

A Reader in Nineteenth Century Historical Indo-European Linguistics

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CHAPTER ONE

SIR WILLIAM JONES

THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY DISCOURSE, ON THE HINDUS

Delivered 2 February, 1786. *Works* I, pp. 19-34.

Editor's Introduction

Sir William Jones's celebrated discourse is given here in full to illustrate the context from which linguistics developed in the nineteenth century. With his contemporaries, Jones was interested in better knowledge of ancient history. In the pursuit of this knowledge, language was only one means. The commemorative address of his successor as president of the Asiatick Society, Sir John Shore, states explicitly that for Jones language was a tool, not an end in itself. "But the judgement of Sir William Jones was too discerning to consider language in any other light than as the key of science, and he would have despised the reputation of a mere linguist. Knowledge and truth, were the object of all his studies, and his ambition was to be useful to mankind; with these views, he extended his researches to all languages, nations, and times." (*Works* I.p.v.) A glance at the other annual discourses supports this statement on Jones's wide interests and the subsidiary position of linguists, which it maintained to the middle of the nineteenth century. Yet the "Desiderata" which Shore found among his papers may indicate that Jones had planned to spend additional time on linguistics: the third desideratum is "A Grammar of the Sanscrit Language, from Panini, etc."; the fourth, "A Dictionary of the Sanscrit Language, from thirty-two original Vocabularies and Niructi."

These proposed undertakings, and citations from his "Dissertation on the Orthography of Asiatick Words in Roman Letters" (*Works* I. pp. 175-228) may indicate that Jones deserves a larger reputation than that for stimulating study of the Indo-European languages and historical linguistics. The views in his third discourse on the origin of our writing system and Devanagari are accurate; the following excerpts from the "Dissertation" indicate a knowledge of phonetics comparable with that of Grimm's successors.

It would be superfluous to discourse on the organs of speech, which have been a thousand times dissected, and as often described by musicians or anatomists; and the several powers of which every man may perceive either by the touch or by sight, if he will attentively observe another person pronouncing the different classes of letters, or pronounce them himself distinctly before a mirror: but a short analysis of articulate sounds may be proper to introduce an examination of every separate symbol.

All things abound with error, as the old searchers for truth remarked with despondence; but it is really deplorable, that our first step from total ignorance should be into gross inaccuracy, and that we should begin our education in England with learning to read the five vowels, two of which, as we are taught to pronounce them, are clearly diphthongs. There are, indeed, five simple vocal sounds in our language, as in that of Rome; which occur in the words *an innocent bull*, though not precisely in their natural order, for we have retained the true arrangement of the letters, while we capriciously disarrange them in pronunciation; so that our eyes are satisfied, and our ears disappointed. The primary elements of articulation are the soft and hard breathings, the spiritus lenis and spiritus asper of the Latin Grammarians. If the lips be opened ever so little, the breath suffered gently to pass through them, and the feeblest utterance attempted, a sound is formed of so simple a nature, that, when lengthened, it continues nearly the same, except that, by the least acuteness in the voice it becomes a cry, and is probably the first sound uttered by infants; but if, while this element is articulated, the breath be forced with an effort through the lips, we form an aspirate more or less harsh in proportion to the force exerted. When, in pronouncing the simple vowel, we open our lips wider, we express a sound completely articulated, which most nations have agreed to place the first in their symbolical systems: by opening them wider still with the corners of them a little drawn back, we give birth to the second of the Roman vowels, and by a large aperture, with a farther inflexion of the lips and a higher elevation of the

tongue, we utter the third of them. By pursing up our lips in the least degree, we convert the simple element into another sound of the same nature with the first vowel, and easily confounded with it in a broad pronunciation: when this new sound is lengthened, it approaches very nearly to the fourth vowel, which we form by a bolder and stronger rotundity of the mouth; a farther contraction of it produces the fifth vowel, which in its elongation almost closes the lips, a small passage only being left for the breath. These are all short vowels; and, if an Italian were to read the words *an innocent bull*, he would give the sound of each corresponding vowel, as in the monosyllables of his own language, *sà, si, sò, se, sù*. Between these ten vowels are numberless gradations, and nice inflexions, which use only can teach; and, by the composition of them all, might be formed an hundred diphthongs, and a thousand triphthongs. ...

We may now consider in the same order, beginning with the root of the tongue and ending with the perfect close of the lips, those less musical sounds, which require the aid of a vowel, or at least of the simple breathing, to be fully articulated; and it may here be premised, that the harsh breathing distinctly pronounced after each of these consonants, as they are named by grammarians, constitutes its proper aspirate. (pp. 182-5)

We hear much of aspirated letters; but the only proper aspirates (those I mean, in which a strong breathing is distinctly heard after the consonants) are to be found in the languages of India; unless the word *cachexy*, which our medical writers have borrowed from the Greek, be thought an exception to the rule: this aspiration may be distinguished by a comma, as the letter before us is expressed in the word *c'hanitra*, a spade. (p. 195)

Agreeably to the preceding analysis of letters, if I were to adopt a new mode of English orthography, I should write Addison's description of the angel in the following manner, distinguishing the simple breathing, or first element, which we cannot invariably omit, by a perpendicular line above our first or second vowel:

Só hwen sm é^ˆnjel, bai divain cãmánd,
Widh rais^ˆ'n tempests shécs a gilti land,
Sch az äv lét ór pél Britanya pást,
Cálm and s^ˆ'rín hi draivz dhi fyúryas blást,

And, p^l'z'd dh'ālmaitiz ārderz tu perfōrm,
Raids in dhi hwerlwind and dairects dhi stārm.

This mode of writing poetry would be the touchstone of bad rhymes, which the eye as well as the ear would instantly detect; as in the first couplet of this description, and even in the last, according to the common pronunciation of the word perform. I close this paper with specimens of oriental writing, not as fixed standards of orthography, which no individual has a right to settle, but as examples of the method, which I recommend. ... (p. 205)

Jones (1746-94) was led to his knowledge of Sanskrit through an interest in Hindu law. At Harrow and Oxford he studied oriental languages and literature. After achieving a reputation as an oriental scholar, out of financial necessity he undertook the study of law. In 1783 he was appointed judge in Calcutta, where he continued his vigorous career of publication. His collected works were published five years after his death, in a handsome edition, *The Works of Sir William Jones* in six volumes (London: Robinson and Evans, 1799). This has been followed here, with a few orthographical changes: since ligatures and symbols like long s are not maintained, it also seemed best to modernize spellings like authentic for authentick, and Sanskrit for Sanscrit, except in titles. Students having the opportunity of consulting the printing of 1799 will admire, with Sir John Shore, Jones's "degree of knowledge" and his elegant presentation.

SIR WILLIAM JONES

THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY DISCOURSE, ON THE HINDUS

2 February, 1786

In the former discourses, which I had the honor of addressing to you, Gentlemen, on the institution and objects of our Society, I confined myself purposely to general topics; giving in the first a distant prospect of the vast career, on which we were entering, and, in the second, exhibiting a more diffuse, but still superficial, sketch of the various discoveries in History, Science, and Art, which we might justly expect from our inquiries into the literature of Asia. I now propose to fill up that outline so comprehensively as to omit nothing essential, yet so concisely as to avoid being tedious; and, if the state of my health shall suffer me to continue long enough in this climate, it is my design, with your permission, to prepare for our annual meetings a series of short dissertations, unconnected in their titles and subjects, but all tending to a common point of no small importance in the pursuit of interesting truths.

Of all the works, which have been published in our own age, or, perhaps, in any other, on the History of the Ancient World, and the first population of this habitable globe, that of Mr. Jacob Bryant, whom I name with reverence and affection, has the best claim to the praise of deep erudition ingeniously applied, and new theories happily illustrated by an assemblage of numberless converging rays from a most extensive circumference: it falls, nevertheless, as every human work must fall, short of perfection; and the least satisfactory part of it seems to be that, which relates to the derivation of words from Asiatic languages. Etymology has, no doubt, some use in historical researches; but it is a medium of proof so very fallacious, that, where it elucidates one fact, it obscures a thousand, and more frequently borders on the ridiculous, than leads to any solid conclusion: it rarely carries with it any internal power of conviction from a resemblance of sounds or similarity of letters; yet often, where it is wholly unassisted by those advantages, it may be indisputably proved by extrinsic evidence. We know *à posteriori*, that both *fitz* and *hijo*, by the nature of two several dialects, are derived from *filius*; that *uncle* comes from *avus*, and *stranger* from *extra*; that *jour* is deducible, through the Italian, from *dies*; and *rossignol* from *luscinia*, or the finger in groves; that *sciuro*, *ecureuil*, and *squirrel* are compounded of two Greek words descriptive of the animal; which etymologies, though they could not have been demonstrated *à priori*, might serve to confirm, if any such confirmation were necessary, the proofs of a connection between the members of one great Empire; but, when we derive our *hanger*, or short pendent sword, from the Persian, because ignorant travellers

thus mis-spell the word *khanjar*, which in truth means a different weapon, or sandalwood from the Greek, because we suppose, that sandals were sometimes made of it, we gain no ground in proving the affinity of nations, and only weaken arguments, which might otherwise be firmly supported. That *Cús* then, or, as it certainly is written in one ancient dialect, *Cút* and in others, probably, *Cás*, enters into the composition of many proper names, we may very reasonably believe; and that *Algeziras* takes its name from the Arabic word for an island, cannot be doubted; but, when we are told from Europe, that places and provinces in India were clearly denominated from those words, we cannot but observe, in the first instance, that the town, in which we now are assembled, is properly written and pronounced *Calicátà*; that both *Cátá* and *Cút* unquestionably mean places of strength, or, in general, any inclosures; and that *Gujaràt* is at least as remote from *Jezirah* in sound, as it is in situation.

Another exception (and a third could hardly be discovered by any candid criticism) to the *Analysis of Ancient Mythology*, is, that the method of reasoning and arrangement of topics adopted in that learned work are not quite agreeable to the title, but almost wholly synthetical; and, though synthesis may be the better mode in pure science, where the principles are undeniable, yet it seems less calculated to give complete satisfaction in historical disquisitions, where every postulatium will perhaps be refused, and every definition controverted; this may seem a slight objection, but the subject is in itself so interesting, and the full conviction of all reasonable men so desirable, that it may not be lost labor to discuss the same or a similar theory in a method purely analytical, and, after beginning with facts of general notoriety or undisputed evidence, to investigate such truths, as are at first unknown or very imperfectly discerned.

The five principal nations, who have in different ages divided among themselves, as a kind of inheritance, the vast continent of Asia, with the many islands depending on it, are the Indians, the Chinese, the Tartars, the Arabs, and the Persians: who they severally were, whence, and when they came, where they now are settled, and what advantage a more perfect knowledge of them all may bring to our European world, will be shown, I trust, in five distinct essays; the last of which will demonstrate the connection or diversity between them, and solve the great problem, whether they had any common origin, and whether that origin was the same, which we generally ascribe to them.

I begin with India, not because I find reason to believe it the true center of population or of knowledge, but, because it is the country, which we now inhabit, and from which we may best survey the regions around us; as, in popular language, we speak of the rising sun, and of his progress through the Zodiac, although it had long ago been imagined, and is now demonstrated, that he is himself the center of our planetary system. Let me here premise, that, in all these inquiries concerning the history of India, I shall confine my researches downwards to the Mohammedan conquests at the beginning of the eleventh century, but

extend them upwards, as high as possible, to the earliest authentic records of the human species.

India then, on its most enlarged scale, in which the ancients appear to have understood it, comprises an area of near forty degrees on each side, including a space almost as large as all Europe; being divided on the west from Persia by the Arachosian mountains, limited on the east by the Chinese part of the farther peninsula, confined on the north by the wilds of Tartary, and extending to the south as far as the isles of Java. This trapezium, therefore, comprehends the stupendous hills of Potyid or Tibet, the beautiful valley of Cashmír, and all the domains of the old Indoscythians, the countries of Népál and Butánt, Cámrup or Asàm, together with Siam, Ava, Racan, and the bordering kingdoms, as far as the Chína of the Hindus or Sín of the Arabian Geographers; not to mention the whole western peninsula with the celebrated island of Sinhala, or Lion-like men, at its southern extremity. By India, in short, I mean that whole extent of country, in which the primitive religion and languages of the Hindus prevail at this day with more or less of their ancient purity, and in which the Nágari letters are still used with more or less deviation from their original form.

The Hindus themselves believe their own country, to which they give the vain epithets of Medhyama or Central, and Punyabhúmi, or the Land of Virtues, to have been the portion of Bharat, one of nine brothers, whose father had the dominion of the whole earth; and they represent the mountains of Himálaya as lying to the north, and, to the west, those of Vindhya, called also Vindian by the Greeks; beyond which the Sindhu runs in several branches to the sea, and meets it nearly opposite to the point of Dwáracà, the celebrated seat of their Shepherd God: in the south-east they place the great river Saravatya; by which they probably mean that of Ava, called also Airávati in parts of its course, and giving perhaps its ancient name to the gulf of Sabara. This domain of Bharat they consider as the middle of the Jambudwípa, which the Tibetians also call the Land of Zambu; and the appellation is extremely remarkable; for Jambu is the Sanskrit name of a delicate fruit called Jáman by the Muselmans, and by us rose-apple; but the largest and richest sort is named Amrita, or Immortal; and the Mythologists of Tibet apply the same word to a celestial tree bearing ambrosial fruit, and adjoining to four vast rocks, from which as many sacred rivers derive their several streams.

The inhabitants of this extensive tract are described by Mr. Lord with great exactness, and with a picturesque elegance peculiar to our ancient language: "A people, says he, presented themselves to mine eyes, clothed in linen garments somewhat low descending, of a gesture and garb, as I may say, maidenly and well nigh effeminate, or a countenance shy and somewhat estranged, yet smiling out a glozed and bashful familiarity." Mr. Orme, the Historian of India, who unites an exquisite taste for every fine art with an accurate knowledge of Asiatic manners, observes, in his elegant preliminary Dissertation, that this "country has been inhabited from the earliest antiquity by a people, who have no resemblance, either in their figure or manners, with any of the nations contiguous to them," and that,

"although conquerors have established themselves at different times in different parts of India, yet the original inhabitants have lost very little of their original character." The ancients, in fact, give a description of them, which our early travellers confirmed, and our own personal knowledge of them nearly verifies; as you will perceive from a passage in the Geographical Poem of Dionysius, which the Analyst of Ancient Mythology has translated with great spirit:

To th' east a lovely country wide extends,
India, whose borders the wide ocean bounds;
On this the sun, new rising from the main,
Smiles pleas'd, and sheds his early orient beam.
Th' inhabitants are swart, and in their locks
Betray the tints of the dark hyacinth.
Various their functions; some the rock explore,
And from the mine extract the latent gold;
Some labor at the woof with cunning skill,
And manufacture linen; others shape
And polish iv'ry with the nicest care:
Many retire to rivers shoal, and plunge
To seek the beryl flaming in its bed,
Or glitt'ring diamond. Oft the jasper's found
Green, but diaphanous; the topaz too
Of ray serene and pleasing; last of all
The lovely amethyst, in which combine
All the mild shades of purple. The rich soil,
Wash'd by a thousand rivers, from all sides
Pours on the natives wealth without control.

Their sources of wealth are still abundant even after so many revolutions and conquests; in their manufactures of cotton they still surpass all the world; and their features have, most probably, remained unaltered since the time of Dionysius; nor can we reasonably doubt, how degenerate and abased so ever the Hindus may now appear, that in some early age they were splendid in art and arms, happy in government, wise in legislation, and eminent in various knowledge: but, since their civil history beyond the middle of the nineteenth century from the present time, is involved in a cloud of fables, we seem to possess only four general media of satisfying our curiosity concerning it; namely, first their Languages and Letters; secondly, their Philosophy and Religion; thirdly, the actual remains of their old Sculpture and Architecture; and fourthly, the written memorials of their Sciences and Arts.

I. It is much to be lamented, that neither the Greeks, who attended Alexander into India, nor those who were long connected with it under the Bactrian Princes, have left us any means of knowing with accuracy, what vernacular languages they

found on their arrival in this Empire. The Mohammedans, we know, heard the people of proper Hindustan, or India on a limited scale, speaking a Bháshá, or living tongue of a very singular construction, the purest dialect of which was current in the districts round Agrà, and chiefly on the poetical ground of Mat'hurà; and this is commonly called the idiom of Vraja. Five words in six, perhaps, of this language were derived from the Sanskrit, in which books of religion and science were composed, and which appears to have been formed by an exquisite grammatical arrangement, as the name itself implies, from some unpolished idiom; but the basis of the Hindustaní, particularly the inflections and regimen of verbs, differed as widely from both those tongues, as Arabic differs from Persian, or German from Greek. Now the general effect of conquest is to leave the current language of the conquered people unchanged, or very little altered, in its groundwork, but to blend with it a considerable number of exotic names both for things and for actions; as it has happened in every country, that I can recollect, where the conquerors have not preserved their own tongue unmixed with that of the natives, like the Turks in Greece, and the Saxons in Britain; and this analogy might induce us to believe, that the pure Hindì, whether of Tartarian or Chaldean origin, was primeval in Upper India, into which the Sanskrit was introduced by conquerors from other kingdoms in some very remote age; for we cannot doubt that the language of the Véda's was used in the great extent of country, which has before been delineated, as long as the religion of Brahmà has prevailed in it. The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologer could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists: there is a similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the Gothic and the Celtic, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the Sanskrit; and the old Persian might be added to the same family, if this were the place for discussing any question concerning the antiquities of Persia.

The characters, in which the language of India were originally written, are called Nágarí, from Nagara, a City, with the word Deva sometimes prefixed, because they are believed to have been taught by the Divinity himself, who prescribed the artificial order of them in a voice from heaven. These letters, with no greater variation in their form by the change of straight lines to curves, or conversely, than the Cusic alphabet has received in its way to India, are still adopted in more than twenty kingdoms and states, from the borders of Cashgar and Khoten, to Ráma's bridge, and from the Sindhu to the river of Siam; nor can I help believing, although the polished and elegant Dévanágarí may not be so ancient as the monumental characters in the caverns of Jarasandha, that the square Chaldaic letters, in which most Hebrew books are copied, were originally the same, or derived from the

same prototype, both with the Indian and Arabian characters: that the Phenician, from which the Greek and Roman alphabets were formed by various changes and inversions, had a similar origin, there can be little doubt; and the inscriptions at Canárah, of which you now possess a most accurate copy, seem to be compounded of Nágari and Ethiopic letters, which bear a close relation to each other, both in the mode of writing from the left hand, and in the singular manner of connecting the vowels with the consonants. These remarks may favor an opinion entertained by many, that all the symbols of sound, which at first, probably, were only rude outlines of the different organs of speech, had a common origin: the symbols of ideas, now used in China and Japan, and formerly, perhaps, in Egypt and Mexico, are quite of a distinct nature; but it is very remarkable, that the order of sounds in the Chinese grammars corresponds nearly with that observed in Tibet, and hardly differs from that, which the Hindus consider as the invention of their Gods.

II. Of the Indian Religion and Philosophy, I shall here say but little; because a full account of each would require a separate volume: it will be sufficient in this dissertation to assume, what might be proved beyond controversy, that we now live among the adorers of those very deities, who were worshipped under different names in Old Greece and Italy, and among the professors of those philosophical tenets, which the Ionic and Attic writers illustrated with all the beauties of their melodious language. On one hand we see the trident of Neptune, the eagle of Jupiter, the satyrs of Bacchus, the bow of Cupid, and the chariot of the Sun; on another we hear the cymbals of Rhea, the songs of the Muses, and the pastoral tales of Apollo Nomius. In more retired scenes, in groves, and in seminaries of learning, we may perceive the Bráhmans and the Sarmanes, mentioned by Clemens, disputing in the forms of logic, or discoursing on the vanity of human enjoyments, on the immortality of the soul, her emanation from the eternal mind, her debasement, wanderings, and final union with her source. The six philosophical schools, whose principles are explained in the Dersana Sástra, comprise all the metaphysics of the old Academy, the Stoa, the Lyceum; nor is it possible to read the Védánta, or the many fine compositions in illustration of it, without believing, that Pythagoras and Plato derived their sublime theories from the same fountain with the sages of India. The Scythian and Hyperborean doctrines and mythology may also be traced in every part of these eastern regions; nor can we doubt, that Wod or Oden, whose religion, as the northern historians admit, was introduced into Scandinavia by a foreign race, was the same with Buddh, whose rites were probably imported into India nearly at the same time, though received much later by the Chinese, who soften his name into FO'.

This may be a proper place to ascertain an important point in the Chronology of the Hindus; for the priests of Buddha left in Tibet and China the precise epoch of his appearance, real or imagined, in this Empire; and their information, which had been preserved in writing, was compared by the Christian missionaries and scholars with our own era. Couplet, De Guignes, Giorgi, and Bailly, differ a little in their accounts of this epoch, but that of Couplet seems the most correct: on taking,

however, the medium of the four several dates, we may fix the time of Buddha, or the ninth great incarnation of Vishnu, in the year one thousand and fourteen before the birth of Christ, or two thousand seven hundred and ninety-nine years ago. Now the Cásmirians, who boast of his descent in their kingdom, assert that he appeared on earth about two centuries after Crishna the Indian Apollo, who took so decided a part in the war of the Mahábhárát; and, if an Etymologist were to suppose, that the Athenians had embellished their poetical history of Pandion's expulsion and the restoration of Ægeus with the Asiatic tale of the Pándus and Yudhishtir, neither of which words they could have articulated, I should not hastily deride his conjecture: certain it is, that Pándumandel is called by the Greeks the country of Pandion. We have, therefore, determined another interesting epoch, by fixing the age of Crishna near the three thousandth year from the present time; and, as the three first Avatàrs, or descents of Vishnu, relate no less clearly to an Universal Deluge, in which eight persons only were saved, than the fourth and the fifth do to the punishment of impiety and the humiliation of the proud, we may for the present assume, that the second, or silver, age of the Hindus was subsequent to the dispersion from Babel; so that we have only a dark interval of about a thousand years, which were employed in the settlement of nations, the foundation of states or empires, and the cultivation of civil society. The great incarnate Gods of this intermediate age are both named Ráma but with different epithets; one of whom bears a wonderful resemblance to the Indian Bacchus, and his wars are the subject of several heroic poems. He is represented as a descendent from Súrya, or the Sun, as the husband of Sítá, and the son of a princess named Caúselyá: it is very remarkable, that the Peruvians, whose Incas boasted of the same descent, styled their greatest festival Ramasitóa; whence we may suppose, that South America was peopled by the same race, who imported into the farthest parts of Asia the rites and fabulous history of Ráma. These rites and this history are extremely curious; and, although I cannot believe with Newton, that ancient mythology was nothing but historical truth in a poetical dress, nor, with Bacon, that it consisted solely of moral and metaphysical allegories, nor with Bryant, that all the heathen divinities are only different attributes and representations of the Sun or of deceased progenitors, but conceive that the whole system of religious fables rose, like the Nile, from several distinct sources, yet I cannot but agree, that one great spring and fountain of all idolatry in the four quarters of the globe was the veneration paid by men to the vast body of fire, which "looks from his sole dominion like the God of this world"; and another, the immoderate respect shown to the memory of powerful or virtuous ancestors, especially the founders of kingdoms, legislators, and warriors, of whom the Sun or the Moon were wildly supposed to be the parents.

III. The remains of architecture and sculpture in India, which I mention here as mere monuments of antiquity, not as specimens of ancient art, seem to prove an early connection between this country and Africa: the pyramids of Egypt, the colossal statues described by Pausanias and others, the sphinx, and the Hermes

Canis, which last bears a great resemblance to the Varáhavatár, or the incarnation of Vishnu in the form of a Boar, indicate the style and mythology of the same indefatigable workmen, who formed the vast excavations of Cánárah, the various temples and images of Buddha, and the idols, which are continually dug up at Gayá, or in its vicinity. The letters on many of those monuments appear, as I have before intimated, partly of Indian, and partly of Abyssinian or Ethiopic, origin; and all these indubitable facts may induce no ill-grounded opinion, that Ethiopia and Hindustàn were peopled or colonized by the same extraordinary race; in confirmation of which, it may be added, that the mountaineers of Bengal and Bahár can hardly be distinguished in some of their features, particularly their lips and noses, from the modern Abyssinians, whom the Arabs call the children of Cúsh: and the ancient Hindus, according to Strabo, differed in nothing from the Africans, but in the straitness and smoothness of their hair, while that of the others was crisp or woolly; a difference proceeding chiefly, if not entirely, from the respective humidity or dryness of their atmospheres: hence the people who received the first light of the rising sun, according to the limited knowledge of the ancients, are said by Apuleius to be the Arü and Ethiopians, by which he clearly meant certain nations of India; where we frequently see figures of Buddha with curled hair apparently designed for a representation of it in its natural state.

IV. It is unfortunate, that the Silpi Sástra, or collection of treatises on Arts and Manufactures, which must have contained a treasure of useful information on dying, painting, and metallurgy, has been so long neglected, that few, if any, traces of it are to be found; but the labors of the Indian loom and needle have been universally celebrated; and fine linen is not improbably supposed to have been called Sindon, from the name of the river near which it was wrought in the highest perfection: the people of Colchis were also famed for this manufacture, and the Egyptians yet more, as we learn from several passages in scripture, and particularly from a beautiful chapter in Ezekial containing the most authentic delineation of ancient commerce, of which Tyre had been the principal mart. Silk was fabricated immemorially by the Indians, though commonly ascribed to the people of Serica or Tancũ t, among whom probably the word Sër, which the Greeks applied to the silkworm, signified gold; a sense, which it now bears in Tibet. That the Hindus were in early ages a commercial people, we have many reasons to believe; and in the first of their sacred law-tracts, which they suppose to have been revealed by Menu many millions of years ago, we find a curious passage on the legal interest of money, and the limited rate of it in different cases, with an exception in regard to adventures at sea; an exception, which the sense of mankind approves, and which commerce absolutely requires, though it was not before the reign of Charles I. that our own jurisprudence fully admitted it in respect of maritime contracts.

We are told by the Grecian writers, that the Indians were the wisest of nations; and in moral wisdom, they were certainly eminent: their Níti Sástra, or System of Ethics, is yet preserved, and the Fables of Vishnuserman, whom we ridiculously

call Pilpay, are the most beautiful, if not the most ancient, collection of apologues in the world: they were first translated from the Sanskrit, in the sixth century, by the order of Buzerchumihhr, or Bright as the Sun, the chief physician and afterwards Vezír of the great Anúshireván, and are extant under various names in more than twenty languages; but their original title is Hitópadésa, or Amicable Instruction; and, as the very existence of Esop, whom the Arabs believe to have been an Abyssinian, appears rather doubtful, I am not disinclined to suppose, that the first moral fables, which appeared in Europe, were of Indian or Ethiopian origin. The Hindus are said to have boasted of three inventions, all of which, indeed, are admirable, the method of instructing by apologues, the decimal scale adopted now by all civilized nations, and the game of Chess, on which they have some curious treatises; but, if their numerous works on Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric, Music, all which are extant and accessible, were explained in some language generally known, it would be found, that they had yet higher pretensions to the praise of a fertile and inventive genius. Their lighter Poems are lively and elegant; their Epic, magnificent and sublime in the highest degree; their Purána's comprise a series of mythological Histories in blank verse from the Creation to the supposed incarnation of Buddha; and their Védas, as far as we can judge from that compendium of them, which is called Upanishat, abound with noble speculations in metaphysics, and fine discourses on the being and attributes of God. Their most ancient medical book, entitled Chereca, is believed to be the work of Siva; for each of the divinities in their Triad has at least one sacred composition ascribed to him; but, as to mere human works on History and Geography, though they are said to be extant in Cashmír, it has not been yet in my power to procure them. What their astronomical and mathematical writings contain, will not, I trust, remain long a secret: they are easily procured, and their importance cannot be doubted. The Philosopher, whose works are said to include a system of the universe founded on the principle of Attraction and the Central position of the sun, is named Yavan Achárya, because he had travelled, we are told, into Ionia: if this be true, he might have been one of those, who conversed with Pythagoras; this at least is undeniable, that a book on astronomy in Sanskrit bears the title of Yavana Jática, which may signify the Ionic Sect; nor is it improbable, that the names of the planets and Zodiacal stars, which the Arabs borrowed from the Greeks, but which we find in the oldest Indian records, were originally devised by the same ingenious and enterprising race, from whom both Greece and India were peopled; the race, who, as Dionysius describes them,

... first assayed the deep,
And wafted merchandize to coasts unknown,
Those, who digested first the starry choir,
Their motions mark'd, and call'd them by their names.

Of these cursory observations on the Hindus, which it would require volumes to expand and illustrate, this is the result: that they had an immemorial affinity with the old Persians, Ethiopians, and Egyptians, the Phenicians, Greeks, and Tuscans, the Scythians or Goths, and Celts, the Chinese, Japanese, and Peruvians; whence, as no reason appears for believing, that they were a colony from any one of those nations, or any of those nations from them, we may fairly conclude that they all proceeded from some central country, to investigate which will be the object of my future Discourses; and I have a sanguine hope, that your collections during the present year will bring to light many useful discoveries; although the departure for Europe of a very ingenious member, who first opened the inestimable mine of Sanskrit literature, will often deprive us of accurate and solid information concerning the languages and antiquities of India.