XIV.

PHALLUS-WORSHIP IN THE MAHABHARATA.

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FOR want of a critical edition of the *Mahābhārata*, such an eminent scholar as Professor Rhys Davids has been led to think that, though there is no mention of the worship of Śiva under the form of the Linga in the old Buddhistic records, "Phallus-worship is often mentioned, quite as a matter of course, in the *Mahābhārata*" ("Buddhistic India," p. 165). Whatever may be the date of the *Mahābhārata* Saṁhitā, it may be successfully shown that the Linga, as a form of Śiva, is not recognised in that great epic.

The only chapters in which the Linga is found mentioned as a form of and name for Śiva are vii, 200 and 201, and xiii, 14 and 17, which are all palpable interpolations of a very late date. If we leave these chapters out of consideration, there cannot be found a single line in the whole of the *Mahābhārata* Saṁhitā in which the Linga form of Śiva is even remotely hinted at. (*Vide* Fausböll's "Indian Mythology," under Rudra and Śiva.)

The sudden appearance of Vyāsa, first before the depressed son of Droṇa, in the middle of vii, 200, and next before the elated Arjuna in vii, 201, is altogether meaningless and irrelevant. Droṇa's son became very much distressed when he found that Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna had escaped unhurt. He asked Vyāsa, who came to the spot of his own accord to preach the Śaiva religion and not to render any help to Aśvatthāman, the reason why Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna could not be killed. Vyāsa informed him in reply that as Kṛṣṇa was a worshipper of the Linga form of Śiva, the Linga god kept him under his protection (vii, 200, 48 to 90). Aśvatthāman is none the wiser; and Vyāsa disappears after preaching his

creed that Śiva is superior to Viṣṇu. The chapter then closes with the one short statement that Aśvatthāman retired from the field of battle and Droṇa breathed his last. That this Vyāsa episode portion in this chapter is an interpolation by a Linga worshipper, becomes clearer when we read the next following chapter (201), which is altogether an interpolation, as an additional chapter to the Droṇa Parva, by the selfsame sectarian hand.

No event of the war is described in vii, 201, for there is really nothing left to tell in connection with the fate of Droṇa. Sañjaya merely relates to his master that Vyāsa appeared again before Arjuna on his preaching tour. In praise of Śiva a long list of his names is given, and of all names the Linga is specially eulogised. After making this inartistic addition to the Parva at its end, the sectarian interpolator repeats over again that Droṇa died after fighting for four days more, forgetting altogether that Sañjaya had communicated that very information in almost identical words to his master, and that chapter 200 ended with those words. The interpolator could not help repeating the words, for otherwise the new chapter would stand self-condemned by having no connection with the story of Droṇa.

This spurious chapter (201) closes with a stanza composed in faultless *śālinī*. Professor Hopkins has shown in his "Great Epic of India" (p. 318 ff.) that there are only a very few complete *śālinī* stanzas in the whole of the *Mahābhārata*. There is no doubt that they all occur in very late chapters only. I am uncertain whether the text Professor Hopkins had before him contains chapter 201 of the Droṇa Parva, for the *śālinī* stanza here referred to by me is not noticed by him in his thorough analysis.

I need hardly point out that there are several chapters in the *Mahābhārata* previous to xiii, 14 and 17, devoted to giving the names of Śiva, and composed with the distinct object of edifying Yudhiṣṭhira. It is curious that Yudhiṣṭhira still insists upon getting a fresh list of these names from the lips of the dying Bhīṣma in xiii, 14. In the whole of the *Mahābhārata* there are only six *āryā* stanzas, and they

are all found in this fourteenth chapter. It is true that *āryā* occurs in the old Pāli literature ; but it does not appear to have been adopted in any composition in Sanskrit till as late as the third or the fourth century A.D. There cannot be any doubt that *śārdūlavikrīḍita* is a very modern metre. In the *Mahābhārata* there are only four stanzas and a half in this metre (Hopkins, "Great Epic," p. 358). Of these four and a half stanzas, two and a half occur in this fourteenth chapter, and the special character and glory of the Linga are celebrated in them (229 and 234). This chapter is also adorned with one stanza of *puṣpitāgrā* (190) and one of *Vasantatilakā*. These signs of lateness, coupled with the very character of the chapter itself, lead to the conclusion that this is a spurious chapter only recently added.

The zealous sectarian and interpolator goes on enumerating the very names of Śiva over again in the seventeenth chapter ; and poor Yudhiṣṭhira has been made to listen to the tediously long list with an undesirable sort of coolness of head. In this seventeenth chapter bare names of Gaṇeśa and Durgā also occur. That Gaṇeśa, regarding whose origin, character, and mythology the *Mahābhārata* is entirely silent, and who appears only in the first chapter, which is also spurious, was unknown when the *Mahābhārata* was compiled, is perhaps admitted on all hands. Regarding the lateness of the goddess Durgā, I have already published a paper in this Journal (1906, pp. 355-362).

Having thus disposed of the chapters in which the cult of the Linga is taught, I may safely conclude that whatever the origin—whether indigenous or not—and whatever the age of this creed may be, Phallus-worship was unknown to the compilers of the *Mahābhārata* Saṁhitā.