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; udyānas, pleasure-parks and bathing tirthas; rañgas, places of plays and poems, palaces of art, kalā-grha; 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:
Preface

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 desires and wishes, were also content 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 circumstanes 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.

Preface

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 Jiva’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 Jivas, 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 Samskṛtya 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!"
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 Prashnoṭṭara
(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 Paṇḍīṭ 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 Paṇḍīṭ

... Paṇḍīṭ 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 Sanskrit literature equal to about thirty Mahābhārata 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 Ganesha, on Cahanāra (Metrology) by Viśṇu, on Cosmogony by Krṣṇa, 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.

Paṇḍīṭ 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 ceases 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 Paṇḍīṭs in his native village, where the parampara, 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 Paṇḍīṭs.

From glimpses afforded by Dhanarāja, the older books, put side by side with the vast waste and desert of words called the modern Sanskrit literature known to us—Vyākaraṇa and Nyāya, and even the greater portion of Vedānta and Sāṅkhya and VEDA-commentary and Mimamsā 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 rahaṣya, secret, of them.

The modern disciple of Panini, with much waste of ingenuity and endeavour to “touch the nose round the back of the head,” as the Hindustani 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. Pandit Dhanaraja says that the older Grammar gives the physiological reason why.

The magnificent hymn, in the Durjā-Septa-chaṭ, by the rescued Devas to the victorious Goddess, is in the Vasanta-tilkā 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. Pandit Dhanaraja explains that the old books say that in the arma or painful and refuge-seeking state of mind the Devas were then in, the Madhyanā and Saṁdhavī (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 “Vasanta-tilkā.” 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 Pandit Dhanaraja was taught are unavailable. They are kept away with jealous care from the reach of the inquisitive public. And Pandit Dhanaraja, 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. Pandit Parmeshri Dēs, who has been recently contributing to the Theosophist some articles on the older Grammar, etc., with the help of this marvellous Pandit, 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 PANDIT'S LIST
OF OLD-WORLD BOOKS

... I asked Pandit Dhanaraja to give me a list of the 'real, original' works (Mula-Grantha) on every subject treated of in the Sanskrit tongue—a list that should form a complete Encyclopaedia of Sanskrit learning in all departments into which such learning had extended (which, according to Pandit Dhanaraja, 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 Pandit readily gave me such a list out of a work by Gobhila, called Shadastrabhava, wherein, he said, such a list had already been framed and put away. I reproduce the list below:

I.—Shadasthastra (the Science of Sounds).

1. Vyakhyasa (Grammar)
   Grantha-sahitya
   (In numbers of
   Stotras, by Maheshvara)
   Bhaskya, by Naraja
   Shlok-maneesas
   100,000

2. Kesha (Etymology and Dictionary)
   Naraka, by Ganesha
   Bhaskya, by Sisheva
   55,000

3. Chhandash (Meter)
   Chhandasvaro, by Visnu
   172,000

4. Jyotisha (Astronomy and Astrology)
   Bhrashtaka-prajapati, by Surya
   100,000

5. Shikshya (Philology, etc.)
   Shikshya, by Maheshvara
   Bhaskya, by Naraja
   90,000

6. Kalpa (the Science of 'Constructions')
   Vyarnavatibhava, by Devi
   248,000

(Jyotisha formerly part of Shadasthastra for some mysterious reasons, which Pandit Dhanaraja promises to explain at future leisure. A shloka-measure means thirty-two syllables.)

II.—Darshana (Philosophy)

1. Vedanta
   Prakritika-Pradipika, by Brahma
   436,000

2. Srishtiya
   Anubhava, by Marichi
   208,000

3. Nyaya
   Prakritika-Rishika, by Swayambhu
   215,000

4. Mimamsa
   Atthavaksha, by Angirasa
   205,000

5. Vaiseshiksha
   Darshanaubhava, by Krama
   375,000

6. Yoga
   Vidyopadhyaya, by Chayamsha
   150,000

III.—Sarva (Law)

Manusmriti
   24,000

IV.—Veda

1. Rk-Sambhuta
   482,000 Rekhas
   26 Brahmanas
   75,000 Shlokas
   42 Upanishadas
   200,000

2. Yajus-Sambhuta
   22 Brahmanas
   100,000 Shlokas
   60 Upanishadas
   105,000
England alone! But what is surprising is that Pandit Dharmaraja, 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 Puranas and modern works!

Let us see if Pandit Dharmaraja 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 Pandit said things that were not true, and that his were mere words.

The Last of the Old-World Pandits?

...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 Sanskrit 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 treasuries 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, juvenescence 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 justifica-
tion. 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 have we 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 with-
out leaving a wreck behind. Circumstances
have occurred which have given rise to grave
doubts as to the ability of Paudīṭ Dharmārjula to
"justify the ways" of himself "to men." Alas!
for the old, old perversity of the human mind
that made Dharmārjula 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 Paudīṭ Parmeshī
dās, for nothing is too difficult for the labour of
love; and many works have been so begun,
amongst them a marvellous Bhashya on the
Bhāgavad-Gītā, professing to explain much of
the esoteric meaning thereof, by the same
Gebhila 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
somewhat or other none of them has been finish-
ed, with the single exception of a Sāmyyana
Kosha, which has been completed in 8,000 and
odd shlokas, taken down to dictation from the
lips of the Paudīṭ. 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 to apper-
tain to, the persons they are addressed by
and to, etc., etc. But the misfortune as re-
gards this single work that is said by the Paudīṭ
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

a