of Krishna especially worshipped at Puri, in Orissa. The following legend thus explains the origin of the image:

When Krishna was accidentally shot by the hunter Jara, his bones were left by him to rot under the tree where he died, until some pious person collected them and placed them in a box. There they remained until Indradhumna, a king who was earnestly striving to propitiate Vishnu, was directed to form an image and place in it these bones, with the assurance that he would obtain a rich reward for his religious deed. When Indradhumna, wished to follow his advice, he prayed to Visvakarma to assist him in making the image.



The architect of the gods consented to do this, but was most careful in explaining to the king, that if any one looked at him whilst he was at work, he would immediately desist, and leave the image in an unfinished state. The king promised to observe this condition, and Visvakarma commenced his work. In one night he raised a grand temple on the blue mountains of Orissa, and was working at the image in the temple. The king, after restraining his impatience for

15 days, foolishly tried to see the god at work. He at once discontinued as he had said, and the image was left with a very ugly face and without hands or feet. The king, being exceedingly grieved as he saw the result of his curiosity, went in his distress to Brahma, who comforted him with the promise that he would render the image famous in its present form. The king invited the gods to be present at its inauguration. Brahma himself officiated as priest, gave eyes and a soul to the god, and thus the form of Jagannath was completely established.*

The picture of the image is copied from one in Dr. Rajendralala Mitra's *Antiquities of Orissa*, and is an exact likeness. He describes the image as "*the most hideous caricature of the human face divine.*" In the Audience Hall there are some human figures which Dr. Mitra says are "disgustingly obscene." Attached to the temple there are about 120 dancing girls.

The image of Jagannath is not only worshipped in the temple, but three days each year it is exposed to view. On the first of these days, called the Snana Yatra (Bathing Festival) the idol is taken from its shrine, and on a lofty platform, in sight of vast multitudes, is bathed by the priests. It is pretended that a cold is thus given, and the image is taken to the Sick Chamber for a fortnight. The real object is to wash off the dust and soot contracted during the year. The Ratha Yatra (Car Festival,) is next celebrated, when the image is placed in an immense car and taken to Jagannath's country house. The third is the Return Festival. The great desire of the pilgrims is to see the image, which is supposed to cleanse from all sin; but religious merit is also supposed to be obtained by assisting to draw the car.

Vaishnava Priests and Ceremonies.—The founder of each Vaishnava sect, called acharya, is regarded as little inferior to Krishna himself, and may even be identified with him. As the living teacher of the day, if not elevated to equal rank, he is a greater reality. He receives homage as a visible and tangible mediator between heaven and earth. He is to the mass of Vaishnavas even more than a mediator between themselves and God. He is the present god whose anger is to be deprecated and favour conciliated, because they make themselves instantly felt.

The Vaishnavas require a special ceremony of initiation, (dīkshā), accompanied by the repetition of a formula of words significant of reverence for either Krishna or Rama. Thus 'homage to the divine son of Vasudeva (Om namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya,) 'homage to the adorable Rama' (Śrī Rāmāya namaḥ), or the eight-syllabled formula, 'adorable Krishna, is my refuge' (Śrī Krishnah Saranam mama).

* Ward's *Hindus*.

Children are admitted to the religion of Vishnu at the age of 6 or 7 years, or by some sects, earlier. A rosary (kanthí) of 108 beads, usually made of tulsi wood, is passed round their necks by the Guru, and they are taught the use of one of the foregoing formulas.

Vaishnavas place perpendicular coloured marks on the forehead called Urdhva-pundra. They are supposed to denote the impress of either one or both the feet of Vishnu, and to possess great efficacy in shielding from evil influences and delivering from sin. In addition to these frontal marks, most of the sects brand the breast and arms with the circular symbol and conch shells of Vishnu.

Names of Vishnu.—Vishnu's worshippers have endowed him with a thousand names and epithets. The repetition of any or all of these names (náma sankírtana), either with or without the help of a rosary, constitutes an important part of daily worship, and is productive of vast stores of religious merit. Some of the most common names are the following: Ananta, 'the endless'; Chaturbhuja, 'four armed'; Dámódara, 'bound round the belly with a rope,' as Krishna; Govinda or Gopála, 'the cowkeeper'; Hari; Kesava, 'the hairy, the radiant'; Madhu-súdana, 'destroyer of Madhu'; Náráyana, 'who moves on the waters'; Purushottama, 'the highest of men'; etc.*

The following story is told showing the benefit of repeating a name of Vishnu:

Ajamila had committed the most enormous crimes, having killed cows and Brahmans, drunk spirits, and lived in the practice of evil all his days. He had four sons; the name of one was Narayana. In the hour of death, Ajamila was very thirsty, and thus called to his son: "Narayana, Narayana, Narayana, give me some water." After his death, the messengers of Yama seized him, and were about to drag him to a place of punishment; when Vishnu's messengers came to rescue him. A furious battle took place; but Vishnu's messengers were victorious, and carried off Ajamila to Vishnu's heaven. Yama demanded of Vishnu an explanation of this affair. Vishnu reminded him that however wicked this man might have been, he had repeated the name Narayana in his last moments; and that if any man, either when laughing or by accident, or in anger, or even in derision, repeated the name of Vishnu, he would certainly go to heaven, though like Ajamila, covered with crimes, and without a single meritorious deed to be laid in the balance against them.

SIVA.

The name of SIVA, the third of the Hindu triad, does not occur in the Vedas; but to gain for him greater reverence, he is declared to be the Rudra of the Vedas.

The name Rudra, means 'a howler or roarer.' In a hymn of the Rig-Veda he is thus addressed :

"This exhilarating hymn, sweeter than the sweetest, is uttered to Rudra, the father of the Maruts. Be gracious to ourselves, our children, and descendants. Slay neither our great, nor our small, neither our growing, nor our grown; injure not, Rudra, our dear selves. Injure us not in our children and descendants, nor in our men, nor in our cattle, nor in our horses." I. 114.

In some hymns Rudra is identified with Agni; in others they are distinct.

Different accounts are given of Rudra's origin. One of them in the Satapatha Brahmana is as follows: The lord of beings was a householder and Ushas (the Dawn) was his wife. A boy was born to them in a year. The boy wept. Prajapati said to him, 'Boy, why dost thou weep since thou hast been born after toil and austerity?' The boy said, 'My evil has not been taken away, and a name has not been given to me; give me a name.' Prajapati said, 'Thou art Rudra.' Inasmuch as he gave him that name, Agni became his form, for Rudra is Agni. He was called Rudra, because he wept (from *rud*, to weep.) Rudra was not satisfied with one name; but continued begging till he obtained seven more.*

In the Veda, says Williams:

"Rudra is an important deity, whose anger is to be dreaded, and whose favour is to be propitiated. Probably the first office, or function, connected with him was that of directing and controlling the rage of the howling storm. As god of gale and tempest he is father of the destructive storm-winds, who are also called Rudras, and generally identified with the Maruts. And in this character Rudra is closely connected with the Vedic rain-god (Indra), and with the still more highly esteemed Vedic deity Fire (Agni), which, as a destroying agent, rages and crackles like the roaring tempest. He is also nearly related to Time (Kāla), the all-consumer, and indeed afterwards identified with him. He has also a more agreeable aspect even in the Veda. He is not merely the awful and inauspicious god whose thousand shafts bring death of disease over men and cattle. He is also addressed as a healer, as a benefactor, as a benevolent and auspicious being."

The Satarudriya hymn of the Yajur Veda is addressed to Rudra in his hundred aspects, and surrounded by his countless hosts of attendants. He is described as possessing many contradictory, incongruous, grotesque, and wholly ungodlike attributes. He is a killer and deliverer: he is tall and dwarfish; he dwells in the mountains, and is the owner of troops (*gana-pati*) of servants who traverse the earth obeying his orders; he is lord of ghosts, goblins and spirits; he is patron of thieves, and robbers; and is himself a thief, robber, and deceiver.

At present nearly all the degrading characteristics of the God have been transferred to the form of his consort, called Kali. This goddess is to this day the patron of thieves, robbers, thugs, murderers, and every kind of infamous rascal.*

Weber says, "At the period when the Satarudriya was composed, the blending of the two destructive deities (Storm and Fire) had evidently taken place; and the epithets which are there assigned to Rudra, lead us back partly to himself and partly to Agni.†

In the Rig-Veda Rudra is addressed as the father of the Maruts, or storm gods; but various origins are assigned to them. They are also called sons and brothers of Indra, sons of the ocean, sons of heaven, sons of earth. The number of them in one place is said to be thrice sixty and in another only 27.

Daksha's Sacrifice.—Rudra or Siva, is said to have married Uma, the daughter of Daksha, who appears afterwards as Parvati, Durga, Kali, etc. Daksha was much dissatisfied with his son-in-law. He said that Siva roamed about dreadful cemeteries, attended by hosts of ghosts and spirits, like a madman with dishevelled hair, wearing a garland of skulls, pretending to be Siva (auspicious) but in reality Asiva (inauspicious). One day as Uma was sitting with her husband on Mount Kailasa she saw the gods passing by in their chariots. She was told that they were going at her father's invitation to a great sacrifice, which he was about to make. As Siva had offended Daksha, he was not invited. The Bhagavata says that Uma was most anxious to attend the sacrifice, although Siva dissuaded her. Disregarding the warning, Uma went. Slighted by her father, she reproached him for his hostility to her husband, and ended by entering fire. Seeing this, Siva's attendants, who had followed her, rush on Daksha to slay him. This was prevented and Siva's followers were put to flight. When Siva heard of Uma's death as a Sati, he was greatly enraged. From a lock of his hair which he tore out, a gigantic demon arose (named Virabhadra), whom he commanded to destroy Daksha and his sacrifice. Along with him went hundreds and thousands of demi-gods whom Siva had created. A terrible catastrophe followed; the mountains tottered, the earth shook, the winds roared, the depths of the sea were disturbed. Virabhadra plucked out Bhrigu's beard, tore out Bhaga's eyes, knocked out Pushan's teeth, cut off Daksha's head and threw it into the sacrificial fire. In their distress the gods resort to Brahma for advice, who advised to propitiate Siva. For this purpose they go to Kailasa, where they see Siva carrying the linga desired by devotees, ashes, a staff, a tuft of hair, an antelope's skin, and a finger's breadth of the moon,

* Abridged from *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, pp. 76, 77.

† Quoted by Muir's *Sanskrit Texts*, vol. iv. p. 397.

his body shining like an evening cloud. Siva relented. Daksha was restored to life, and as his head could not be found, it was replaced by that of a goat. Daksha worshipped Siva, and Uma, who had given herself up to the flames, was reborn as Parvati, daughter of Himavat, the God of the Himalayas.

The Vaishnavas give a different termination to the story. The Harivansa says that the sacrifice was destroyed and the gods fled in dismay till Vishnu intervened, and seizing Siva by the throat compelled him to desist and acknowledge his master.

"This legend," says Wilson, "is obviously intended to intimate a struggle between the worshippers of Siva and Vishnu, in which at first the latter, but finally the former, acquired the ascendancy."

Siva's Residence.—Siva's heaven is supposed to be Kailása, a mountain in the Himalayas, north of lake Manasa, where he dwells with his countless troops (ganas) of servants. It is also the abode of Kuvera, god of wealth, who is in a similar manner surrounded by his attendants, the Yakshas. To Kailása Siva's worshippers hope to be ultimately transported, and there he lives with his wife Parvati (also called Durga, Kali, Uma, Bhavání, Sita, etc.) with the divine hero Virabhadra, who is a manifestation of his own energy, and with his two sons Skanda and Ganesa. The latter two control Siva's troops, leading some to battle against evil demons, and restraining others who are themselves mischievous imps, and would turn the whole world into a scene of confusion unless kept in check. It is probable that in surrounding the god Rudra-Siva with armies of demons and impish attendants, and making his sons lead and control them, Hindu mythologists merely gave expression to an idea inveterate in the Indian mind, that all disease, destruction, and dissolution are the result of demoniacal agency."*

Appearance.—Siva is sometimes represented with five faces (Panch-anana) sometimes with one face with three eyes. The Mahabharata gives the following account of the origin of the third eye. As Siva was seated in the Himalayas where he had been engaged in austerities, Uma, dressed as an ascetic, came up behind him, and playfully put her hands over his eyes. Suddenly the world became darkened and lifeless. The gloom, however, was as suddenly dispelled by a great flame which burst from Siva's forehead, in which a third eye, luminous as the sun, was formed. By the fire of that eye, the mountain was scorched, and everything upon it consumed. Uma hereupon stood in a submissive attitude before her husband, when in a moment, the Himalaya was restored to its former condition.

* William's *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, p. 79.

Siva is commonly represented with a moon's crescent above his forehead, a serpent around his neck, and a second necklace of skulls, with numerous other serpents about his person. His body is generally covered with ashes, and his hair thickly matted together, and gathered above his forehead into a coil, so as to project like a horn. On the top of it he bears the Ganges, the rush of which he intercepted in its descent from Vishnu's foot; that the earth might not be crushed by the weight of the falling stream. His complexion is sometimes white, from the reflection of the snows of Kailāsa, sometimes dark, from his identification with the dark destroyer Time (Kāla). His throat is blue from the stain of the deadly poison, which would have destroyed the world had not Siva, in compassion for the human race, undertaken to drink it up, on its production from the churning of the ocean.

Siva rides on a white bull (called Nandi), images of which are often placed outside his shrines. At the death of a follower of Siva, if his friends are pious and can afford it, they set a bullock loose, and allow it to wander at will. By the Hindus generally it is considered a meritorious act to feed these sacred bulls, and a sin to injure them. In country places many of these animals are to be seen, and they become a great nuisance to the cultivators into whose fields they wander; for though they do much damage, as they have no owner, no compensation can be obtained.

Siva is sometimes represented clothed in a deer skin, sometimes in the skin of a tiger alleged to have been formerly killed by him when created by the magical arts of some Rishis, who tried to destroy the god because his beauty had attracted the amorous glances of their wives. Sometimes, again, he appears wearing an elephant's skin which had belonged to a demon of immense power, named Gaya, whom he conquered and slew. As Siva is constantly engaged in battle with mighty demons, he is armed with special weapons, suited to his warlike needs. He carries a three-pronged trident (*trisūla*); a bow, a thunderbolt (*vajra*) &c. He also holds in his hand a noose for binding his enemies and a kind of drum, called *damaru*, which he uses as a musical instrument to keep time in dancing.

Siva's Characters.—His functions, as shown by his 1008 names, are innumerable, but Williams names five as the principal:

1. *The Destroyer.*—At the end of every Kalpa, Siva is supposed to annihilate, not merely men and all created things, but even the gods. He is then called Rudra, Mahā Kāla. One legend makes him bear the bones and skulls of the gods as ornaments and garlands. Another account says that when he burnt up the gods by a flash from his central eye, he rubbed their ashes upon his body; whence the use of ashes is considered of great importance in his worship.

2. *The Reproductive Power of Nature.*—He is supposed to reproduce after destruction, and as such he is worshipped as if he were the creator. Under this form he is represented by the linga, sometimes accompanied by the yoni, the female organ.

The worship of the linga was probably adopted from some aboriginal tribe. Several legends are given to explain how it came to be the representative of Siva. The Padma Purana says that it was the result of a curse pronounced by Bhrigu. When Bhrigu was sent by the Rishis to discover which of the three gods was the greatest, he came to Siva's abode. Wishing at once to enter, he was prevented by a doorkeeper, who informed him that as his master was with Devi his wife, it was impossible for him to enter at present. After waiting for some time, Bhrigu's patience being exhausted, he said: "Since thou, O Sankara! hast treated me with contempt in preferring the embraces of Parvati, your forms of worship shall be the Linga and Yoni."*

The Vamana Purana gives a different account. After the death of Uma at Daksha's sacrifice, Siva wandered about like a madman. He travelled from hermitage to hermitage, but could find no rest. When the hermit's wives saw him, they fell in love with him, and followed him from place to place. Their husbands enraged at this, cursed the god and by this means deprived him of his manhood. A great commotion through the world followed, so that Brahma and Vishnu interceded with the hermits on Siva's behalf. They agreed to withdraw their curse on condition that Siva should be represented by the Linga; and thus it became an object of worship to gods and men.

3. *The typical Ascetic.*—Siva is supposed to have attained the highest perfection in austerity and abstract meditation. Hence he is called Mahá-tapáh, Maha-Yogí. In this character he appears quite naked (Dig-ambara) with only one face, with ash-besmeared body, and matted hair, sitting in profound meditation under a tree, and often under a canopy formed by a serpent's head. There he is supposed to remain passionless, motionless, immovable as the trunk of a tree (sthánu), and perhaps rooted to the same spot for millions of years.

The Vamana Purana thus explains why Siva became an ascetic. As already described, Siva, in anger, cut off Brahma's fifth head; but when he tried to throw the head to the ground, it would not fall but remained in his hand. Siva wandered about from one place of pilgrimage to another, to get rid of the head, but it clung to him till he reached Benares. Hence the peculiar sanctity of Benares. It was in his attempt to get free from the sin of Brahmanicide that Siva became a wandering mendicant.

* Kennedy's *Hindu Mythology*.

4. *The learned Sage*.—The whole grammar of Panini, the greatest of Indian grammarians, is supposed to have been revealed to him by Siva. The first 14 Sutras are called the Siva-Sutras. In this character he is represented as a Brahman wearing the Brahmanical thread, well-skilled in the Veda. A verse from the ancient version of Manu says: "Siva is the god of the Brahmans, Krishna of the Kshatriyas, Brahma of the Vaisyas, and Ganesa of Sudras."

5. *Lord of Demons and Dancers*.—As such he is named Bhutasvara and Natesvara. In these characters he haunts cemeteries and burning-grounds, wearing serpents around his head and skulls for a necklace, attended by troops of imps. He sometimes indulges in revelling, and, heated with drink, dances furiously with his wife Devi the dance called Tandava, while troops of drunken imps caper around them. The worshippers of Siva in this character usually belong to the Saktas, some of whom are given to abominable practices.

Siva and Durga.—The home life of Siva and his spouse does not appear to have been of the happiest. As they could each bestow gifts upon their worshippers, it sometimes happened that the one wanted to bless whom the other wished to curse. In the contest between Rama and Ravana, Siva favoured the former and Durga the latter. Durga poured forth a torrent of abuse, calling Siva a withered old man, who smoked intoxicating herbs, lived in cemeteries, and covered himself with ashes, and asked if he thought she would accompany him on such an errand. Siva now gets angry, and reminds his wife that she was only a woman and therefore could know nothing; and further that she does not act like a woman because she wandered about from place to place, engaged in war, was a drunkard, spent her time in the company of degraded beings, killed giants, drank their blood, and hung their skulls around her neck. Durga became so enraged at these reproaches, that the gods were frightened, and entreated Rama to join them in supplication to her, or Ravana would never be destroyed. He did so; she became propitious, and consented to the destruction of the demon. Durga is represented in the Sivopâkhyana as being exceedingly jealous because her husband, in his begging excursions, visited the quarters of the town inhabited by women of ill-fame.*

Siva and Parvati Gambling.—The following story is from the Skanda Purana:

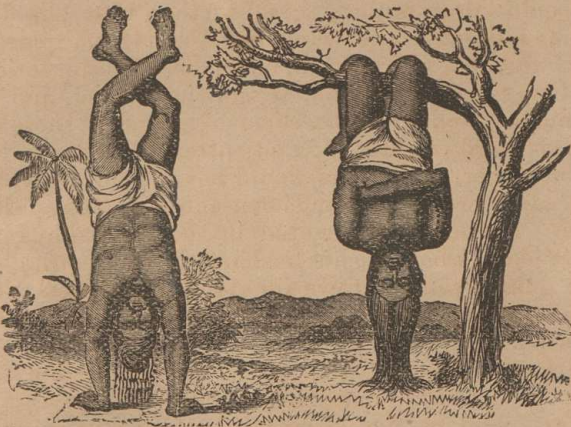
Siva, having invited the discus-armed Vishnu to sit as a witness, proposed to the matchless Parvati to have a game at dice. "If you lose," said he, "give me all the jewels you are wearing. If you win you shall have the peerless Arddhachandra and all my other ornaments." The frontal-eyed Siva first cast the dice and

Parvati followed. He who would not have suffered defeat even with Vishnu and Brahma as his antagonists, lost the game to Parvati. Upon this Siva mockingly said to Parvati, "Instead of conquering me, you are yourselves beaten; give me now, according to agreement, your necklace and other jewels." The radiant Vishnu immediately chimed in, saying, the honour of winning the game belongs to Siva. Thereupon Parvati, with cloud-like tresses, became enraged, and charged them with treachery.

Hari-Hara.—The Vaishnava Puranas contend for the superiority of Vishnu over Siva, while the opposite is maintained in the Saiva Puranas. The following legend teaches their unity. One day when Lakshmi and Durga were sitting together in the presence of Siva, Lakshmi contended that her husband was greater than Siva, because Siva had worshipped him. As they were conversing, Vishnu himself appeared, and in order to convince his wife that he and Siva were equal entered the body of Siva and they became one. Siva is represented on one side and Vishnu on the other.

Ardha-nari.—Siva is sometimes represented as half-male, half female, the linga and yoni being their symbols.

Saiva Ascetics.—As Siva himself lived the life of an ascetic and practised severe penance, it is believed that a similar life is pleasing to him now. Hence many Saivites practise great austerities and resort to cruel rites as a means of gaining his favour. Wandering throughout India are tens of thousands of sannyasis, who subsist upon charity, and expose themselves to cold and heat, in the belief that their life is pleasing to this deity. Some of them inflict upon themselves great physical pain by retaining their arms



SAIVA ASCETICS.

or legs in one posture for years; others allow the thumb nail to grow through their fingers, others gaze into the sun until they become blind, others again impose a vow of silence upon themselves. At

certain festivals held in honor of Siva, the lower orders of the people used to swing from bamboos, hanging by iron hooks forced into their bodies, whilst others threw themselves from a height upon sharp knives. At these times an intoxicating drug from hemp is freely indulged in ; the authority for this practice being the life of Siva as described in the Puranas.



SAIVA SANNYASI.

Of these ascetics the most disgusting are the Aghorapanthis, who propitiate Siva by their revolting diet, feeding on filth and dung of different kinds. Some, it is said, eat corpses stolen from Muhammadan burial-grounds. The head of the Aghoris subsists on scorpions, lizards, and loathsome insects left to putrify in a dead man's skull. All these practices arise from perverted ideas of God and what is pleasing to Him.

Take the case of a *sannyási*. What good does he do? Most men become *sannyási*s because they are too lazy to work, and can get an easy living by preying upon the industrious. The withered arm, the vow of silence, &c. are merely devices to get more money. Such vows are sins—not acts of merit. Suppose a servant rendered useless some of the tools given to him to work with, would he be praised? God has given us arms to provide food for ourselves, our families, and the poor; He has given us the gift of speech that we may comfort the sorrowful, instruct the ignorant. The withered arm and vow of silence defeat these ends. It would be noble for a man to venture into a burning house to rescue children; but it is worse than useless for a man to sit in the middle of blazing fires.

Hindus are generally cleanly; many of them bathe every day; yet, strange to say, matted hair, a filthy dress, and a body smeared with ashes, are considered some of the marks of a holy man. A natural sense of modesty leads certain parts of the body to be covered. Some *sannyási*s, however, as a token of superior sanctity, go about perfectly naked. A man of this description, who had also taken a vow of silence, made his way into Madras, where he was very properly taken up by the police.

Saiva *sannyási*s profess to be imitating Siva, one of whose epithets in *digambara*, clothed with space or perfectly naked. The matted hair and ash-besmeared body are also copied from Siva. Still worse, Siva is described as being reproved by Parvati for going among prostitutes; he is said to have been intoxicated with ganja and bhang. It is well known that many *sannyási*s imitate Siva also in these respects.

The wickedness of *sannyási*s is shown by their threatening to curse those who refuse to give them alms. A truly good man would go away quietly; even if reviled, he would bless rather than curse.

CONTESTS BETWEEN VISHNU AND SIVA.

As already mentioned, Vishnu in the Vedas occupies a secondary place. Krishna is first represented simply as a hero, endued with superhuman powers. In the Vaishnava Puranas he is exalted as the Supreme Being. The Vishnu Purana relates that when Bana, a thousand-handed Asura, and all the Asuras assisted by Siva and Kartikeya fought with Krishna, he defeated them all. Siva, no

longer able to fight, sat down in his car, while Kartikeya took to flight, and Krishna, with his discus lopped off the thousand arms of Bana.

It has been mentioned that at Daksha's sacrifice, one version is that Vishnu seized Siva by the neck and compelled him to acknowledge him as master.

On the other hand Saiva Puranas exalt Siva over Vishnu.

TRIMURTI.

Trimurti, 'triple form,' denotes the Hindu triad. This was foreshadowed in the Vedic association of the three gods, Agni, Vayu, and Surya. The triad consists of Brahma, Siva and Vishnu, the representatives of the creative, destructive, and preservative principles. Brahma is the embodiment of the Rajo-guna, the quality of passion or desire, by which the world was called into being; Siva is the embodied Tamo-guna, the attribute of darkness or wrath, and the destructive fire by which the earth is annihilated; and Vishnu is the embodied Satwa-guna, or property of mercy and goodness by which the world is preserved.

The Padma Purana, which is a Vaishnava work and gives the supremacy to Vishnu, says, 'In the beginning of creation, the great Vishnu, desirous of creating the whole world, became three-fold; creator, preserver, and destroyer. In order to create the world, the supreme spirit produced from the right side of his body himself as Brahma, then in order to preserve the world he produced from the left side of his body Vishnu; and in order to destroy the world he produced from the middle of his body the eternal Siva. Some worship Brahma, others Vishnu, others Siva; but Vishnu,



TRIMURTI.

THE HINDU TRIAD