DIE SAGENSTOFFE DES R̥GVEDA UND DIE INDISCHE ITIHĀSA-TRADITION, VON EMIL SIEG. I. pp. vi, 150 + [1]. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1902.)

The work of which Dr. Sieg of Berlin submits a specimen in this fasciculus constitutes a bold attempt to deal with one of the most important problems of Indian literary history. The hymns of the R̥gveda have in a large number of cases an obvious ritual application which reveals at the same time the object for which they were composed. But many of them are denied any such application even by the native critics, and European scholars will consider the devices by which others have been adapted to purposes of ritual as artificial interpretations. With regard to such hymns a question arises as to the circumstances of their composition. Are they purely independent utterances or were they intended to be communicated in some context? In the latter case, is the context easily inferrible from the hymns themselves or have we any external aids for ascertaining it?

The answer to a part of these questions may be taken as a matter of common acceptance. There are hymns in the R̥gveda which imply a context, and of these some at any rate demand for their explanation the help of other literary material. Dr. Sieg points out that this truth, first brought to light by Professor Windisch, who recognized the hymn of Purūravas and Urvaśī (R.V., x, 95) as a dialogue without context, has been clearly expounded by Professor Oldenberg,¹ and all scholars familiar with Pischel and Geldner's *Vedische Studien* are aware what use these authors make of the same conception. Professor Oldenberg well compares the relation between the verse and prose of the Pali Jātaka, and finds in this system of text and sermon the prevailing literary type of pre-Buddhist times. We may add of post-Buddhist times also; for the conjunction of a text in itself brief and obscure with an indispensable commentary is, one might say, the prevailing one in all periods of Indian literature down to

¹ Z.D.M.G., 1883, pp. 54-86; 1885, pp. 52-90.

the present, and we need have no *a priori* scruples in recognizing the same deeply rooted intellectual habit in the Rġveda itself. The figure of the poet who recites his verse in the middle of a prose narrative is still familiar in all parts of India, and may have been familiar in the earliest age.

But if there are many hymns in the Veda which imply a story, it is an inference of mathematical certainty that not all these stories have been lost. There may have been much change and transformation, which is indeed the fate of all Indian writings, affecting not only epics but also highly finished compositions such as the Śākuntala. But it would be a miracle if nothing were left in the later literature capable of explaining the earlier.

This thought is developed and pointed in the introductory part of Dr. Sieg's work. He shows that the critical principle in question was familiar to the Indian commentators and precisely expounded by them. The most general term for the application of a hymn was *vinīyoga*, and they distinguished between the expressed and implied *vinīyoga* of hymns and parts of hymns. Their discussions proceeded predominantly from four points of view, and they were classed as *yājñikāḥ*, *ātmaśāstraḥ*, *nairuktāḥ*, or *aitihāsikāḥ*, according as they treated the hymns from ceremonial, philosophical, grammatical, or mythological-historical stand-points. In the Brāhmaṇas, and in general commentaries such as that of Sāyaṇa, there is a commingling of all three methods of interpretation. But we have an example of all the mainly etymological treatment in Yaska's *Nirukta*, while the philosophical criticism gave rise to the transcendental or *Adhyātma* explanations.

Dr. Sieg maintains that the existence of the forms *aitihāsika* and *paurāṇika* in their context in the Mahābhāṣya (iv, 2. 60) proves the existence of a particular work entitled *Itihāsa* or *Purāṇa*, as a textbook or collection of mythological lore. But we cannot admit the force of this argument. Patañjali makes no mention of the formation *ākhyānika* in the sense of 'a student of *ākhyāna* or romance,' recording special names as *vāśavadattika*, etc., for 'a student of the *Vāśavadattā*

story,' etc. But this may be due to the fact that the *purāṇa* or *itihāsa* is from the nature of the case a single body of legend, while romance is capable of indefinite extension. We, too, have 'historians' and 'mythologists,' but no 'novelist' in the same sense. Whether the remainder of Dr. Sieg's argumentation on this head is conclusive cannot be answered without a longer inquiry. But even if the Indian commentators employ the words *itihāsa* and *purāṇa* of definite literary types of works (as Dr. Sieg urges, pp. 27 sqq., 33), this is not the same as referring to one single work. The terms *aitihāsika* and *paurāṇika* seem of precisely the same nature as *vaiyākaraṇika*, *chāndasika*, and *naiyāyika*. Why, indeed, should we not be content to understand by the word *purāṇa* a class of writings from which sprang the *purāṇa* par excellence, the Mahābhārata, which, as Dr. Sieg mentions, the Indian commentators understood by the name? This, however, is very far from a systematic treatment of mythology.

The main body of Dr. Sieg's work, pp. 44-142, deals with individual hymns and legends, and constitutes the practical application of his theory. The case is emphatically one for the maxim *solvitur ambulando*, and if in a number of cases it is possible by the employment of later legends to contribute towards the elucidation of the hymns, the value of this method stands beyond dispute. I do not propose (nor do I claim any special competence) to examine in detail this part of the book. In the case of many of the legends Dr. Sieg seems to me to come materially nearer to the right interpretation and even to attain to a definite solution. One of the best examples is the legend of Śyāvāśva as compared with R.V. v, 61. The relation between the two seems to be established, but there nevertheless remains an obscurity in the story as concerns the part played by Taranta, Purumīḥa, and Śasīyasī. If from some other source Dr. Sieg should be able to throw light on this part of the legend and at the same time elucidate the relations between Śyāvāśva and the Aśvins (Śyāva, see Macdonell, "Vedic Mythology," p. 52), the whole hymn will be fully explained.

Dr. Sieg is fully capable of dealing with his material, and

it would be impossible to gainsay the learning and skill with which he handles it. We regret only that he has several times (e.g., p. 126, p. 137, n. 4) treated the Bṛhaddevatā as posterior in date to the Mahābhārata, whereas Professor Macdonell has pointed out to me that the reverse is the case. If I may call attention to two details with which I should provisionally disagree, on p. 84 we find the word *māmat* of R.V. iv, 18. 8-9, explained (with Grassmann) as augmentless imperfect of *mad mamātti*, while on p. 97 Dr. Sieg proposes to emend a note of Harisvāmin,

daurgrahā nāma daurgahenāśvena samhatena kratunā ȳje,

by reading *sa ha tena* for *samhatena*. I cannot resist the conclusion that Ludwig is here right in taking *māmat* as a pronoun, referring back to the *mama* of v, 7. In that case we must regard it as an ablative = Prakrit *mamatto*. In the second passage, I should prefer to read *daurgaheṇāśvena samhatena* with the text, and interpret it to mean with a *daurgaha*, i.e. an *āśva samhata*, 'a body of horse,' so that *daurgaha* bears the same relation to *durgaha* as *austṛa*, 'body of camels,' etc., to *uṣṭra*, etc. Perhaps the original reading was *daurgahenāśvena aśvasamūhena kratunā*. The simplex *durgaha*, 'horse,' is no doubt a compound of *dur* = *dhur* with *gāh*, and analogous to *śūrya*, *jumenta*, *dhaureya*. With the *tmanā* = *svayam*, noted p. 49, n. 5, we may compare the classical *ātmanā*, which bears the same sense.

What we have said will be sufficient to show to the reader that Dr. Sieg has in this work made a valuable contribution to the solution of a problem which, if it is ever to be solved, must be solved on the lines which he here lays down. Inasmuch as his familiarity with the subject and the essential aids to its investigation, and further his skill and scholarly method in dealing with these, are fully on a level with the high demands of modern research, we hope that he may find the necessary support for continuing the publication of the large mass of material which he has prepared.

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