most mildly), that it is impossible for an ordinary layman, whose scholarship extendeth not beyond the range of modern Samskrit, to say whether the collocation of letters carries any sense at all in it or is mere ‘abramadabra’.

But whatever the value of this particular man and his statements may be, there is little doubt—as I have learnt from independent sources also—that old and valuable MSS. and great learning do exist in the country “beyond the Sharaṇa,” forming the districts of Gorkhpur and Basta, and that there is a race of Pandits dwelling scattered over that tract, who, unlike the Pandits of most of our cities, are not forced to make of their knowledge their sole means of livelihood, but, possessing independent means, as small landowners or large cultivators, prosecute their studies amongst themselves in that right spirit of love and reverence of learning for the sake of learning which is its best and tenderest fosterer, though most unfortunately under the vow, it seems, that they will not impart their knowledge to any other than a Sharaṇa-parina Brahmaṇa. We may and do regret the vow in the interests of the world at large, but I cannot but admire the principle that prompts it. ... ...

The above extracts show amply the indecisiveness of the impressions then produced on me by the personality and the conversation of Pandit

Dhamaraja. To these I now add an account of the troubles and tantalisations undergone by Pandit Parmeshri Das on account of this phenomenal person, whom he was the first to discover for practical purposes. Of course I had had many talks with him about the matter previously, but I took down from his mouth systematically, for this introduction, a complete account of his experiences from the very beginning up to date, on the 25th October, 1903, when he was in Benares, on a short visit. He gave the account in Hindi, from which I put it in English.

Pandit Parmeshri Das' Narrative

I first began to take an interest in the Samskrit language in 1894, so far as I can remember, when I was about fifty years of age, after coming across an account, in a newspaper, of a lecture by Mrs. Besant, delivered in Calcutta, wherein she strongly advocated the study of Samskrit.

My beginnings were very modest. I began, indeed, with Devanagari and the Hindi vernacular, which I did not know well, having studied Urdu and Persian at school and college. From Hindi and Devanagari I passed on to Samskrit, taking up the Bhagavad-Gita to begin with, naturally, as will be easily understood.

The difficulties I met with in properly understanding the language of the Gita compelled me to think of studying Samskrit grammar.
went to a Shāstri, teaching in a local school, and promptly got by heart the first fourteen sūtras of Pāṇini, reported by tradition to have been received by him direct from Śiva after much penance and propitiation, and forming the foundation of the rest of Pāṇini’s grammar.

But now arose a difficulty. The misfortune of having been a practicing lawyer for over twenty years, at the time I engaged the Shāstri to help me across the depths of Samskṛti grammar, compelled me to ask him why there were only fourteen sūtras and not fifteen or thirteen; why there were only so many vowels and so many consonants, and not more or less; why, even amongst those that were enumerated in these aphorisms, the particular order observed had been followed, why a preceded, and i followed and u succeeded, etc.

The Shāstri came to a standstill. I tried to pull him along a little further; but our mutual perplexities became more and more tangled every day. I sought other help. The same results. My collection of Samskṛti grammars, old and new, eastern and western, grew more and more complete. So did my discontent with them. The thing weighed on me like a nightmare. Why were there only and exactly fourteen aphorisms and forty-two (or counting also the repetition of one) forty-three letters enumerated in them, and why were they arranged in that particular order? My very sleep was affected. My daily prayers began to include a petition for help on this particular point.

Months passed. It was June of 1894, I believe, and I was still rubbing my eyes in bed early one morning, preparatory to getting up, when I was informed that two men had arrived at the house, one of them blind, and that they wanted to see me. Against my usual custom, I went straight from my bed to the doorway of the house. I saw two men. One was under twenty, possibly not more than eighteen, blind of both eyes, one eye sunken, the other bulging with a sightless, distorted and swollen eyeball. The other man was of almost the same age. Neither had anything else on but a loin-cloth. I asked them who they were and what they wanted.

“We want a meal and enough money to carry us to Cawnpore.”

“Are you literate?”

The blind man said: “Yes.”

“What have you studied?”

“Samskṛti.”

“Why are you going to Cawnpore?”

“I hope to get some work there in connection with the Ārya-Samāj.”

“What emoluments?”

“Rs. 5 or Rs. 7 per month for a teachership.”

“Do you know the Siddhānta-Kānamūḍi?”

“Yes.”
"All right; I will see you again; rest and eat in the meanwhile."

The blind man gave his name as Dhanaraja, and that of his companion as Chandra Bhala.

I saw them again in the afternoon, and we had some little talk on Sanskrit grammar. We met again in the evening. Then I could not wait any longer and propounded my standing difficulty.

The blind man said: "Yes, I can answer all your questions."

"Out of your own intelligence, or from some old book?"

"From old books." This was good news. "But," he added, "I have not got the books; I only know them by heart."

A few days later, after he had settled himself in the house, I began taking down to his dictation a series of Sanskrit verses, mostly in the anuvṛtta metre. I took down about 1,500. They constituted a dialogue between Shiva and Parvati, in which the latter asked the very same questions that had been puzzling me, and the former answered them in a way that was quite satisfactory to me, at least, and at the time.

I do not now remember whether he mentioned the name of this work, but he said that it was complete in those 1,500 couplets. He added, however, on further inquiry, that if I wanted more details on Sanskrit grammar I should find them in complete fulness in the Nārada-Bhāṣya on the Māheśvara-Vyākaraṇa.

I had been also studying pieces of the Siddhānta-Kāraṇḍī, relating to sanātī (the coalescence of letters and sounds) with the man, all the while becoming more and more discontented with the vṛttis (explanations of Pāṇini's aphorisms) contained in the work, and obtaining better explanations from the blind Pandit himself, out of his mnemonic resources, as regards the physiological reasons for these coalescences. I preserved notes of these perpetual "whys" of mine and "because" of his.

My next manuscript-enterprise was more ambitious. I began writing to Dhanaraja's dictation the Nārada-Bhāṣya, which he said, extended over 60 or 62,000 couplets, all verse. I took down about 500 or 600 of these.

Then I began to question him about the Māheśvara-Vyākaraṇa (of which the Nārada-Bhāṣya was said by him to be an extended commentary). He began to dictate and I to write. To the best of my recollection, he said there were 5,000 aphorisms in the work. I wrote down about a thousand. I found that the order and arrangement of the sub-divisions of the subject was exactly the same as in the modern Siddhānta-Kāraṇḍī. But the aphorisms were entirely different, and the illustrations and examples were all Vaiṣṇava-looking, and very
numerous and lengthy, and full of compounds difficult to pronounce. In connection with this difficulty of pronunciation, after giving me a number of inconsistent replies, first saying that the current Shikṣā (a set of rules for pronunciation, etc., forming a sort of supplement to the current grammar) was genuine, and then that the one published by Dayānanda Sarasvatī (the founder of the Ārya Śamāj) was genuine, he ultimately said that the original Shikṣā written by Pāṇini was different from both.

I wrote down this Shikṣā, extending to over 100 shlokas, and said by the Pandit to be complete in that number.

I also employed, about this time, another Pandit, and got him to write down a Bhāṣya (commentary) on this Shikṣā, consisting of extracts of the best portions of eight different commentaries. This Bhāṣya is also complete excepting the last five or six shlokas. All this, of course, was dictated also by Pandit Dhanarāja, and all from memory, as he said.

The year 1894 came to an end with this.

I asked Pandit Dhanarāja how he came to find the Nārādiya-Bhāṣya.

He said: “Our family are residents of the village of Belhar Kālān, in Tahsil Khāliābād of the Bastī District (in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, India). My grandfather was a very learned Pandit. He had a great taste

for studying and teaching ancient works. His collection of MSS. is still with us. He kept up a private Pāṭhāshālā (school). He was very fond of Sannyāsīs (wandering ascetics). One day, when I was about twelve or thirteen, there came a Sannyāsī who was very much struck with my exceptional memory, for I could get almost 1,000 complete by heart in a single day. He taught me the Nārādiya-Bhāṣya. I had an elder cousin, now dead, who had not lost his eyesight, as I did at two and a half years of age from small-pox; and he had even a greater retentiveness. He also committed the Nārādiya-Bhāṣya to memory.”

At the close of 1894, Pandit Dhanarāja went back to his village. He returned again, after an absence of a few weeks, at the end of January, 1895. This time he came with changed ways, always trying to evade dictation and avoid talk on the matters in which I was most interested. However, I got him to dictate some old stotras (hymns) to me. Then, one day in the course of conversation, he mentioned that in a work called the Nārāvārā, a dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Uḍāhava, there was a statement that Rṣhis would continue to dwell on the Himalayas throughout the Kaliyuga and be the custodians

1 “The ocean of Na, the Negation,” for explanation of which Negation, see the text of the Praṣṇava-Vaṇḍa.—B. D.
of all knowledge after Krishna's departure from this earth.

I forthwith began to reduce the Narayana into writing, having succeeded in inducing Pandit Dhanaraja to dictate it. We proceeded to about 500 shlokas, the whole being declared by him to be many thousands. I forget the exact number.

Then, one night I asked him if he had ever studied the small Bhagawat-Gita too, amidst all these huge performances. He said "No." Then I said: "You ought to study it now."

So we began, I this time acting as dictator and he as memoriser. I taught him about eight or ten shlokas, he repeating them faithfully after me, at first in a halting manner, and then over and over again, exactly imitating the process by which a child commits lessons to memory.

By and by it was decided that Dhanaraja and I and another friend should spend some time every day on the Gita and endeavour to discover esoteric meanings therein, out of our own unaided intuitions, and write them down in the vernacular (Hindi). Well, I led off with guesses, based on Theosophical literature, which I had been reading steadily.

Dhanaraja said: "Yes, this is so." I asked: "Why do you speak in this imprimitur style?"

After many days' haggling he repeated shlokas, from some Kosha (Dictionary or Thesaurus) saying that they proved authoritatively that the Gita-words had that particular meaning. I asked: "Why then bother our heads unnecessarily? If you have got an appropriate Kosha, specially fitted for this purpose, you can go along interpreting the Gita far more easily."

He said he had been repeating from a Bhashya on the Nirukta, the Kosha of the Veda.

We began anew with this help. After we had struggled on to the seventh or eighth verse of the first chapter of the Gita, Dhanaraja admitted that he knew the book very well and many Bhashyas also on it, including one by Govinda. The pretence of ignorance was only a cloak!

We began the Govindiya-Bhashya on the Gita and, for a wonder, finished it too! People who will take the necessary trouble to put themselves mentally in my circumstances of age, life-long habits, heavy legal occupations, insufficient knowledge of Sanskrit, eagerness to know more and inability to spare the necessary time and energy for systematic study from the beginning like a young tyro, and the wonderful nature of the entirely new world of literature opened up, will not wonder that I made so many beginnings and so few endings, and that I was always wandering off into alluring digressions. They will rather wonder that I completed the few MSS. that I did.

My previous familiarity with the subject-
matter of the Bhagavad-Gītā and my great respect for the work, the Hindus’ Bible, and the interest of the commentary itself, took me right through the whole of this great work. Not having learnt Sanskrit or practised Devanāgarī-writing in my earlier years, I have never made myself a good calligraphist of that character. Yet I, with my own hand, laboriously inscribed the bulk of the book. The rest was written by two other writers whom I employed. And the bulk is large; the complete work measures about 24,000 shlokas (of thirty-two syllables each). This performance occupied us three whole years—1895-6-7.

But while our energies were mainly directed to this work during this period, digressions were not wanting, as was inevitable from my endless queries. A piece of a Vyāsya-Samhitā—a dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇī (that is Paṇḍit Dhanarāja’s spelling, the current one being Rukmiṇī) on all matters in heaven and earth, said to be complete in about 14,000 shlokas—was put on paper.1 A Sāmāyikavān-Kosha—an independent lexicon in about 8,000 verses, by Vyāsa, was so fortunate as to get completed. And the ‘real original’ Vaiśeṣika Nīruka with a Bhasṭya was also begun. Of

1 About 800 shlokas of this were written down by me, in the course of some holidays during my stay at Bārābāṅkī.—B. D.

course all this was done to the dictation from memory (as he alleged), of the blind Paṇḍit, who is also the sole authority for the descriptions and epithets used, as to whether a work was or was not completed, whether it was genuine, etc., or not.

In 1896 Paṇḍit Dhanarāja attended the Annual Convention of the Theosophical Society, held at Benares; and with his help I contributed some articles on Sanskrit grammar to The Theosophist, during the three years 1895-6-7.

At the end of 1897, Paṇḍit Dhanarāja went away for a long period. But he did not go to his home. He went and stayed with the Rājā of Hadahā, close to Bārābāṅkī. He stayed with him almost throughout the whole of 1898, coming to see me now and then for a few days only at a time. I, too, suffered from unhappy family bereavements in that year, and no work could be done with Paṇḍit Dhanarāja. The year 1899 also passed similarly. Paṇḍit Dhanarāja was wandering about elsewhere, coming to see me now and then. In 1900 he stayed with me for almost a month in the summer, when we did some sporadic work on the ‘real, original’ Bhāṣyā1 on the Bhagavad-Gītā with the ‘real’ original Śaṅkara-bhāṣya, the current one being

1 The first hundred shloka-measures or so of this were written down by me on the 31st of July, 1900, when I was visiting Paṇḍit Purneshṭr Dās, for a
decided by him to be spurious. We also did some miscellaneous hymns and stotras.

Then Pandit Dhamaraja went on to Benares, and dictated the Prayoga-Veda there.¹

He returned to Bharahau in the summer of 1901; and then dictated to me 700 shlokas of what he declared was the second half and continuation of the Bhagavad-Gita now current. The Vyarnava-Samhita was also continued with the help of a copyist.

We also began a Bhavya, by Bharahau, in 80,000 shlokas, on the original Brahma-Sutras, numbering 10,000. By the end of February, 1902, we had progressed to the seventh or eighth sutra of the original and about the 3,000th shloka of the commentary. He left again and has not returned to me since. But he has been wandering about amongst other householders in the district of Bharahau, and I have met him also at one or two places casually.

At the end of these eight years of acquaintance, this extraordinary man still remains a puzzle to me, notwithstanding the fact that he has lived in the same house, almost in the same room, with me, night and day, for months and months together. If all he says about himself; his day at Bharahau; they seemed to be a sort of abstract of the alleged Gobhila-Bhavya of the Bhagavad-Gita.—B. D.

¹To me, as will be described later on.—B. D.

memory; the hundreds of ancient works of which nobody in the outside world knows anything at all; his memorial knowledge of them all, comprising perhaps two million couples of thirty-two syllables each (I have and have had taken down some 60,000, and you, Bhagavan Das, 16,000); amongst them such 'trifles' as fifty-two Bhavyas on the Gita, four complete Bhavyas on the 'complete' Vedas (not the patches now extant) from beginning to end, all the eighteen Puranas, the 'real, original' ones, and the Mahabharata, with Gobhila's Bhavya on them all, full of wonderful 'esoteric' interpretations, the original Sutras of the six systems of philosophy and the six Vedantas, all with Bhavyas, in fact works on all possible branches of science and philosophy; and all that he says about the secret handing-down of all such wondrous learning in old families of Pandits, in the Nepali Terai and adjoining country—if all this, or a tenth or a hundredth of it, be true at all, then it is very, very wonderful.

Can we believe him or can we not? In all these eight years, he has never repeated a second time, despite incessant requests and offers of all kinds of inducements, honorary, pecuniary, etc., a single shloka that he has dictated once. He has evaded and avoided, equivocated and prevaricated; but never actually given this absolutely
simple and conclusive test of memory. He has failed most woefully in promises to show or secure MSS. of the works he dictated, which again would have settled all our doubts most satisfactorily. The majority of my friends, interested in these matters, who have come into contact with him, hold the strongest and most unfavourable opinion as to his straightforwardness in this respect. Indeed they do not hesitate to call him a charlatan; and it is difficult to prove them wrong.

I myself have been often driven to such irritation by his want of straightforwardness, that I have driven him out of my house—but always only to call him back again when the irritation subsided. And yet the fact of what he has dictated remains and stands invincibly. Has it or has it not any merits?

After eight years of work on it I am satisfied that a fair portion of it is new and valuable to modern thought. I have made many efforts to trace the MSS. of the works mentioned by Dhanaraja, with the help of occasional descriptions given by him as to the Pandit families with which, as he says, he stayed and studied the books he says he knows by heart. But I have always failed to lay my hand on any such substantial thing, partly, at least, I think, because of my very restricted opportunities for search. Yet I believe that the MSS. exist, for
Pandit Dhanarajā's Biography.

To the above I wished very much to add a full account of his life from the lips of Pandit Dhanarajā himself. But for reasons which will be partially understood from the latter portion of the narrative of Pandit Parmeshri Dās, I have not succeeded in getting from Dhanarajā any such systematic account. If I do in future I will certainly publish it. In the meanwhile I am compelled to content myself with putting together such notes, either on paper or in memory, as I retain of occasional talks about himself that Dhanarajā has indulged in in my hearing. Of course, the reliability of those talks is no greater, nor less, than that of his sayings and doings in general; and it is so defective, that I should ordinarily have refrained from publishing any of these matters. But the many years' experience of the man that Pandit Parmeshri Dās and I have had, and his failure and mine (of which more will be said later) to trace or secure original MSS., and the utter uncertainty of my having better opportunities in the future, and the very great inherent merits, in our eyes, of the material dictated by the man, and finally the hope that others with better opportunities will take the work up, and possibly bring to light this whole new world of very valuable literature for the use of humanity—all these considerations have combined to induce me not to delay publication of these matters any longer.

What I have gathered from Pandit Dhanarajā Mishra about his life is as follows:

He was born about 1873 A.D. in the village of Belhār Kalān, Post Office Mouliāwal, Tahsil Khalīshābād, District Bāstī, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, India. His father was Nepal Mishra, uncle Patārājā Mishra, and grandfather Haragovinda Mishra. He had an elder brother, Chandrikā, who died at the age of sixteen or seventeen. (In Pandit Parmeshri Dās' narrative this brother is mentioned as cousin.) Dhanarajā lost his eyesight from small-pox when he was two and a half or three years of age.

He had a phenomenal memory from his earliest childhood. When he was seven or eight years old, he could commit to memory many hundreds of shlokas in a single day. His brother Chandrikā was even better endowed. The family of Dhanarajā were grammarians. His grandfather kept a kind of private school (or dāv-pāthashāla), and taught deserving vidyārtha (seekers of learning, students). Dhanarajā early exhausted his family store of modern Sanskrit grammar, and grew more and more dissatisfied and inquisitive.
Many Sannyāsīs (wandering ascetics) used to visit his grandfather. One of them was specially attracted by Dhanārāja’s wonderful memory and insquisitiveness, and told him that he should study the Maheswariya-Vyūkarana, with the Nārādiya-Bhaṭṭakya on it, if he wanted his grammatical difficulties solved and his curiosity satisfied. Dhanārāja was eager to learn, and the Sannyāsī put him on the track. He told him the names of the Pandīts and the places from whom and where he would get what he wanted.

Dhanārāja ran off from his home, accompanied and helped by a companion. (In Pandīt Parmeshshīri Dāś’s narrative Dhanārāja says he was taught the big work on grammar by the Sannyāsī himself.) His phenomenal memory, precocious intelligence, and developed insquisitiveness, were ready certificates of desert, and served as passports to the confidence of the Pandīts mentioned by the Sannyāsī, and he began his astonishing career of memorising.

He went from one Pandīt to another, from village to village, and from district to district, obtaining clues to each successive house of learning from the previously visited one, all being occupied by members of the same ancient fraternity. (Some brief mention of them has been already made in the extracts reprinted from the Prasūnaṇava.)

In this way he committed to memory some hundreds of thousands, almost millions, of shloka-measures of literature (one shloka-measure being equal to thirty-two syllables). He wandered about thus for eight or ten years, and then felt saturated. In the course of his wanderings he seems to have heard from some Pandīts, who had been tried and found wanting, about Pandīt Parmeshshīri Dāś’s unanswerable questions. Here was a congenial spirit. In the spirit of the old Upaniṣad stories he went to Pandīt Parmeshshīri Dāś to answer his questions. What followed has already been described above.

From August 30th, 1900, to January 19th, 1901, he stayed with me at “Durgākund,” Benares. In this period the Prasūnaṇava was written down to his dictation, by me and Pandīt Gaṅgānāth Jhā, M.A., D. Litt., (now Professor of Sanskrit, Muir Central College, Allahabād); the last portion, about an eighth of the whole, being written by Pandīt Ambālī Dās of Benares (sometimes head Pandīt in a Jaina Sanskrit Pāṭhakṣāla in Benares and now Professor of Vedāṇa in the Ramavira Sanskrit Pāṭhakṣāla Department of the Central Hindu College, Benares). I have not seen him again since. I myself have not had the desired opportunity of going to his place and visiting the neighbouring tracts, and he has not been able to comply with my invitation to come and stay with me again. But I have had some correspondence,
very occasional and rare, with him since. I wrote to him repeatedly to send me an account of his life, written down to his dictation by some pupil of his; but he has not done so. He gave me some hopes of coming to me on a visit, in answer to repeated invitations, but these hopes have also remained unfulfilled so far. I might have got from him orally what he had not thought fit to send in writing.

I understand he has been married twice, the first wife having died.

I have made a list of the ‘ancient’ works of which he has spoken to my brother or myself from time to time during the months the Pṛṇava Vāgga was being written, together with the names of the Pāṇḍīṭs or others, and the places, with whom and where, according to him, manuscripts of them exist. Very much to my regret I have not had an opportunity, so far, of going out to search for them myself, personally, though I retain hopes of being able to do so some day, later on. But I have had search made for them, through friends residing in or near the localities concerned. All without success, so far. Either the villages do not exist, or at least cannot be traced and recognised; or, if the villages are found, then the Pāṇḍīṭs named are not to be found there; or if both are found, then the Pāṇḍīṭs swear that the MSS. named are not with them, and that they never even

heard of them; and so on. Perhaps others may take up the search and succeed better. The list is printed below for permanent record as a clue at least.