

THE STRANGE STORY OF A HIDDEN BOOK

I.

A STORY

A GREAT land, and a great race living its large life thereon : majestic mountains crowned with silent snows ; encircling seas ; vast gorges in which torrents lost themselves ; forests of stately trees and flowering plants and creepers in festoons ; broad-rolling rivers ; awesome cataracts, dazzling cascades and sprayful waterfalls ; incessant-brawling brooks and limpid rills and rivulets ; all teeming with wild life, gentle and innocent or mighty and compelling, gorgeous insects, flashing fish, and birds and beasts of high and low degree—all the poetry of living nature :

Great temples ; beautiful homes, full-spaced ; broad paths ; fair market-places ; uḍyānas, pleasure-parks and bathing tīrṭhas ; raṅgas, places of plays and poems, palaces of art, kalā-grhas ; chariots and cars ; bulls and dromedaries of the finest breeds, and elephants and horses trained and beautified with utmost skill—all the poetry of life-enhancing art :

Peace and contentment; mutual help and love and service; stately courtesies and ways of gracefulness; well-balanced, well-divided industry and ease; all-rounded knowledge; scripture chant and high and holy hymn—all the poetry of human life was there.

Strong and fair and youthful were the bodies of the race. But the Jivas were very old, and long experience in their many previous births had taught them well how sin was ever hunted down and torn in pieces by sure misery. And sinless therefore was the race. And, therefore, too, the Earth's benignity flowed forth to it in unchecked plenty. As the men were just and gentle to each other and to all beings, so the elemental gods that ever give to men what they desire and deserve, shaping their ways to men's deserts and wishes, were also clement unto them. And Mother Earth took pleasure in her children, and, in her vast and joyful dance around the sun, bore her rounded body so that all physical circumstances of wind and wave and sunshine were adjusted to their comfort, and they were happy even as yearling babes rolling and leaping in their mother's lap.

And so that happy elder race lived its large life. But a day came when they should pass away to other worlds and new experiences.

A deep and solemn forest of gigantic pines on a great mountain slope within the land. A hermitage of peace and calm and quiet. A hoary sage and students young and old in a large number.

"My children," said the sage, "the time has come when our race, having lived its appointed round of experiences here, must pass further onwards. You, who are the youngest of the race, are not yet fit to pass on with it. Your studies are not yet complete, and more experience has to be gathered by you all. Your faculties are not all evenly developed and well balanced. Some have grown in power and action greatly; others have grown in noble feeling of emotion; others yet are working for a newer and a larger life of subtler senses for acquiring knowledge, and of finer instruments for doing action. But not until there is a union and a perfect balance of all the three constituents of the Jīva's life on one plane, may it progress into another plane efficiently.

"This balance and perfection are not gained till Jivas do attain the middle point of the life of that plane and pass, through a *vairāgya* and a surfeit that includes all the selfish pleasures of that plane, into touch with the All-Self-Consciousness, and thereby learn to live for others than their own particular selves. Therefore your future destiny is that you shall work as pioneers of

a still younger race of Jīvas, that shall gradually be born within the land, heralding its arrival by great wars and times of much disquiet and unrest, and shall take possession of the flesh-houses left by the present race for their benefit. You too shall take birth again and again amongst them, and in the teaching and serving of them shall you yourselves learn and advance. And older ones from us shall not be absent. They shall remain behind as may be necessary, and watch and help and guide as may be fit.

"The great store of knowledge gathered by this older race for the profit of humanity shall lie hidden for long ages in such manner that it shall not be gained easily by those that would misuse it. But yet shall true and earnest seekers never fail to find it. Public spread thereof will be only when, and be only to the degree that, the elements of unity and harmony in the new race predominate over the elements of separation and discord, and a fair number of that race find conditions favorable enough for searching publicly for it, and give the guarantee, by their good life, that they shall use the knowledge well.

"Ye shall know the arrival of that time when the older and younger among you, born in different physical races, shall recognise your common spiritual ancestry and come together

and work together openly, making no distinction of outer caste or creed or colour or race or sex ; and some shall bring to that inner commonwealth an independent re-discovery of some of these large truths of physical science that now are known to you, and some of metaphysic and psychology and ethic, and others of knowledge through the superphysical senses of the superphysical planes, and some shall be taught directly by the elders staying behind, and others shall carry away entire and by sheer force of strong memory, whole works in sacred Samskr̥t lying hidden purposely in families selected for the keeping of them thus. And so, with spread of knowledge, spread of love, and spread of mutual help, a happier time shall come over the suffering lands and men shall join to form a new race in imitation of the present, and haply rise to greater heights even than this ! So, fare ye well ! "

If thy Soul is sad within thee,
 Hung'ring, thirsting, after peace,
 Come with me, belov'd ! believe me,
 Read, I promise, doubts shall cease.
 When the Master gave the secret,
 " 'Tis the last in terms of sound,"
 So he said, and " Go, proclaim it,
 Say the lost word has been found.

They who list' and ponder deeply,
 They shall find all life made new
 By this sweet voice of the silence,
 Wisdom's dawn on pity's dew.
 Knowing this, the Final Knowledge,
 Seek whate'er ye wish and find.
 For the mind that knoweth truly
 Must have left ill wish behind.
 And to him who wisheth rightly,
 Not for self but for the race,
 Aye the Guardians of the Wisdom
 Show the Glories of Its Face.
 Ask of Air and Fire and Water
 And the Holy Ones of Earth
 For the secrets held for seekers
 Who have found the second birth—
 Not that *ye* may have the secrets,
 But for all pure souls are one,
 And that so may fuller service
 To our suffering race be done.
 And, lest even now ye falter,
 Fix gaze on what brooks no seeing,
 Ever list' to what is Soundless
 Hold fast That which hath no being!"

II. A HISTORY

PAṆḌIT̥ DHANARĀJA

In the winter of 1896-1897, being then in the service of the Government of India, and posted, with judicial and revenue duties, at the town of Bārābankī (near Lucknow, the famous capital of the Indian province of Oudh), I came across Paṇḍit̥ Dhanarāja, at the house of Paṇḍit̥ Parmeshrī Dās, a practising lawyer and pleader for Government in the Court of Wards Department, a grey-haired fellow-member of the Theosophical Society (repeatedly mentioned in Colonel Olcott's *Old Diary Leaves*) and a dear friend who has now passed away (in October 1908). The impressions that I then received as to Paṇḍit̥ Dhanarāja were described by me at the time in letters to my elder brother, Bābū Govinda Dās (then an Honorary Magistrate and Municipal Commissioner in Benares), and a great hunter after and collector of rare Samskr̥t manuscripts. Extracts from these letters were published by him in the *Prashnotāra* (now called *Theosophy in India*), the monthly organ of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society, for the months of March, April, and May, 1897. Portions of these extracts were copied in the *Lucifer* (afterwards THE THEOSOPHICAL REVIEW) of London, for May,

1897. I think it best, on the whole, for the purposes of this narrative, to reprint the extracts here, though they are scarcely written in a style suitable for publication.

EXTRACTS FROM THE PRASHNOTTARA
(*Extracts from some Private Letters*)

[NOTE.—The following three extracts from private letters are printed in the hope that members situated favourably and having local facilities may try their hands and fortune at MS.-hunting in the districts of Gorakhpur and Basti. Many members have had the opportunity of making the acquaintance of Paṇḍit Dhanarāja, referred to in these extracts, at the last Annual Convention of the Indian Section held at Benares in October, 1896, and will probably remember him.—SUB-ED.]

AN OLD-WORLD PAṆḌIT

. . . . Paṇḍit Dhanarāja is blind of both eyes; he is scarcely twenty years old; yet it is calculated that he carries in his memory a mass of Samskr̥t literature equal to about thirty *Mahābhāratas* in bulk. The statement is not easily believable, especially when we are told that this mass comprises writings on all subjects—the ‘original’ works on Grammar by Maheshvara (Shiva), on Kosha (Lexicography) by Gaṇeśha, on Chhandah (Metre) by Viṣṇu, on Cosmogony by Kṛṣṇa, etc., etc. And yet I am convincing

myself gradually that the statement represents truth. I say I am convincing myself gradually, for I freely confess that I am not quite convinced yet.

Paṇḍit Dhanarāja says that from the age of about five upwards he has been doing nothing else than ‘committing to memory’ at an average rate of about 1,000 shlokas every day. His work ceased about a year or so ago; and he is now setting about to digest and assimilate his vast mental meal. He studied at the house of a family of Paṇḍits in his native village, where the paramparā, succession, has come down, and where the books are yet found, the very names of which have been long forgotten by, and are now unknown to, the modern generation of Paṇḍits.

From glimpses afforded by Dhanarāja, the older books, put side by side with the vast waste and desert of words called the modern Samskr̥t literature known to us—*Vyākaraṇa* and *Nyāya*, and even the greater portion of *Veḍānta* and *Sāṅkhya* and *Veḍa*-commentary and *Mīmāṃsā* and *Dharma-Shāstra*, etc., etc., including books plagiarised, books bodily stolen, books written in pure spite and intolerance, and books written for mere display of learning—appear to be as well-cultivated gardens full of healthy flower and fruit and fragrance beside the desert sands of Sahara.

I do not mean to say that what is now available to the general public does not contain . . . that which will bring peace to the mind of the man tossed with doubts, philosophy proper. This has been left by a kind destiny, though it is enveloped in and surrounded by an immense mass of verbiage on other subjects. But the next degree of literature . . . on the secret sciences and on Physiology, Chemistry, Astronomy, etc., etc., has disappeared and carried off with it all the *rahasya*, secret, of them.

The modern disciple of Pāṇini, with much waste of ingenuity and endeavour to "touch the nose round the back of the head," as the Hindī proverb says, will explain at some pages' length why the "i" sound followed by the "u" sound amalgamates with the latter into the "yu" sound. Paṇḍit Dhanarāja says that the older Grammar gives the *physiological* reason why.

The magnificent hymn, in the *Durgā-Saptashatī*, by the rescued Devas to the victorious Goddess, is in the Vāsanta-tilakā metre. The modern metrist has nothing more to say as to why that particular metre was used, than that such was the whim of the author, or at most that the rules of propriety required it. Paṇḍit Dhanarāja explains that the old books say that in the āṛṭa or painful and refuge-seeking state of mind the Devas were then in, the Maḍhyamā and Sainḍhavi (nerves belonging to the apparatus

of articulation apparently) are affected and come into play, with the consequence that the sounds uttered can take no other metrical arrangement than the "Vāsanta-tilakā." Possibly the full explanation is based deep down on the physics and mathematics of sound, but even this much *sounds* very useful.

The promises held out, then, are great. It would be well indeed if they were realised. But the difficulties are many. The MSS. out of which Paṇḍit Dhanarāja was taught are unavailable. They are kept away with jealous care from the reach of the inquisitive public. And Paṇḍit Dhanarāja, though willing to dictate all he has in his memory, cannot be provided with a writer sufficiently fast to reduce any tolerable portion of his stores into writing. Paṇḍit Parmeshri Dās, who has been recently contributing to the *Theosophist* some articles on the older Grammar, etc., with the help of this marvellous Paṇḍit, is doing all he can in the matter, but however thankful we may be for what he has done we cannot but feel that it is not enough by far. If some system of short-hand Devanāgarī could be devised by a Theosophical brother sufficiently ingenious, it would be a great help indeed—though we must always be prepared for disappointment even after all these old books have become lipi (writing) from Smṛti (memory). Such disappointment is by no means the

unfrequent lot of Theosophical students! The first view has often aroused surging hopes of the promised land of milk and honey; while a nearer view has often dissipated the illusion and shown that that first spectacle was a mere mirage indeed.

AN OLD-WORLD PAṆḌIT'S LIST
OF OLD-WORLD BOOKS

... I asked Paṇḍit Dhanarāja to give me a list of the 'real, original' works (Mūla-Granthas) on every subject treated of in the Samskr̥t tongue—a list that should form a complete Encyclopædia of Samskr̥t learning in all departments into which such learning had extended (which, according to Paṇḍit Dhanarāja, means all departments whatsoever of possible human knowledge, of course!). I added, as a condition, that the list should be self-complete, such that the fortunate possessor of the books mentioned therein should be independent of other help for intelligence of them. And the Paṇḍit readily gave me such a list out of a work by Gobhila, called *Shāstrānubhava*, wherein, he said, such a list had already been framed and put away. I reproduce the list below:—

I.—*Shabḍa-Shāstra* (the Science of Sounds).

	<i>Grantha-saṅkhyā</i>	
	(In numbers of	
1. <i>Vyākaraṇa</i> (Grammar)	Shloka-measures)	
Sūtras, by Maheshvara }		
Bhāṣya, by Nārada }	100,000	

2. <i>Kosha</i> (Etymology and Dictionary)		
Nirukta, by Gaṇeśa }		
Bhāṣya, by Sheṣha }	55,000	
3. <i>Chhandah</i> (Metre)		
Chhandārṇava, by Viṣṇu . . .	172,000	
4. <i>Jyotiṣha</i> (Astronomy and Astrology)		
Brhadāṅka-prādipta, by Sūrya . . .	100,000	
5. <i>Shikṣhā</i> (Philology, etc.)		
Shikṣhā, by Maheshvara }		
Bhāṣya, by Nārada }	90,000	
6. <i>Kalpa</i> (the Science of "Constructions")		
Vyavasthānubheda, by Devī . . .	248,000	

(*Jyotiṣha* forms part of *Shabḍa-Shāstra* for some mysterious reasons, which Paṇḍit Dhanarāja promises to explain at future leisure. A shloka-measure means thirty-two syllables.)

II.—*Darshana* (Philosophy)

1. <i>Veḍānta</i> .		
Prāhikṣha-Prāḍīpa, by Brahmā . . .	436,000	
2. <i>Sāṅkhya</i> .		
Anubhava, by Marīchi . . .	308,000	
3. <i>Nyāya</i> .		
Prabhāntarikṣha, by Svayambhū . . .	215,000	
4. <i>Mīmāṃsa</i> .		
Arthaparakāsha, by Aṅgirāḥ . . .	205,000	
5. <i>Vaiśeṣhika</i> .		
Darshanānubhava, by Kṛatu . . .	275,000	
6. <i>Yoga</i> .		
Vṛttijāitārṇava, by Chyamana . . .	150,000	

III.—*Smṛti* (Law)

Manusmṛti	24,000
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IV.—*Veḍa*

1. <i>R̥k-Samhitā</i>	432,000 R̥chās
28 Brāhmaṇas	75,000 Shlokas
42 Upaniṣats	200,000 "
2. <i>Yajus-Samhitā</i>	250,000 R̥chās
22 Brāhmaṇas	100,000 Shlokas
60 Upaniṣats	105,000 "

3. Sāma-Samhitā	600,000 Ṛchās
21 Brāhmaṇas	150,000 Shlokas
90 Upaniṣads	200,000 „
4. Atharva-Samhitā	300,000 Ṛchās
11 Brāhmaṇas	80,000 Shlokas
52 Upaniṣads	100,000 „

UPAVEḌA

V.—*Āyurveda* (Medicine)

Chakrānuvasha by Sanaka	392,000
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VI.—*Dhanurveda* (Archery)

Praveshāstra-Prakāsha, by Prachetāh	300,000
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VII.—*Gāndhārva-veda* (Music)

Svarānuvāda, by Nārada	136,000
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VIII.—*Kāraṇyopaveḍa*

Siddhāntopanyasta, by Ashvinī- Kumāra	432,000
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(This, the fourth Upaveḍa, is said to comprise the sciences of commerce, agriculture, cattle, architecture, law, etc., i.e., briefly, all things relating to man's social life. The current name is Sthapātya or *Shilpupaveḍa*.)

IX.—*Kāma Shāstra* (The Science of Love)

Dehātānubhava, by Pulastya	150,000
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The above list exhausts all the four 'objects of human life,' Dharma, Artha, Kāma, and Moksha.

Printed in royal 8vo volumes of 800 pages each, every page containing fifteen shlokas on an average—this total of 6,380,700 shlokas would form a compact little library of 500 volumes, roughly; nothing surprising, by any means, seeing that twenty times that number of volumes is disgorged annually by the press of

England alone! But what *is* surprising is that Paṇḍit Dhanarāja, while modestly denying that he has the whole by heart, yet admits that he carries in his memory at least a good two-thirds of it, besides another ten lakhs or so in miscellaneous literature, novels and histories (yes, *novels and histories*) and Purāṇas and modern works!

Let us see if Paṇḍit Dhanarāja can justify his statements, and make good his promise to a wondering and grateful humanity, or whether we are forced to content ourselves in the end with saying that the Paṇḍit said things that were not true, and that his were mere words. . .

THE LAST OF THE OLD-WORLD PAṆḌITS?

. . . Old MS.-hunter as you are, did you not look with longing eyes at the list I sent you last? ...What hopes...it must have aroused! What ideas of revolutionising Oriental scholarship, of giving an irresistible impulse to the study of Samskr̥t all over the world, of helping the young and growing races of the West! To a child of India it must seem that a discovery of such records would be pregnant with much more profit and use than the treasures of literature which King Menelik of Abyssinia has recently promised to throw open to the research of western scholars within his dominions. Alas! the profit and the use that there may be, will be for Europe, juvenescent and vigorous, not for

our superannuated race now in the senility and dotage that precede death. Her scientists would make each hint the starting point of a new science, the counterpart of which we had, perhaps, but have no more. This is but as it should be. Every fact is its own best justification. The fact that arts and sciences have been lost, and the books that described and taught them gone out of sight, in itself shows clearly that the race has deteriorated and grown weak and unfit to possess them. What is left to do is to help as far as may be to transfer the spirit of the dying giant to the thriving babe.

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways.

And we ought loyally to help on the new ways. . . . So I have been digressing and building castles in the air which, as in others, so in this case, have to end in disillusionment (for which I have already prepared you) and vanish like the fabric of a vision, but not exactly without leaving a wrack behind. Circumstances have occurred which have given rise to grave doubts as to the ability of Paṇḍit Dhanarāja to "justify the ways" of himself "to men." Alas! for the old, old perversity of the human mind that made Dhr̥tarāshtra cry out: "I know the right and yet cannot abide therein; I know the wrong and yet cannot refrain therefrom." While talking so profusely of the wondrous

hidden store of lore on every matter of interest to humanity, he seems to be very chary of giving the clue to where it may be found. To take down whole works to his dictation seems a very long and desolately laborious task. But even that has been attempted by Paṇḍit Parmeshri Dās, for nothing is too difficult for the labour of love; and many works have been so begun, amongst them a marvellous *Bhāṣhya* on the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, professing to explain much of the esoteric meaning thereof, by the same Gobhila as has been mentioned before as the author of *The Survey of Sanskrit Literature*, out of which the list has been given to you, but somehow or other none of them has been finished, with the single exception of a *Sāmyāyana Kosha*, which has been completed in 8,000 and odd shlokas, taken down to dictation from the lips of the Paṇḍit. This last work is a sort of lexicon and book of rules as to how works and words are to be interpreted, with reference to the special subject they treat of, the time and place and other circumstances they appertain to, the persons they are addressed by and to, etc., etc. But the misfortune as regards this single work that *is said* by the Paṇḍit to have been completed, as well as with regard to the many other works which have been begun but never finished, is that the style is more often than not so entirely "archaic" (to put the matter

