

ART. IV.—*The Religious Festivals of the Hindus.* By H. H. WILSON, Dir. R.A.S.

AMONG all the nations of the ancient world, a considerable portion of the year was devoted to the solemnization of public festivals, at which the people found in the assemblage of multitudes, in the exhibition of games, and in religious pageants and ceremonies, a compensation for the want of those more refined entertainments which are created by the necessities and the luxury of a more advanced stage of civilization. Some of these primitive celebrations have retained their hold upon national tastes and feelings long after their origin and meaning were forgotten, and become interwoven with new conditions of society, with altered manners and institutions, and with a total change of religion. In all the countries of Europe they have left at least traces of their former prevalence in the nomenclature of our calendars, and many of the holidays which are appropriated to the saints of the Christian Church have been borrowed from the public festivals of ancient paganism. In proportion also as nations, or as different classes of the same nation, retain their primitive habits, the observances of olden times enjoy their veneration, and interest their affections. They are, however, fast fading in the Western world, even from the faith of tradition, before the extension of knowledge and refinement, and before the augmented demands for toil which the present artificial modes of life impose, when holidays are denounced as an unprofitable interruption of productive industry, and a festival or a fair is condemned as a wasteful expenditure of time and money. It is only, therefore, in regions remote from the reach of the task-master, where exemption from work is occasionally the equal right of all classes of the community, that we may expect to find the red letters of the Calendar significant signs—importing what they designate—public holidays—days on which the artificer and the peasant rest from physical exertion, and spend some passing hours in a kindly communion of idleness with their fellows, in which, if the plough stands still and the anvil is silent, the spirit of social intercourse is kept alive, and man is allowed to feel that he was born for some nobler end than to earn the scanty bread of the pauper, by the unrelaxing labour of the slave.

It is in the remote East, and especially in India, that we may expect to find the living representation of ancient observances, and the still existing solemnizations which delighted the nations of

antiquity, and we shall not be altogether disappointed; although even here they begin to languish under the influence of a foreign government, under the unsympathizing superiority which looks upon the enjoyments of a different race with disdain, under the prevalence of the doctrine which regards public holidays as deductions from public wealth, and under the principles of a system of religious faith which, although it might be indulgent to popular recreations, cannot withhold its disapprobation of them when their objects and origin are connected with falsehood and superstition. From the operation of these causes, the Hindu festivals have already diminished both in frequency and in attraction; and they may become, in the course of time, as little familiar to the people of India as those of European institution are to the nations of the West. They will then, perhaps, become also objects of curiosity and interest; and in anticipation of that period, and in order to secure an account of them whilst it is still possible to learn what they are, I propose to offer to the Society some notices of the religious *Fasti* of the Hindus and *Calendar* of their public festivals.

The different celebrations of the Hindus are specified in their *Almanacs*, and are described at length in different works, such as the *Tithi Tatwa*, *Tithi Kritya*, *Vratārka*, *Kāla Nirñaya*, the *Kalpa Druma* of *Jaya Sinha*, and others, and also in passages of several of the *Purāṇas*, particularly in the *Bhaviṣyottara*, which, as it usually occurs, treats exclusively of the festivals. The observances are, for the most part, the same in the different provinces of India, but there are some peculiar to peculiar localities; and even those which are universally held, enjoy various degrees of popularity in different places, and are celebrated with various local modifications. The periods also vary within certain limits, according as the lunar month is reckoned to begin from the new moon, or from the full moon; the former mode of computation prevailing in Bengal and in Telingana, whilst in Hindustan and in the Tamil countries of the South the latter is followed. My opportunities of personal observation have been in a great degree limited to Bengal, and for the rest of India I can speak but imperfectly of any existing practices which may not exactly conform to those enjoined by original works, or of which no account has been published by actual observers. One object of communicating these notices to the Society is, therefore, the supplying of this deficiency. Amongst the Members of the Society are many who, in the course of their public services, must have witnessed the celebration of the Hindu festivals in different and distant places: their better knowledge will enable them to furnish correct information respecting

those local peculiarities with which I am unacquainted; and I hope that they may be induced to favour the Society with the results of their experience, and contribute to render the description of the popular festivals of the Hindus as complete and authentic as those who may take an interest in the topic have a right to expect from us.

Upon examining the *Fasti* of the nations of antiquity, it is obvious that many of their festivals originated either from the same or similar motives. They all bear a religious character, inasmuch as religious worship formed part of the celebration; but that was the spirit of the time. However erroneously directed, the feelings of the multitude in the heathen world associated the powers of heaven, real or imaginary, with all their transactions; but the sources to which I more especially refer, however closely linked with this common sentiment, are in some degree varieties of it: they constitute the species, and are obviously reducible to two principal distinctions, which may be regarded as universal or particular. The universal festivals, which are probably traceable among all nations elevated above barbarism, and which may have been handed down by tradition from the earliest periods in the history of the human race, are manifestly astronomical, and are intended to commemorate the revolutions of the planets, the alternations of the seasons, and the recurrence of cyclical intervals of longer or shorter duration. The particular festivals are those arising out of national forms of religious worship, out of the different mythological creations of priests or poets, or out of imperfect narratives, transmitted orally through succeeding generations, of occurrences anterior to historical record. In as far as these traditions may have related to the great mass of mankind, before it was broken up into detached communities, or as the mythological fictions may typify real personages or events of the same era, or may embody objects likely to be presented to the imaginations of men under similar aspects, we need not be surprised to meet with analogies of deep interest, even in the festivals which are of particular institution. It is, however, in those which relate to the course of time and the phenomena of the planetary sphere that analogies are most likely to occur, and do, in fact, present themselves in the practices of distant and apparently unconnected races.

The coincidences that may be discovered between the universal or particular festivals of the various nations of antiquity, form a subject that well deserves careful and patient investigation. It would, in all probability, tend to confirm the remarkable results which comparative philology has of late so unanswerably demonstrated, and furnish cor-

roborative testimony of that relationship of races, which, however dissimilar now, in physical configuration, social condition, and national character, are proved to be of kindred origin by the unequivocal affinities of language. In like manner as the Greek, Latin, Teutonic, Celtic, Slavonic, and Sanskrit tongues have been shown to be allied by principles common to them all, so in all probability it would be found that the festivals and holidays which once animated the cities of Athens and Rome, the forests of Germany and the steppes of Russia, are still continuing to afford seasons of public recreation to the dark complexioned tribes that people the borders of the Indus and the Ganges. The full development of these identifications is, however, a work of time and of research exceeding what I can bestow upon it; and I must be content with contributing only that portion of the materials requisite for its investigation which relates to the *Fasti* of the Hindus, briefly suggesting, as I proceed, one or two of the most obvious points of apparent similarity.

The subject of the Festivals of the Hindu year was introduced to the Asiatic Society of Bengal by Sir William Jones, who published a paper on it in the third volume of the *Researches*. What he thought of the inquiry is evident from the manner in which he speaks of the authority whence his information was derived, and which he calls a wonderfully curious tract of the learned and celebrated Raghunandana. It was no doubt his *Tithi Tatwa*, a standard text-book, as are all the works of the same author, in Bengal. Sir William Jones, however, has taken from this work only the heads of the descriptions, and omits all the particulars into which it enters, with the exception of a few brief notes; and his details are neither sufficiently full nor interesting to inspire others with the sentiments with which he contemplated the subject. Some years ago I collected materials for its fuller elucidation, and published in one of the Calcutta papers brief notices of the festivals as they occurred; but the notices were merely popular, and were necessarily short and unconnected, and they have never been presented in a collective form. The topic is one, therefore, which, if destitute of other recommendation, possesses, even in these latter days, that of some degree of novelty, and may on this account be further acceptable to the Society.

As remarked by Sir William Jones, although most of the Indian fasts and festivals are regulated by the days of the moon, yet the most solemn and remarkable of them have a manifest reference to the supposed motions of the sun. An attempt is usually made to adjust the one to the other; but the principles on which the adjustment of the solar to the lunar year is based, are of a somewhat complicated character,

and are not essential to a knowledge of the periods at which the festivals are held, and which, with a few exceptions, are sufficiently determinate. They will be specified as we proceed.

UTTARA'YAN'A.—*First of (solar month) Mágha, first lunation dark half or Moon's wane of Pausha or Mágha, 12th-13th of January.*—The Roman poet Ovid, in the opening of his "Fasti," inquires of Janus why the new year is considered to begin in January instead of April, in winter instead of spring; as the latter is the true season of the renovation of nature, when flowers bud, birds carol, and animals rejoice.

Dic, age, frigoris quare novus incipit annus,
Qui melius per ver incipiendus erat—
Omnia tunc florent: tunc est nova temporis ætas.

The same question seems to have suggested itself to the reformers of the Hindu calendar, and accordingly the new year of the luni-solar computation now in use begins with the first of Chaitra, which falls somewhere in the course of March, and in solar reckoning is said to agree with the entrance of the sun into the sign Mesha, or Aries. There was, however, a period at which a different principle was followed¹, and one that coincides with the peculiarity that puzzled the poet; the new year then commenced on the first of the solar month Mágha, the date of the Makara-Sankránti, or sun's entrance into the sign Capricornus², identical with the Uttaráyāña, or return of that luminary to the regions of the North, or, in fact, to the winter solstice; a very important era to the nations north of the equator, amongst whom no doubt were the primitive Hindus, as bringing back to them the genial warmth of the sun and the resuscitation of vegetable life, and deservedly, therefore, held to be the beginning of a new year.

The Uttaráyāña, or winter solstice, although no longer considered as occurring on the first day of the year, and which, even in olden times, as we shall see, was thrown back a fortnight, to the first of the light half of Pausha, retains the veneration attached to it originally as the renovator of animal and vegetable existence, and is one of the great festivals of the Hindus. It commences, as in our own calendars, with

¹ According to Bentley, this was 1181 B.C.

² The term Makara denotes an aquatic non-descript animal: the more ancient name of the sign seems to have been Mriga, a deer मृगकैटसङ्क्रान्ती द्वे "The two Sankrántis, the deer and the crab."—Tithi Tatwa. The same work explains the application of the term, the type of the constellation having the head, not of a goat, but of a deer मृगो मृगास्यत्वेन मकरः

the entrance of the sun into the sign Capricornus; but, although the astronomical period is the same, the actual dates present a considerable deviation. According to our Ephemerides, the sun enters Capricorn on the 21st of December; according to those of the Hindus, on the 1st of their solar month Mággha; and this, in actual practice, is identified with the 12th of January or thereabouts. I have already observed that the adjustments of the Hindu calendar are very difficult matters to deal with, and an explanation of the difference between the 21st of December and the 12th of January is to be found only in astronomical calculations. Thus Colonel Warren observes, the dates of the equinoctial and solstitial points, as far as they are regulated by the solar and lunar moveable zodiac, are fixed, but their relation to the sidereal zodiac depends upon the precessional variation¹. For our present purpose, however, it is sufficient to know that the essential elements of the celebration are the Makara Sankránti, or sun's entrance into Capricorn; the Uttaráyāna, or commencement of the sun's return to a northern declination; and the actual observance on the 1st of the luni-solar month Mággha falling on the 12th of January, or occasionally a day before or after it.

The observances enjoined on this occasion are partly of a private, partly of a public character. The first consist of offerings to the Pitris, or progenitors, whether general, as of all mankind; or special, as of the family of the worshipper; to the Vástu devas, the Dii Lares, or domestic genii; the guardians of the dwelling, or the site on which it is erected; and to the Viswa devas, or universal gods. The ceremonies addressed to all these are performed within the abode of the householder, and are conducted by the family priest. The principal article of the offering is tila, or sesamum seeds, either separately, or, as is more usual, mixed with molasses, or the saccharine juice of the fruit of the date-tree, and made up into a kind of sweetmeat, called Tilüa. Pishtakas or cakes also are offered, composed of ground rice, mixed with sugar and ghee; whence the festival has the denominations of Tilüa Sankránti and Pishtaka Sankránti, the solar conjunction of the sweetmeat or the cake.

The good things prepared on this occasion are not intended exclusively for those imaginary beings who are unable to eat them. They are presented merely for the purpose of consecration, and that they may be eaten with greater zest by the householder and his family; nor is that all, for a portion of them is sent to friends and relations, as memorials of regard, inclosed in fine linen, silk, or velvet,

¹ Kála Sankalitá, p. 4, note.

according to the means of the presenter, and the station of those to whom they are presented.

In many places in Bengal a curious practice is observed, called *Báwanni bandhana*, particularly by the females of the family. In the evening, one of the women takes a wisp of straw, and from the bundle picks out separate straws, which she ties singly to every article of furniture in the house, exclaiming "*Báwanni pauti*," implying, may the measure of corn be increased fifty-two fold,—*pauti* denoting a measure of grain. In the villages similar straws are attached to the *Golas*, or thatched granaries, in which the grain of the preceding harvest has been stored.

Besides these private ceremonies, which expressively typify the feelings of satisfaction with which the re-approach of the sun was hailed by a people to whom the principal phenomena of the heavens were familiar, there are also public celebrations of the same event, expressing similar sentiments, but deriving a more local and peculiar complexion from the physical circumstances of the country, and the superstitions of its inhabitants.

According to the *Kalpa Druma* of Jayasinha, upon the authority of the *Padma Puráña*, the whole month of *Mágha* is especially consecrated to *Vishnú*, to whom and to the Sun also prayers should be daily addressed, and offerings or *arghyas* presented. The introduction of *Vishnú* is a modern interpolation¹. The same work prescribes daily bathing before sunrise. The *Bhavishtyottara* also directs daily bathing in *Mágha*, with mantras or prayers by the three first classes, silently by *Súdras* and women, and affirms that the practice is enjoined by the *Vedas*, a rather questionable assertion. The same may be said of the *Vaishnáva* formulæ, given by *Raghunandana*; according to whom the person performing his ablutions is to invoke various personifications of *Vishnú*. Thus the *Sankalpa*, or previous prayer, is, "By this bathing, when the sun is in *Makara*, be thou, oh *Mágha*, oh *Govinda*, oh *Achyuta*, oh *Mádhava*, oh God, the giver of the promised reward to me." He is then to bathe, calling to mind *Vásudeva*, *Hari*, *Krishna*, *Srídhara*, and to say, "Salutation be to thee, oh Sun, lord of the world, giver of light, do thou make perfect this great worship, this bathing in *Mágha*."

Whatever may be the date of this mixture of tenets, the ablution is no doubt an ancient portion of the rite. Bathing in sacred streams constitutes an indispensable part of most of the ceremonial observances

¹ The ablution is to be preceded by a fast and followed by a feast and gifts to Brahmins. पूर्वे व्रतादिकं कुर्यात् पश्चेः स्नानदानयोः Tithi T.

of the Hindus; and where such rivers are not within access, their place is supplied by other pieces of water of less lofty pretensions; a dirty puddle may take the place of the holy Gangá. At the winter solstice, bathing at the confluence of the Ganges with the ocean is particularly meritorious, and accordingly a vast concourse of people is annually assembled at Ganga Ságar, or the mouth of the Hugli branch of the Ganges, at the period of the Makara Sankránti, agreeably to the limitations above assigned to it; that is, its identification with the 1st of Mágha or the 12th of January. Wherever such assemblages take place, objects of a secular nature are now, as they have ever been, blended with those of devotion; and the Mela, which originates in purposes of pilgrimage, becomes equally or in a still greater degree a meeting of itinerant merchants, or a fair.

The number of persons who assemble at Ganga Ságar is variously estimated. Some years ago they were considered to average about one hundred thousand; but I have been informed by high authority that latterly the number has increased to double that amount. They come from all parts of India, the larger proportion, of course, from the contiguous provinces of Bengal and Orissa; but there are many from the Dekhin and from Hindustan, and even from Nepal and the Panjáb. They are of both sexes and of all ages; many come with small pedlery for petty traffic; many from idleness or a propensity to a vagrant life, not uncommon in India; and there is a very large proportion of religious mendicants of all sects. The Saivas usually predominate.

The place at which the Mela is held is, or perhaps it were more safe to say, was, some years ago, a sand bank, on the southern shore of the island of Ságar, immediately to the west of the inlet called Pagoda Creek, from a small pagoda or temple, also on the west of the creek, nearer to the sea than the bank of sand, and separated from the latter by a smaller creek running inland. South from this to the sea-shore, extended a thick jungle, with a pathway leading into the interior, where was a large tank for the supply of the people with fresh water. Tigers lurked in the jungle, and not unfrequently carried off the pilgrims. Along the sea-side, for more than a mile, extended rows of booths, shops, and small temporary temples, with the travelling gods of the religious mendicants, who received the adoration and contributions of the pious. Besides the numerous shops for the supply of provisions and sweetmeats, a brisk traffic was carried on in small wares, especially in betel-nuts, black pepper, and the red powder that is scattered about at the vernal festival of the Huli. A Pandit in my employ, who had visited the Mela, asserted that an impost was levied by the custom officers of Government, of four anas per oar on each boat;

but no such charge appears to have been authorized, except in the case of the Ságár Island Society, who were permitted to make some such charge in consideration of the clearings and tanks made by them. The mendicants, however, petitioned against this privilege, and it was withdrawn from the Society. The petition was not disinterested, as the Sanyásis claimed a right to levy the charge on their own account; a practice that seems to have grown up from long use, and to have been silently acquiesced in by the pilgrims. The total amount was inconsiderable, having been farmed by a native contractor from the Society, whilst in their possession, for 1200 rupees in the first year, and 2000 in the second.

The Mela lasts several days, but three days are the limit of the religious festival. The first ceremony is the propitiation of the ocean, by casting into it various offerings, with short ejaculatory prayers; the oblations are commonly cocoa-nuts, fruits, or flowers; the most appropriate gift is that of the five gems, *Pancha ratna*, consisting of a pearl or diamond, an emerald, a topaz, and a piece of coral, along with a cocoa-nut, an areca-nut, and the thread worn by Brahmans. These are wrapped up in a cloth, and cast into the branch of the river which communicates with the sea, at a place called *Dhola Samudra*, and also at the confluence. The jewels are, in general, of the smaller size, not worth more than a rupee or two. There was a time when the offerings were of a less innocent description, and children were cast into the sea. This horrible and unnatural practice was wholly unsanctioned by anything in the Hindu ritual; and its suppression, by the Government of Bengal, had the cordial concurrence of the Brahmans. The act was not, like the oblation of fruits or jewels, intended to obtain the favour of the deified ocean, but in satisfaction of a vow; as where a woman had been childless, she made a vow to offer her first-born at *Gangá Ságár*, or some other holy place, in the confidence that such an offering would secure for her additional progeny. The belief is not without a parallel in the history of antiquity, sacred or profane, but it was the spontaneous growth of ignorance and superstition, not only unprompted, but condemned by the Hindu religion, and was confined to the lowest orders of the people. It will easily be credited, that the occurrence was rare, and that no attempt has ever been made to infringe the prohibition.

On the first day, bathing in the sea is to be performed; it takes place early in the morning, and is repeated by some at noon; some also have their heads shaved after bathing; and many of those whose parents are recently deceased celebrate their *Sráddha*, or obsequial ceremonies on the sea-shore. After ablution, the pilgrims repair to

the temple, which is dedicated to a Muni, or divine sage, an incarnation of Vishnú, named Kapila. Vishnú became incarnate in his person for the destruction of the sixty thousand wicked sons of King Sagara. He is said to have stationed himself at this place, which was then upon the brink of a vast chasm, leading to the infernal regions. When the sons of the king, who were in search of a horse intended for the solemn sacrifice of the Aswamedha, arrived here, they found the Muni absorbed apparently in meditation, while the steed was grazing near him. Accusing him of having stolen it, they approached to kill him, when fire flashed from his eyes, and instantly reduced the whole troop to ashes. In order to expiate their crime, purify their remains, and secure paradise for their spirits, Bhagírattha, the great-grandson of Sagara, brought down by the force of his austerities, the Ganges from heaven; and led her from the Himalaya, where she had alighted, to this spot. The sons of Sagara were sanctified, and the waters of the river, flowing into the chasm, formed the ocean. The Ganges is called Bhágírathee, from King Bhagírattha; and the sea is termed Ságara, after his great grandsire. The legend is told, in its most ancient and authentic shape, in the Rámáyána.

The temple of Kapila is under the alternate charge of a Bairági and Sanyási, mendicants of the Vaishnava and Saiva sects; the latter presides at the Mela held at this place in the month Kártik, the former at the Mela of Mágha. They exact a fee of four anas from each person who comes to the temple. The aggregate collection of Mágha was divided amongst five different establishments of mendicants of the Rámánandi order, in the vicinity of Calcutta. In front of the temple was a Bur tree, beneath which were images of Ráma and Hanumán; and an image of Kapila, of the size nearly of life, was within the temple. The pilgrims commonly write their names on the walls of the temple, with a short prayer to Kapila; or suspend a piece of earth or brick to a bough of the tree, with some solicitation, as for health, or affluence, or offspring; and promise, if their prayers are granted, to make a gift to some divinity.

Behind the temple was a small excavation termed Sítá kund, filled with fresh water, of which the pilgrim was allowed to sip a small quantity, on paying a fee to the mahant or head manager of the temple. This reservoir was probably filled from the tank, and kept full by the contrivances of the mendicants, who persuaded the people that it was a perpetual miracle, being constantly full for the use of the temple.

On the second and third days of the assemblage, bathing in the sea, adoration of Gangá, and the worship of Kapila, continue as on

the first; after which the meeting breaks up. During the whole time the pilgrims, for the most part, sleep on the sand; for it is considered unbecoming to sleep on board their boats.

This is the great public celebration of the recurrence of the winter solstice in Upper India. In the south there is an equally popular commemoration of the same event, but of which the ceremonies are peculiar, consisting principally of marks of public reverence for cattle, but comprehending also the preparation and distribution of food; whence, indeed, its appropriate appellation, in the Tamil language, Pongol, which, according to native authority, Tiruvakádu Mutia, signifies literally boiled rice, and metaphorically, prosperity or rejoicing¹. The word is therefore another denomination of the festival of the Makara Sankránti, or sun's entrance into Capricorn; or, in the words of the same writer, the first day of the Indian January, corresponding, agreeably to the mode of computation followed in the Dekhin, with the 1st of Tye or Taishya, the Pausya of Hindustan, which, (as in the latter,) falls about the 12th of January. The following particulars of the festival are from a paper, published in the Asiatic Annual Register for 1807, by the intelligent native already named, Tiruvakádu Mutia.

"On the day on which the sun enters Capricorn, which is the beginning of the auspicious period of the Uttaráyāṇa, the Hindus offer libations of water, mixed with tila and kusa, or sesamum seeds and sacred grass, to the manes of their ancestors. They then boil rice with milk and sugar; and when they see it bubble up, they cry aloud 'Pongal, O pongal!' meaning, Let the world be prosperous and rejoice. The boiled rice, along with esculent fruits, is offered to the sun, invoking him for the general good, and the production of abundance. Early the next morning, the husbandmen sprinkle water upon corn sown or grown in fields, crying aloud, 'Pongal, pongal!' meaning, Let the corn grow in plenty, by the grace of the glorious sun, who has begun his northern course (the Uttaráyāṇa), which is a day of the gods. At noon rice and milk are again boiled, and are presented to Indra, praying him to bestow abundant rain, and by thus favouring pasture, cause cattle to increase and multiply. In the afternoon, cows and bulls are washed, and fed with part of an oblation first offered to Indra; and being also painted and adorned with leafy and flowery chaplets, are brought in herds, attended by bands of music, to the public place of the village; there the cow-keepers dress victuals, and

¹ Pongali, according to Rottler, Tam. Dict., means "a bubbling up;" in Telugu, it denotes a dish of rice mixed with boiled milk and sugar and other articles.—Campbell, Tel. Dict.

provide fresh perfumes and flowers, wherewith to decorate their animals; and sprinkle saffron water with mango leaves upon them, as a preservative from evil, crying aloud, 'Pongal, pongal!' meaning, Let cattle be cherished and multiplied, by the grace of Indra, as well as of Gopála (or Krishná the cow-herd). Then the Hindus, with joined hands, are to walk round the cows and bulls, and particularly round the Brahmans, and to prostrate themselves before them. This done, the cow-keepers, with their herds of kine and oxen, return home to their several houses¹. Hence this day is termed *Matu Pongal*; that is, the feast of cattle."

"So the day of the *Makara Sankránti*, or *Perum Pongol*, is dedicated to the sun, and the day of *Matu Pongol* to Indra; they are both comprised in the term *Pongol*, which is an anniversary festival of a week's duration. During this term the Hindus visit and compliment each other, wishing a happy pongal or many returns of it. Sons and daughters prostrate themselves before their parents, servants before their masters, disciples before their teachers. Some people give alms to the poor, some make presents to their friends and relations, some sport and amuse themselves with diversions of different kinds. This ceremony is said to be a practice of very ancient standing, which the former kings of Madura, of the Pándya dynasty, introduced upon the authority of the *Sástras* and *Puráñas*²."

There can be no doubt that the remark of Mutiá, that the observance of the *Uttaráyaña* is a practice of high antiquity, is perfectly true; and there can be equally little doubt that it was of like univer-

¹ The Abbé Dubois adds the following particulars of this part of the ceremony. "On peint de diverses couleurs les cornes des vaches et on leur met au cou une guirlande de feuillages verts entremêlés de fleurs à laquelle on suspend des gateaux, des cocos, et autres fruits, qui se détachant bientôt par le mouvement de ces animaux sont ramassés et mangés avec empressement par ceux qui les suivent. Après avoir conduit les vaches en troupe hors de la ville ou du village, on les force à s'enfuir de coté et d'autre en les effarouchant par le bruit confus d'un grand nombre de tambours et d'instrumens bruyans. Ce jour là ces bêtes peuvent paître par tout sans gardien, et quelques dégats qu'elles fassent dans les champs où elles se jettent, il n'est pas permis de les en chasser."—II., 337.

² This authority acknowledges, therefore, a principal festival of but two days, but we have that of the Madras calendar for three; the first being called the *Bhoga Pándikei*, the second the *Pongal*, and the third the *Matu* (or cattle) *Pongal*. So the Abbé Dubois, "*La fête dure trois jours*;" the first of which is called *Bhoga Pongal* (*pongol de la joie*, from *Bhoga*, enjoyment), the second *Surya Pongal* (*pongol du soleil*), and the third the *Pongol des vaches*.—2, 335. In Rottler's Tamil Diet. we have the three days; the first *Pongi-pandikei*, dedicated, it is said, to Indra; the second *Perum pongol*, sacred to the sun; and the third the *Mátu pongol*, sacred to Krishná.

sality amongst, at least, the Indo-Teutonic races. The analogies are so obvious, that they must instantly occur to every one's mind; and the offerings and distribution of food and sweetmeats and presents, the sports and the rejoicing, and the interchange of mutual good wishes, which characterize the Uttaráyāna amongst the Hindus, are even yet, though to a less extent than heretofore, retained by Christian nations at the same season; beginning with the plum-puddings and mince-pies of Christmas, passing through the new year's gifts and happy new years; the *strenæ* of the Romans, *quæ omnia simul strenas appellarunt*; and terminating with Twelfth-night. Whatever modifications these types of rejoicing may have undergone, and however changed in their present purport, by their connexion with our religious faith, they are evidently of the same general character as the observances of the Hindus; and designate the commencement of a period, in which the northern hemisphere is again to be gladdened, by the proximity of the fountain of light and heat.

In looking for the more striking points of coincidence between the observances of the East and West at this particular season, it is not necessary to be restricted to dates, beyond approximate limits. Our own calendar has been subjected to different reforms, which have, even within a recent term, advanced, by twelve days, the enumeration of the days of the month; and alterations of an astronomical nature have also been alluded to, which may perhaps explain further deviations in this respect. The main point of agreement is unaffected. It is not the recurrence of any precise day of the week or month that constitutes the occasion of the celebration; it is the recurrence of the commencement of the sun's northward course, the Uttaráyāna, or winter solstice, from which all the manifestations of gladness derive their origin; and whether this be fixed accurately or inaccurately—whether the period at which the phenomenon was first noticed has in the course of ages undergone a change—is immaterial. Little doubt can be entertained that the same event gave rise to the same feelings; and that they have been expressed by actions, varying in form, but not in spirit, by very distant nations, through a very long succession of the generations of mankind.

It has already been seen that the Romans connected the beginning of the year with the sun's entrance into Capricorn, and that they then celebrated the renovation of nature. Their mode of celebrating it seems to have had many things in common with the usages of the Hindus, particularly in the interchange of sweetmeats; only substituting for the rice, cakes, and molasses of the Hindus, figs, dates, and

honey. These articles they sent, at this season, to their friends and relations: they were intended, according to Janus, to be ominous of an agreeable year to follow.

Omen ait, causa est ut res sapor ille sequatur,
Et peragat cœptum dulcis ut annus iter.

They also interchanged *læta verba*, good wishes and congratulations;—et *damus alternas accipimusque preces*. The presents made at this season were called *strenæ*; and the word, as well as the practice, subsists in the *Etrennes* of new year's day in France. *Strenam* vocamus quæ datur die religioso omnis boni gratiâ. According to Festus, the practice is referred by Symmachus to an early period of Roman history, the reign of Tatius; but it was no doubt much older. How far it prevailed among the Greeks does not fully appear. The Greeks had a festival in the month Poseideôn, or January, in which they worshipped Neptune, or the Sea, in like manner as the Hindus worship the ocean; but no other particulars are recorded; and it is remarkable how little of the Greek calendar is of an astronomical origin. It is almost entirely legendary and mythological, arguing a people shut up by themselves in very ancient times, and comparatively late in their observations of planetary phenomena. However, it would seem that the sending of good things to one another was not limited to the Romans, as it is said that the Fathers of the Church rigorously condemned the observances of this season, not because of the exchange of civil missives and mutual pledges of regard, but because of the idolatrous worship. "In calendas Januarii antiqui patres vehementius invehebantur, non propter istas missitationes adinvicem et mutui amoris pignora, sed propter diem idolis dicatum."—Montacut. Orig. Eccles. pars prior, p. 128. As the "Fathers" are named so generally, it may be inferred that the observances which they condemned were known wherever the primitive church was established.

The Christmas and new year's festivities which have left traces amongst the Teutonic nations, were transferred to them from their German forefathers, in the time of Paganism. Thus Bede observes of the Anglo-Saxons, "they began their year on the eighth of the calends of January, which is now our Christmas-day." So the yule clog, log or block, which was burnt on the eve of Christmas-day, is considered to have been used as an emblem of the return of the sun, and the lengthening of the days; for according to Bede, both December and January were denominated *Giuli* or *Yule*, upon account of the sun's returning and augmenting the duration of the days: "*December Giuli—eodem quo Januarius nomine vocatur. Giuli a conversione solis in auctum diei nomen accepit.*"—Beda de Ratione Temporum. Again,

Bishop Stillingfleet states, in his *Origines Britannicæ*, "that the ancient Saxons observed twelve days at this period, and sacrificed to the sun." And Mallet states, "that all the Celtic nations worshipped the sun, and celebrated his festival at the winter solstice, to testify their joy at his return to the northern sky. This was the greatest solemnity in the year."—*North. Ant.* 2, 68. Identifications too palpable to be denied, with the *Uttaráyaña* of the Hindus, and the worship by them also of the sun, at the same season, and on the same account. A like analogy may be suspected in the Yule dough, or cakes of flour and water, which, after the introduction of Christianity, were kneaded into little images; but were originally, in all probability, nothing more than the rice cakes of the Hindus. The extension of the period of festivity, so as to include the new year, brings us also to the interchange of presents and good wishes which, amongst the Saxons, as well as the Romans and Hindus, was thought peculiarly appropriate at this season.

Mention is made by Mr. Brand, to whose work on *Popular Antiquities* I am indebted for most of the preceding statements, that it was enjoined in the ancient Calendar of the Roman church, to present on Christmas eve, sweetmeats to the Fathers, "*In Vaticano dulcia patribus exhibentur.*" Of course the Fathers of the Christian church are intended; but it is scarcely possible to avoid a suspicion that something was originally meant, that the practice was, in fact, a relique of heathenism, and that the "Fathers" were in their primitive character, the *Dii Manes* of the Romans, the *Pitris* of the Hindus.

Whatever may be thought of this coincidence, there can scarcely be a doubt that we have some community of origin between the Pongal and the blessing of the cattle at Rome, on the day dedicated to St. Anthony. According to the legend, the Saint once tended a herd of swine, and hence possibly his connexion with other animals. A much more intelligible relation subsists between them and the Hindu Indra, or Jupiter pluvius, as provender is plentiful and nutritive in proportion as rain is abundant. The following account of this ceremony is taken from "*Rome in the Nineteenth Century*," and it will be observed that the time of the year, the decorating of the cattle, the bringing them to a public place, the sprinkling of them with holy water, and the very purport of the blessing, that they may be exempt from evils, are so decidedly Indian, that could a Drávira Brahman be set down of a sudden in the Piazza, before St. Mary's church at Rome, and were asked what ceremony he witnessed, there can be no doubt of his answer; he would at once declare they were celebrating the Pongal.

"*January 18th, 1819.*—We were present to-day at one of the most ridiculous scenes I ever witnessed, even in this country. It was St. Anthony's blessing of the horses, which begins on that Saint's day and lasts for a week. We drove to the church of the Saint, near the Santa Maria Maggiore, and could scarcely make our way through the streets, from the multitudes of horses, mules, asses, oxen, cows, sheep, goats, and dogs, which were journeying along to the place of benediction; their heads, tails, and necks decorated with bits of coloured ribbon, on this their unconscious gala-day. The Saint's benediction, though nominally confined to horses, is equally efficacious and equally bestowed upon all quadrupeds. The priest stood at the door of the church, holding a brush in his hand, which he continually dipped into a large bucket of holy water, and spirted at the animals as they came in unremitting succession, taking off his little skull cap and muttering every time, '*Per intercessionem Sancti Antonii abbatis hæc animalia liberantur a malis.*' "

There can be no doubt that this ceremony is much older than St. Anthony, and it probably is a relique of the Latin village festival of the *Pagualia* or the *Feræ Sementinæ*, which took place about the middle of January, when, after the seed had been sown, the ploughs were laid up in ordinary, and the cattle were decorated with garlands.

—— nunc ad præsepia debent,
Plena coronato stare boves capite.—Tib. lib. xi., El. i., l. 8.

A palpable relique of which rite is also traceable in the Plough Monday of our calendar (13th January), and the games with which it was celebrated.

The long course of ages which has elapsed has necessarily impaired the evidence of a perfect concordance between the ceremonies with which the nations of antiquity commemorated the sun's northern journey; yet no reasonable doubt can be entertained that they did agree in celebrating that event with practices, if not precisely the same, yet of a very similar character; and that traces of such conformity are still to be discovered in the unaltered ritual of the Hindus, and the popular, though ill-understood and fast-expiring practices of the Christian world,—affording a curious and interesting proof of the permanency of those institutions which have their foundation in the immutable laws of nature, and in the common feelings of mankind.

The important character of the *Uttarāyaṇa* festival, and the remarkable analogies which, whether indisputable or not, it unavoidably suggests, have led to a more copious detail, perhaps, than the subject deserves. It is only, however, in such cases that prolixity will admit of apology. The greater number of the festivals will receive

brief notices in proportion as they are more or less of a purely local description, and of inferior interest.

MA'NSA'SHT'AKA.—*Eighth lunar day of the dark half of the lunar month Māgha, about the 20th of January*¹.—The denomination of this day defines its occurrence, ashtaka, meaning eighth; it also indicates its purport, mānsa signifying flesh. Accordingly, on this day, the Śrāddha, or obsequial offerings of flesh, should be made to the pitris or manes. According to the Paurāṇik authorities², there are three days of this nature, in the months severally of Agra-hāyaṇa, Māgha, and Phālguna; which is also the specification of Gobhila, as quoted by Raghunandana; but according to the Mitāksharā, there are four such ashtakas in the course of the year; there being one on the eighth of the moon's wane of each of the two months of the two seasons of Hemanta and śisīra or the four winter months, when śrāddhas are positively enjoined (nitya³). The former authorities direct that different offerings shall be made on the three days, or severally, cakes, flesh, and vegetables, as will be noticed. The institution appears to have been part of the ancient ritual, and to have fallen into comparative neglect. The Brahmans of Upper India, who maintain a perpetual fire, and are thence called Agnihotras, are said to observe the Mānsāshtaka; so do the orthodox Saivas and Śāktas, and the disciples of Raghunandana in Bengal; but it is usual to substitute cakes of boiled rice flour⁴, mixed with milk and sugar for the meat which was anciently presented, not only at the Ashtaka śrāddhas, but, as Manu enjoins, at the periodical śrāddhas in general. "Let the Brahman who maintains a household fire, who has performed the funeral ceremonies of his own family, repeat the subsequent general śrāddha at the conjunction of the moon every month. The wise have called the monthly śrāddhas the subsequent, or periodical śrāddha, and that is to be offered diligently with excellent flesh." (B. III. 122, 123.) The time is specified in the Mitāksharā, upon the authority of an ancient lawgiver, Aśwālāyana. The flesh should be that of a goat or a deer, King Ikshwāku having commanded a large deer to be brought to him for the śrāddha at the Ashtaka⁵.

¹ The specification of the date is to be understood as applicable to Bengal, and even there it is subject to occasional variation.

² The Vishnu Purāṇa specifies three altogether—Aghana, Māgha, and Phālguna. Raghunandana quotes the Brahma P. for the same.

³ अष्टकाः चतस्रः हेमन्तशिशिरयोश्चतुर्णामपरपक्षाणामष्टमीषु अष्टका इत्यश्वलायनोक्तः Mitāksharā, 33, I. 16.

⁴ Boiled in a pot, sthālīpāka, as Gobhila says, अपि वा स्थालीपाकं कुर्वीत

इक्ष्वाकुस्तु विकुक्षिं वै अष्टकायामथादिशत् ।

मंसमानय आह्वाय मृगं हत्वा महाबले ॥

RAT'ANTI CHATURDAŚÍ.—*Fourteenth lunar day of the dark half of Mágha, (26th January.)*—In Sir William Jones's description of this festival, he merely explains it by the sentence, "The waters speak," the word "ratanti," meaning "they speak;" being the first part of an ancient text importing, "The waters say, We purify the sinner who bathes in the month of Mágha, when the sun is scarcely risen, although he be a chandála, or the killer of a Brahman¹." Accordingly the essential rite on this day is bathing in some sacred stream or piece of water; which should be performed before dawn, whilst the stars are yet visible. As in many parts of India the temperature of the atmosphere is at this season almost cold, bathing at such an hour in the open air may easily be conceived to be no trifling penance. Offerings should also be presented on this occasion to Yama, the judge of the lower regions; for he who worships Yama at this period, it is said, shall not see death. Besides the usual libations of water to deceased progenitors, a śráddha should be celebrated, and Brahmans and the family should be fed with rice mixed with pulse, accompanied by a particular Mantra².

These appear to be the ancient directions for a religious rite on the 14th of the dark half of the Mágha; but later days have changed both its time and object. According to the present practice, in Bengal at least, ablution is performed, not before sunrise, but after sunset; and instead of Yama one of the terrific forms of Deví is worshipped, Muñdamáliní, she with the chaplet of skulls, or Syámá, the black goddess; particularly when any cause has prevented the adoration of the latter in the month of Kártik. The authority for this modification of the ceremony is that of the Tantras; and, except by the Śáktas, is not held in much estimation. The day is little observed anywhere.

VARADA' CHATURTHÍ.—*Fourth lunar day of the light half of Mágha (30th January—1st February.)*—According to some of the authorities³ followed in Hindustan, Siva is to be worshipped on

¹ Harivansa, as cited by Raghunandana. The text, as quoted by Raghunandana, is—

माघे मासि दन्त्यापः किञ्चिद्भुदिते खौ ।

ब्रह्मघ्नमपि चाखडालं कं पतनं पुणीमहे ॥

² As in the Nirnayámrita, from the Brahma Purán'a. माघकृष्णचतुर्दश्यां विष्णोर्हैहान्मरीच्यादिना विभज्य बन्धुभ्यः कृशरं भोजयेत् स्वयम् । The Kalpa Tatwa has ब्राह्मणेभ्यः कृशरान्नं भोजनं दत्त्वा

³ Hemádri, Nirnayámrita, Padma Purán'a.

this day in the evening, with offerings of jasmine flowers, whence it is also called Kuñda Chaturthí; but the more usual designation Varadá Chaturthí, implies a goddess, the giver of boons, who in some of the Puráñas is identified with Gaurí, or more especially with Umá, the bride of Siva. She is on this day to be worshipped with offerings of flowers, of incense, or of lights, with platters of sugar and ginger, or milk or salt, with scarlet or saffron-tinted strings and golden bracelets. She is to be worshipped by both sexes, but especially by women; and women themselves, not being widows, are also to be treated with peculiar homage. In the Deví Puráña it is enjoined, that various kinds of grain, and condiments, and confections, and plates made of baked clay, should be given on this day by maidens to the goddess. The due observance of the rite is said to secure a flourishing progeny. The worship of Gaurí, at this season, seems to be popular in the South of India, as the Calendar specifies the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th of Mágha to be equally consecrated to her. In Bengal little regard is paid to this celebration, although worship is sometimes offered to Umá, on behalf of unmarried females, in reference to the means adopted by Gaurí or Umá, whilst yet a maiden, to propitiate Siva, and obtain him for her husband¹. This last circumstance renders it not unlikely, that the epithet Varadá ought to be differently interpreted, and that it means the giver of a husband, a bridegroom being one sense of Vara, and the part which is assigned in it to unmarried girls, the presents to be made by and to them—the offerings to be made for them—and the reward of the rite—a family of children, leave little doubt of the correctness of the interpretation. Now this festival, it is to be observed, occurs in the last days of January or beginning of February, and is not far from that time, when “*quisque sibi sociam jam legit ales avem.*” What St. Valentine had to do with the choosing of mates has perplexed antiquaries; the interposition of Umá, in the selection of a bride or bridegroom, is more intelligible, as she may well be disposed to encourage that of which she set the example. The Romish Church, however, furnishes us with a somewhat nearer approximation in the festival of St. Agnes, which occurs on the 21st January, for on the eve of her day, many kinds of divination are practised by virgins to discover their future husbands. Although the festival is accounted for by a legend of the martyrdom and canonization of the virgin Agnes, it is not impossibly a relict of Paganism, like St. Valentine’s day, which has been supposed to derive its origin from the

¹ See Sir Wm. Jones’s Ode to Bhavání; also translation of Kumára Sambhava, by Dr. Mill, *Journal As. S. B.*, Vol. II., p. 329.

Roman Lupercalia. These festivals may possibly, however, be merely an ill-understood record of ancient usages with regard to seasons of the year when marriages were most suitably solemnized. This seems to be indicated by the Hindu worship of Varadā, although, even amongst them, the precise import of the festival is forgotten.

That this season was considered propitious for marriages amongst the Greeks, is evident, from the name of the month corresponding with January-February, Γαμηλιών, from marriages (γαμός) being frequently celebrated in it; and what is very curious, although very possibly no more than an accidental coincidence, the fourth from the new moon—the Hindu Chaturthī—is especially recommended by Hesiod: Ἐν δὲ τετάρτῃ μηνὸς ἄγεσθαι ἐς οἶκον ἄκουγῃν. “Let him (the bridegroom) take home his bride on the fourth of the moon.”

Srī PANCHAMÍ.—*Fifth lunar day of the light half of the month Mágha (2nd February.)* The designation Srī indicates the bride of Vishnú, the goddess of prosperity and abundance; and the text quoted from the Samvatsara Pradīpa, in the Tithi Tatwa, confirms the identification by stating, that upon this day, Lakshmī, the Goddess of Fortune, (who is also the bride of Vishnú,) is to be worshipped with flowers, perfumes, food, and water: probably the day was originally dedicated to her. The same text, however, proceeds to direct, that pens, and nk, and books, should be revered upon this day; and that a festival should be observed in honour of Saraswatī, the goddess of learning—hence it is inferred, that by Srī, in the first part of the rubric, Saraswatī also is intended, especially as Srī has various significations, one of which may be Saraswatī.

Saraswatī, by the standard mythological authorities, is the wife of Brahmá, and the goddess presiding over letters and arts. The Vaishnavas of Bengal have a popular legend, that she was the wife of Vishnú, as were also Lakshmī and Gangá. The ladies disagreed, Saraswatī, like the other prototype of learned ladies, Minerva, being something of a termagant, and Vishnú, finding that one wife was as much as even a god could manage, transferred Saraswatī to Brahmá, and Gangá to Siva, and contented himself with Lakshmī alone. It is worthy of remark, that Saraswatī is represented as of a white colour, without any superfluity of limbs, and not unfrequently of a graceful figure wearing a slender crescent on her brow, and sitting on a lotus.

On the morning of the fifth lunar day of Mágha, the whole of the pens and inkstands, and the books, if not too numerous and bulky, are collected—the pens, or reeds, cleaned, the inkstands scoured, and the

books, wrapped up in new cloth, are arranged upon a platform or a sheet, and are strewn over with flowers and blades of young barley; no flowers except white are to be offered. Sometimes these are the sole objects of adoration; but an image of Saraswatí stands, in general, immediately behind them; or, in place of the image, a water-jar; a not uncommon, although a curious substitute for a god or a goddess, amongst the Hindus.

After performing the necessary rites of ablution, Saraswatí is to be meditated upon, and invited to the place of worship, with some such mental prayer as the following: "May the glorious goddess of speech, she who is of a white complexion and graceful figure, wearing a digit of the moon upon her brow, and carrying an inkstand and a pen in her lotus-like hands,—may, she, sitting on her lotus throne, be present for our protection¹, and for the attainment of honours and wealth." Water is then to be offered for the washing of her feet; food for her refreshment; flowers, or more costly articles, as pearls and jewels, for her decoration; and three salutations are to be made to her with the mantra, "Reverence to Saraswatí, reverence to Bhadrakálí, reverence to the Vedas, to the Vedāngas, to the Vedānta, and to all seats of learning²." Of other mantras addressed to her, the following are given in the Matsya Purāṇa: "As Brahmá, the great father of all, never, oh, Saraswatí! lives without thee, so do thou ever be my benefactress." Or, "As the Vedas and all inspired writings, as all the sciences and the arts, are never, oh, goddess! independent of thee; so, by thy favour, may my wishes be fulfilled. "In the forms of thy eight impersonations, Lakshmí, Medhá, Dhavá, Pushtí, Gaurí, Tushtí, Prabhá, and Dhriti, do thou, oh, Saraswatí! be ever my protectress."

At the end of the ceremony, all the members of the family assemble and make their prostrations—the books, the pens, and ink, having an entire holiday; and should any emergency require a written communication on the day dedicated to the divinity of scholarship, it is done with chalk or charcoal upon a black or white board.

After the morning ceremony, the boys and young men repair to the country for amusement and sport, and some of these games are of a very European character, as bat and ball, and a kind of prisoner's base. School-boys also used to consider themselves privileged, on this day, to rob the fields and gardens of the villages, but this privilege was stoutly opposed, and was all but extinct some years ago. In the evening there are entertainments according to the means of the parties.

¹ Sárada Tilaka. Sir W. Jones translates this prayer somewhat differently.

² Brahma Purán'a.

The regular celebration of this festival here terminates, but of late years a supplementary observance forms a plea for a second day's holiday in Bengal. The Bengalis have a great passion for throwing the temporary images of their female divinities into the Ganges. It is a rite especially appropriate to Durgá, at the end of the Durgá Pújá; but it has been extended to other goddesses, and amongst them, to Saraswatí, at this season. Accordingly, on the sixth lunar day, the image, which is commonly of plastic clay painted, is conveyed in procession to the river side, stripped of its ornaments, and tossed rather unceremoniously into the stream.

There are some remarkable varieties regarding the seasons of this festival in different parts of India, whether it be considered as dedicated to Saraswatí or to Lakshmí. The *Srí panchamí*, when applied to the former, is observed in Hindustan in Aswin (August-September), and when to the latter, in *Márgasírsha* (October-November), as we shall have future occasion to notice, or the present, the fifth of *Mágha*, is held to be the proper *Srí panchamí*, and dedicated, not to Saraswatí, but to Lakshmí. There is, however, both in Upper India and in the Dekhin, a festival on the fifth of the light half of *Mágha*, which is no doubt the original and ancient celebration,—the *Vasanta Panchamí*, or the vernal feast of the fifth lunar day of *Mágha*, marking the commencement of the season of Spring, and corresponding, curiously enough, with the specific date fixed for the beginning of Spring in the Roman calendar, the fifth of the ides of February.

Quintus ab æquoreis nitidum jubar extulit annis,
Lucifer, et primi tempora veris eunt.—Ovid, II., 149, 150.

After the *Vasanta Panchamí*, *Káma* the god of love, and his bride *Ratí*, pleasure, are to be worshipped with offerings of fruits and flowers¹. In general observance, however, *Vishnú* and *Lakshmí* now take their places, as there are no temples to *Kámadeva*; nor indeed are the celebrations, which probably once occurred at this season, very particularly observed. The day is retained in the calendars, and constitutes a nominal fixed point, from which festivals, which become conspicuous enough a few weeks afterwards, are still said to commence.

¹ *Ratí* is personified as a young and beautiful female, richly attired and decorated, dancing and playing on the *Víná*; and *Káma* is represented as a youth with eight arms, attended by four nymphs,—Pleasure, Affection, Passion, and Power,—bearing the shell, the lotus, a bow and five arrows, and a banner with the *Makara*,—a figure composed of a goat and a fish, or, as before mentioned, the sign *Capricorn*.

SÍTALA' SHASHT'HÍ.—*Sixth lunar day of the light half of Mágha (3rd of February).*—This ceremony is of a strictly private character, and is limited to married women who have children. The object is, in the present day, especially to protect them from the small-pox. The observance, however, seems to have had originally no such specific application, but to have been intended to secure, generally, the healthiness of infants, by the propitiation of a goddess, termed, apparently at the original institution of this rite, Shashthí, but now more commonly Sítalá. According to the legend, the ceremony was instituted by King Priyavrata, in gratitude to Shashthí, for restoring his dead son, Suvrata, to life¹. It should be celebrated on the sixth day of the light fortnight in every month, but this frequent repetition of it has fallen into disuse. Shashthí is said to be so named because she is a sixth part of the goddess Prakriti, but she evidently derives her name from the day of the fortnight of which she is a personification. She is the daughter of Brahmá, and wife of Kártikeya, the general of the hosts of heaven, and is to be meditated upon as a female dressed in red garments, riding on a peacock and holding a cock. Sítalá, in its ordinary sense, means cold, and is here used as an epithet, in reference, perhaps, to the occasional coolness of the day at this time of the year, as distinguished from the sixth lunar days in other months. The word seems also to have suggested the principal observance on this occasion. Cooking on this day is interdicted, victuals must be dressed on the day preceding, and on this eaten cold. Images of Shashthí are rarely made, but sometimes a small doll represents the goddess, or she is typified by the stone on which condiments are ground. This is covered with a yellow cloth and placed upon a platform; or in villages, at the foot of the Indian fig-tree. Fruits and flowers are offered to it, with this prayer, "Oh, Shashthí! as thou art cold, do thou preserve my children in health."

The worship of Sítalá, as identical with Shashthí, seems to be retained only in Bengal. In Hindustan, upon this day, the sun is worshipped with fasting and prayers, and with offerings of Akand or Mandára leaves, whence it is called the Mandára Shashthí. There is, however, a Sítalá Pújá on the eighth of the dark half of Chaitra (or Phálguna), in which case the two minor goddesses are of course distinct.

BHA'SKARA SAPTAMÍ.—*Twenty-second of Mágha, seventh day of the light fortnight (4th of February).*—This day is in an especial degree sacred to the sun. Abstinence is to be practised on the day preceding;

¹ From the Brahmá Vaivartta Purán'a.—Prakriti Khan'd'a, s. 40.

and in the morning before sunrise, or at the first appearance of dawn, bathing is to be performed until sunrise; a rigid fast is to be observed throughout the day, worship is to be offered to the sun, presents are to be made to the Brahmans, and in the evening the worshipper is to hold a family feast; one of the observances of the day is abstinence from study, neither teacher nor scholar being allowed to open a book.

At the time of bathing, certain prayers are to be mentally recited, during which the bather places upon his head a platter holding seven leaves of the arka plant (*calotropis gigantea*), or sataván (*asparagus racemosus*), or the jujube, or a little oil and a lighted wick, and stirs the water around him, according to some, with a piece of sugar-cane; after his prayers, he removes the articles from his head, and sets the lamp afloat on the water. He then makes the usual libations to the Manes, and having gone home, presents food, and money, and clothes, according to his means, to the Brahmans. One of the formulæ of meditation given is, "Glory to thee, who art a form of Rudra, to the lord of Rasas, to Varuna, oh Hárivása, be salutation to thee."

The Káśí Khaṇḍa, as quoted in the Kalpa Druma, gives a different prayer: "Of whatever sin committed by me during seven lives, may this Mákari Saptamí remove both the sorrow and the shame; and whatever sin has been committed by me in this life, through the influence of time, whether in mind, spirit, or body, wittingly or unwittingly, may every such sin, involving the fruit of seven diseases, be effaced by this bathing, oh thou who art identical with the sun, do thou efface it, oh Mákari Saptamí!" The repetition of this prayer purifies a person from all sin, and the whole rite is considered as securing him from sickness and premature decay.

As appears from these latter mantras, the day is also termed Mákari Saptamí, the seventh lunar day of the sun in Capricornus. It may be doubted if the term Mákari is rightly understood, even by the original authorities. Raghunandana considers it to designate the whole month of Mágha, which, regarded as a solar month, should commence with the sun's entrance into the sign. There may, however, be something more in it, and it may originally have been identical with the Uttaráyāṇa, when the sun is equally an especial object of adoration, and either a change of computation depending on astronomical periods, or the purpose of multiplying festivals, has detached it from its primitive position.

In Upper India, the day is also called Achalá Saptamí, the fixed or immovable seventh, because it is said it is always to be held sacred. In the South it is better known as the Ratha Saptamí, or Seventh of

the Chariot; for it is also the first day of a Manwantara, or period of the reign of a Manu, being that of Vivaswat, when the sun comes abroad in a new carriage. Agreeably to the directions given in the Kalpa Taru, for the proper observance of this rite, the sun should be worshipped in his own temple—a temple it would now be difficult to discover in any part of India—with prayers and offerings upon the sixth; during which abstinence is to be practised, and at night the worshipper is to sleep on the ground. He is to bathe and fast on the seventh, as before described, but he is also to construct a car of gold, or silver, or wood, with horses and driver; and after the mid-day ablutions, to decorate it, and with prayers from the Vedas invite the sun to take his place in it. Worship is then to be addressed to the sun, and the worshipper is to prefer whatever desire he may have formed, which the sun will assuredly grant him. The night is to be spent with music, singing, and rejoicing, and in the morning ablution is to be repeated; presents are to be made to the Brahmans, and the car with all its appurtenances is to be presented to the Guru or spiritual preceptor. This is probably an ancient rite, coeval with the development of the institutions of the Vedas.

Various other appellations are specified as belonging to this same lunar day, as the Jayantí Saptamí, the victorious seventh; the Mahá Saptamí, the great seventh, and others; but the characteristic observance is the same, and whatever the designation, the worship of the sun is the prominent ceremony of the seventh of the light half of Mágha.

The same may be said, however, of the seventh lunar day throughout the year, chiefly of one seventh in each fortnight, that of the moon's increase; but also of the seventh day of the wane. Besides which, there are particular sevenths to which the concurrence of other circumstances, such as its falling on a Sunday, or when the moon enters certain mansions, as Rohini, gives extraordinary sanctity, and renders the worship of the sun more than usually efficacious. The specification of the days of the week by the names of the seven planets, is, as it is well known, familiar to the Hindus. The origin of this arrangement is not very precisely ascertained, as it was unknown to the Greeks and not adopted by the Romans until a late period. It is commonly ascribed to the Egyptians and Babylonians, but upon no very sufficient authority, and the Hindus appear to have, at least, as good a title as any other people to the invention¹.

¹ It has been thought that Herodotus alludes to the custom, when he observes, lib. ii., c. 82, that the Egyptians assign their months and days to different deities. Pliny also has an obscure intimation that the sovereignty over each day was attri-

Aditya-vára, Ravi-vára, or Rabi-bar in the barbarized vernacular, Dies Solis, or Sunday, is one of every seven. This is somewhat different from the seventh Tithi or lunar day, but a sort of sanctity is, or at least was, attached even to Sunday, and fasting on it was considered obligatory or meritorious¹. But the religious Fasti of the Hindus confine their instructions to the Tithi, and declare, that whoever worships the sun, on the seventh day of the moon's increase, with fasting, and offerings of white oblations, as white flowers and the like; and whoever fasts on the seventh of the moon's wane, and offers to the sun red flowers and articles of a red colour, is purified from all iniquity and goes after death to the solar sphere². The worship of the sun, on the seventh of the dark fortnight, seems to have gone out of use, but that on the seventh of the light fortnight is strongly recommended in various authorities, beginning with this seventh of Mágha and continuing throughout the year. In connexion with this observance, different modes of abstinence are enjoined for each succeeding lunar day, such as taking, during the day, small quantities only of milk, or ghee, or water, or acrid leaves; or fasting wholly from sunset on the sixth till after morning ablutions on the eighth; thence this day is also termed Vidhána Saptamí—the seventh of observance—as being the first of the series. On all these occasions Arghyas, or offerings, are presented to the Sun; but the arghya, more peculiarly appropriated to him, consists of eight articles. These slightly vary in different specifications, but they are usually water, milk, curds, ghee, sesamum and mustard seeds, grains of rice, and the blossom of the kúsa grass. Perfumes and flowers, especially of a white or a red colour, are also most fit to be presented to the sun, according to some authorities. Gifts of fuel, and the lighting of a large fire on the morning of the seventh lunar day of Mágha,

buted to the planets in the order of their revolution. In the time of Dion Cassius, or in the beginning of the third century, the nomenclature had come into general use, and he is the authority for its Egyptian origin. As in the Latin version, quod autem dies ad septem sidera illa, quos planetas appellarunt, referuntur id ab Ægyptiis institutum.—Lib. 38, c. 18. Christmannus, a modern Latin writer, (de Kalendario Romano,) attributes the nomenclature to the Babylonians: Sane apud Romanos nulla tunc erat distinctio temporis in hebdomades dierum; ea tamen apud Babylonios et Ægyptios statim a regno Nabonasari in usu fuit cum septem planetarum nominibus dies septimanæ appellarentur. He does not give his authorities. It was not impossibly of Chaldean invention, but was very generally diffused throughout the East at a remote date.

¹ The jackall declines touching the sinewy meshes of the noose, because it is Sunday.—Hitopadesa.

² Commentary on Tithi Tatwa.

are also meritorious acts. The following are two other prayers¹ usual on these occasions, in which it will be noticed that the number "Seven" makes a conspicuous figure.

Upon presenting the Argha, the day itself, personified as a goddess, is thus addressed; "Mother of all creatures, Saptamí! who art one with the lord of the seven coursers and the seven mystic words, glory to thee in the sphere of the sun;" and on prostration before the sun or his image, the worshipper utters, "Glory to thee, who delightest in the chariot drawn by seven steeds, the illuminator of the seven worlds; glory to thee on the seventh lunar day—the infinite, the creator!" It is impossible to avoid inferring, from the general character of the prayers and observances, and the sanctity evidently attached to a recurring seventh day, some connexion with the sabbath, or seventh, of the Hebrew Heptameron.

BHÍSHMA'SHTAMÍ.—*Twenty-third of Mágha, eighth lunar day of the light half (7th February).*—This is a festival which, at first sight, appears to be of special and traditional origin, but which has, probably, its source in the primitive institutes of the Hindus, of which the worship of the Pitris, the patriarchs or progenitors, the Dii Manes, constituted an important element. According to the Tithi Tatwa, this day is dedicated to Bhíshma, the son of Gangá, and great uncle of the Pándava and Kaurava princes; who was killed in the course of the great war, and dying childless left no descendant in the direct line, on whom it was incumbent to offer him obsequial honours. In order to supply this defect, persons in general are enjoined to make libations of water on this day to his spirit, and to offer him sesamum seeds and boiled rice. The act expiates the sins of a whole year: one of its peculiarities is, that it is to be observed by persons of all the four original castes, according to a text of Dhavala, an ancient lawgiver, quoted by Raghunandana, "Oh, twice-born! persons of all the Varñas should on the eighth lunar day offer water, sesamum seeds, and rice, to Bhíshma. If a Brahman, or man of any other caste, omit to make such offerings, the merit of his good deeds during the preceding year is annulled." According to a different reading of the text, however, it should be rendered: "Let all the twice-born castes make the oblations." This excludes Súdras, but extends the duty to the Kshatriyas and Vaisyas as well as Brahmans. The intention of the rite, as now understood, is expressed in the formulæ uttered at the time of presenting the offerings: "I present this water to the childless hero Bhíshma, of the race of Vyághrapada, the chief of the house of Sankriti. May Bhíshma,

¹ From the Narasinha Purán'a.

the son of Santanu, the speaker of truth and subjugator of his passions, obtain by this water the oblations due by sons and grandsons." The simple nature of the offerings which are sufficient on such occasions, water and sesamum seeds, justifies the remark made by Ovid on the Feralia, that the Manes are easily satisfied,—Parva petunt manes.

The observance of this ceremony is almost obsolete in Bengal, and in the principal authorities of Hindustan it is not noticed. The Bhavishyottara Purāṇa has a Bhīshma panchakam,—a solemn rite which begins on the 11th of Kārtik (light half), and continues to the 13th, which has something of the character of the Feralia, being a period of mortification and fasting, and expiatory of sin, which is worshipped in an effigy made for the occasion, placed upon a measure of sesamum, and invoked by the appellations of Dharma-raja or Yama, the judge of the dead. The ceremony is said to have been ordained by Bhīshma, when mortally wounded, and is to be practised by all castes, and even by women. The rite is not found, however, in any of the calendars, and it is probably an expiring relique of the once general and public worship of the Manes.

BHAIMYEKA'DASĪ.—*Eleventh lunar day of the light half of Māgha (10th February).*—This is also a festival of traditional origin, said to have been first observed by Bhīma, one of the Pāṇdu princes, in honour of Vishṇu, according to the instructions of Vāsudeva. Every eleventh lunar day, it may be observed, is held in extravagant veneration by the Hindus, but more particularly by the Vaiṣṇavas. Fasting on the eleventh is declared to be equally efficacious with a thousand āśwamedhas, and eating during its continuance as heinous a sin as parricide, or the murder of a spiritual teacher. This extravagance demonstrates its sectarian character, and consequently its more modern origin. The notion may have grown, however, out of particular appropriations of the lunar day, when the eleventh was set apart, as in the present case, to the adoration of Vishṇu.

According to the ritual, the worshipper on this occasion is to fast on the tenth, and bathe at sunset. He is to bathe at dawn on the eleventh, and having previously constructed a temporary temple in the court-yard of his house, he is to cause burnt-offerings to be made to Purushottama and other forms of Vishṇu, by Brahmans acquainted with the Vedas; he himself going through a rather complicated series of prayers and gesticulations. There is no image of Vishṇu, and he is invoked by formulæ derived from the Vedas. The worshipper observes a strict fast throughout the day, and keeps a vigil at night

with music and singing. On the morning of the twelfth he dismisses the Brahmans with presents, bathes, and then takes a meal, of which flesh forms no part. The performance of this ceremony expiates the sin incurred by omission of any of the prescribed fasts during the preceding twelvemonth.

Some differences of date and nomenclature occur, in various authorities, regarding this day. The Kalpa Druma calls it Jayá, but enjoins fasting and watching, and the worship of Vishnú; and attributes to it the same expiatory efficacy, calling it the purifier, the destroyer of sin, the bestower of all desires, and the granter of emancipation to mankind.—Pavitrá, pápahantrí cha, kámadá, mokshadá, nrinám. The same work, however, has a day named from Bhíma, and refers to the same legend for its origin; but it places it on the following day, as Bhíma dwádaśí. The Bhavishyottara Purána also removes the day to the twelfth, and tells a different story to account for it, describing it as taught by the sage Pulastya to King Bhíma, the father of Damayantí, in reply to his anxious inquiry how sin was to be efficaciously expiated. Like the preceding, its essence is the domestic worship of Vishnú, with the Homa or oblations to fire, and ceremonies and prayers of Vaidika origin. One part of the ceremony consists in the administration of a sort of shower-bath to the institutor of the rite, as towards evening water is dropped upon his head from a perforated vessel, whilst he sits meditating upon Vishnú. The evening is to be spent in music and singing, and the reading of the Harivansa, or Sánti parva of the Mahábhárata. The ceremony expiates all possible wickedness. The rite is held in little esteem, and is evidently compounded of the observances of various eras,—all of which are equally little understood,—although the compound is manifestly of a purificatory or expiatory character.

SHAT TÍLA DA'NAM.—*Twenty-seventh Mágha, twelfth day of the light half (11th February).*—This may be considered as in some sort a continuation of the Bhaimyekádaśí, and is intended for the same object—the removal or expiation of sin. As the name implies, six different acts are to be performed, in all which Tila or sesamum seeds, are an essential ingredient. The person who observes the rite is to bathe in water in which they have been steeped—to anoint himself with a paste made of them—to offer them with clarified butter upon fire—to present them with water to the manes of his ancestors—to eat them—to give them away. The consequences of so doing are purification from sin, exemption from sickness and misfortune, and a sojourn in Indra's heaven for thousands of years. According to the Bráhma

Puráha, Yama, the deity of the infernal regions, created Sesamum after long and arduous penance upon this day, whence its sanctity. The same title and the same virtues are sometimes attributed also to the twelfth of the dark fortnight of the month, as was explained by Agastya to Dattatreya, when he asked by what means the effects of sin would be obviated, and sinners saved from hell without great effort or munificent donations¹. The ceremonies to be performed with Tila seeds are the easy means of accomplishing the object. The importance attached to the use of Sesamum in most of the offerings, but especially in those to the Manes, is very remarkable and not very explicable. The legend of their being generated by Yama is rather the consequence than the cause of such appropriation. Sesamum seeds did form an ingredient in the offerings of the Greeks, but not with the same frequency, nor apparently with the same object. Cakes of sesamum were distributed by them at marriages, as the grains were considered typical of fertility. Perhaps some such opinion may have prevailed amongst the Hindus, and hence their use in obsequial offerings, the great end of which is not merely the satisfaction of the dead, but the perpetuation of progeny, and the prosperity of the living.

Another festival is observed on this day, in some parts of India, in honour of Vishnú, as the Varáha, his descent as a boar to lift up the earth from beneath the waters, being supposed to have occurred on this day; hence it is termed also the Varáha Dwádasi.

YUGA'DYA'.—*Thirtieth Mágha, fifteenth day, light half, or full moon of Mágha (14th February).*—Bathing and fasting, and the offering of sesamum seeds to the Manes, are enjoined on the full moon of Mágha, and it is also held in additional honour as the anniversary of the commencement of the Kali Yug, or present age of the world, the age of impurity. According to some authorities the anniversaries of the Yugas occur not on the days of opposition, or full moon, but on those of conjunction or new moon, and this is more consonant to the character of the rites principally practised, as bathing and libations of water and sesamum to the Dii Manes. Thus the Vishnú Puráha observes, the fifteenth of Mágha in the dark fortnight is one of the days called by ancient teachers, the Anniversaries of the first day of a Yuga or Age, and are esteemed most sacred; on these days water mixed with sesamum seeds should be regularly presented to the progenitors of mankind; and again, the Pitris are described as saying, "After having received satisfaction for a twelvemonth we shall further derive it from

¹ Kalpa Druma.

libations offered by our descendants at some holy place at the end of the dark fortnight of Mágha."

SA'KA'SHTAMÍ.—*Ninth of the solar month Phálguna; Eighth day of lunar month Phálguna, dark half (22nd February).*—This is another of the eighth lunar days dedicated to the Manes, when their worship is to be performed with the usual accompaniments of bathing and abstinence, and offerings to the Viswadevas or universal gods. On this occasion the offerings presented to the Pitris are, as the name imports, restricted to vegetable substances, Sága signifying any potherb.

VIJAYAÍKA'DASÍ.—*Eleventh Phálguna, dark half (24th February).*—A celebration little known or observed. A water jar, decorated with the emblems of Vishnú, and considered as a type of him, is worshipped with the usual oblations; bathing in the morning and a vigil at night are to be observed. This is considered as a purificatory ceremony, first performed by Ráma to secure his passage across the ocean to Lanká: according to the authority, the Skanda Purána, quoted by the Kalpa Druma, it is an old ceremony of a purificatory tendency, removing sin and conducing to virtue.

Before taking leave of the period which has been latterly described, and which corresponds with the greater portion of the month of February, it is impossible not to be struck with the peculiar character of the ceremonies. From the time of the Vasanta panchamí, which ushers in the spring with indications of festivity, all the observances partake more or less of a lustral or purificatory purport; some of them have no other aim than the expiation of sin, whilst this in others is mixed up with the worship of the Manes. Purification from, or expiation of wickedness is, however, the predominating design of the ceremonies; and ablution and fasting, and abstinence of all kinds are the practices considered essential to the attainment of this object. Such are the chief intentions of the Makara Saptamí, Bhíshmáshtamí, Bhaimyekádasí, Shat-tila dánam, Yugádyá, and Sákáshtamí, all occurring within this interval. Now the spirit of the time is precisely that which marked a great part of the month of February among the Romans, and the name of the month itself is said to have been derived from its dedication by Numa to Februus, the god of lustrations, for in that month it was necessary to purify the city and pay to the Dii Manes the oblations that were their due: "Nomen habet a Februo deo lustrationum cui a Numa erat dicatus. Lustrari autem eo mense civitatem necesse erat; quo statuit ut justa Diis manibus solverentur¹."

¹ Macrobius, Saturn. I. 13.

According to some, the name is derived from the verb "februor," to be cleansed or purified. The connexion between lustrations and obsequial rites is another analogy, and consonantly with this opinion, the Feralia, or worship of the manes were celebrated for several days in February, ending with the 17th, or according to some with the 23rd. The month was thence called also the Feralis Mensis. This similarity of time and of purposes can scarcely have been accidental, and there can be no reasonable doubt that the Feralia of the Romans and the Sráddha of the Hindus, the worship of the Pitris and of the Manes, have a common character and had a common origin.

SIVARA'TRÍ.—*Fourteenth of the lunar month Phálguna; dark half, (27th February).*—This, in the estimation of the followers of Siva, is the most sacred of all their observances, expiating all sins, and securing the attainment of all desires during life, and union with Siva or final emancipation after death. The ceremony is said to have been enjoined by Siva himself, who declared to his wife Umá, that the fourteenth of Phálguna, if observed in honour of him, should be destructive of the consequences of all sin, and should confer final liberation. According to the Isána Sanhitá, it was on this day that Siva first manifested himself as a marvellous and interminable Linga, to confound the pretensions of both Brahmá and Vishnú, who were disputing which was the greater divinity. To decide the quarrel, they agreed that he should be acknowledged the greater, who should first ascertain the limits of the extraordinary object which appeared of a sudden before them. Setting off in opposite directions, Vishnú undertook to reach the base, Brahmá the summit; but after some thousand years of the gods spent in the attempt, the end seemed to be as remote as ever, and both returned discomfited and humiliated, and confessed the vast superiority of Siva. The legend seems to typify the exaltation of the Saiva worship over that of Vishnú and Brahmá, an event which no doubt at one time took place.

There is some difference of practice in respect to the day on which this festival is observed; according to some authorities, it is held on the fourteenth of the dark half of Mágha, according to others on the fourteenth of that of Phálguna; but this is a mere nominal difference, arising from the modes of reckoning the beginning of the month from the new or the full moon. Another difference, which is less easily adjusted, is that of date; some considering the festival as properly commencing on the thirteenth instead of the fourteenth; which appears to be the case in the South, according to the published calendars. This arises from the circumstance of the chief part of the

ceremony being observed by night, as the name of Sivarátri denotes, and of a variety in the apportionment of the hours of the night to the series of observances. According to some, the ceremony should begin on the evening of the thirteenth Tithi, or lunar day, if it extends to four hours after sunset; according to others, it should begin on whichever of the two tithis or lunar days comprises the larger proportion of the hours of the night; according to some, it should be held on the Tithi, which comprises both evening twilight, and midnight; and according to others, that which includes midnight without the evening. These are knotty points, which are not very intelligible without reference to an almanac, but they are not the less important in the eyes of the worshippers of Siva. When the Tithi coincides with the solar day, or lasts from sunrise to sunrise, it is called Suddha, or pure, and the rite begins with the morning of the fourteenth and closes on the morning of the fifteenth.

The three essential observances are fasting during the whole Tithi, or lunar day, and holding a vigil and worshipping the Linga during the night; but the ritual is loaded with a vast number of directions, not only for the presentation of offerings of various kinds to the Linga, but for gesticulations to be employed, and prayers to be addressed to various subordinate divinities connected with Siva, and to Siva himself in a variety of forms. After bathing in the morning, the worshipper recites his Sankalpa, or pledges himself to celebrate the worship. He repeats the ablution in the evening, and going afterwards to a temple of Siva, renews his pledge, saying, "I will perform the worship of Siva, in the hope of accomplishing all my wishes, of obtaining long life, and progeny, and wealth, and for the expiation of all sins of whatever dye I may have committed during the past year, open or secret, knowingly or unknowingly, in thought, or act, or speech." He then scatters mustard-seed with special mantras, and offers an argha; after which he goes through the *mátrika nyása*,—a set of gesticulations accompanied by short mystical prayers, consisting chiefly of unmeaning syllables, preceded by a letter of the alphabet: as, A-kam, A'-srán, salutation to the thumb; I-chan, I'-srin, salutation to the forefinger; U-stan, U'-stúm, salutation to the middle finger; and so on, going through the whole of the alphabet with a salutation, or *namaskár*, to as many parts of the body, touching each in succession, and adding, as the Mantras proceed, names of the Mátris, female Saktís, or energies of Siva, who, by virtue of these incantations, are supposed to take up their abode for the time in the different members of the worshipper. Other objects are supposed to be effected by similar means; impediments are obviated by stamping thrice, and repeating as often the Mantra

"Houn, to the weapon, phat;" next, with the same mantra, and by thrice snapping the finger, the ten quarters of the sphere, or universal space, are aggregated in the Linga; and the purification of all beings is to be effected by thrice clapping the hands together, and uttering the same Mantra each time. The repetition of nyása, or touching parts of the body whilst repeating mystical ejaculations, accompanies every offering made to the Linga, as fruits, flowers, incense, lights, and the like, during the whole ceremony.

When the rite is performed, as it most usually is, in the performer's own residence, a Linga, if not already set up, is consecrated for the purpose; and this is to be propitiated with different articles in each watch of the night on which the vigil is held. In the first watch, it is to be bathed with milk, the worshipper, or the Brahman employed by him, uttering the Mantra "Houn—reverence to Isána." An offering is then made with the prayer: "Devoutly engaging in thy worship, oh, Íswara, and in repeating thy names, I celebrate the Sivarátrí rite according to rule, do thou accept this offering!" Incense, fruits, flowers, and articles of food, as boiled rice, or sometimes even dressed flesh are offered with the customary prostration, and with the repetition of other Mantras.

A similar course is followed in the other three periods, with a modification of the formulæ, and the articles used to bathe the Linga with. Then in the second, it is bathed with curds, with the Mantra "Houn—reverence to Aghora;" and the mantra of the Argha is "Reverence to the holy Siva, the destroyer of all sins; I offer this Argha at the Sivarátrí, do thou with Umá be propitious." In the third, the bathing is performed with ghee, with the Mantra "Houn, reverence to Vámadeva;" and the Argha-mantra is, "I am consumed by pain, poverty, and sorrow: oh Lord of Párvatí, do thou, oh beloved of Umá, accept the Argha I present thee on this Sivarátrí!" In the fourth watch the Linga is bathed with honey, with the Mantra "Houn, reverence to Sadyajáta;" and the Argha-prayer is, "Oh, Sankara! take away the many sins committed by me, accept, beloved of Umá, the oblation I present thee on this the night of Siva." At the end of the watch, or daylight, the ceremony is to be concluded with the radical mantra, "Siváya nama," and some such prayers as these; "Through thy favour, oh Íswara! this rite is completed without impediment; oh look with favour, oh lord of the universe, Hara, sovereign of the three worlds, on what I have this day done, which is holy and dedicated to Rudra! Through thy grace has this rite been accomplished. Be propitious to me, oh, thou most glorious! Grant to me increase of affluence: merely by beholding thee I am assuredly sancti-

fied." Oblations to fire are then to be made, and the ceremony concludes with further offerings to the Linga, and with the Mantra, "By this rite may Sankara be propitiated, and coming hither, bestow the eye of knowledge on him who is burnt up by the anguish of worldly existence." Brahmans are to be entertained, and presents are to be made to them by the master of the house and his family holding a feast.

Those modes of adoration which are at all times addressed to the different forms of Siva, and those articles which are peculiarly enjoined to be presented to the Linga, form, of course, part of the observances of the Sivarátri. Amongst the forms is the Japa, or muttered recitation of his different names as the worshipper turns between his fingers the beads of a rosary, made of the seeds of the Rudráksha, or Eleocarpus. The fullest string contains one hundred and eight beads, for each of which there is a separate appellation, as Siva, Rudra, Hara, Sankara, Íswara, Maheśwara, Súlápáni, Paśupati, and others. Amongst the latter, are certain leaves and flowers, and fruits, and especially those of the bel-tree, as in the text—"The Vilwa is the granter of all desires, the remover of poverty; there is nothing with which Sankara is more gratified than with the leaf of the Vilwa." The flower of the Datúra is another of his favourites, and a single presentation of it to a Linga is said to secure equal recompense as the gift of a hundred thousand cows. At the Sivarátri worship, the Linga may be crowned with a chaplet of Ketaki flowers, but only on this occasion. According to the legend, a Ketaki blossom fell from the top of the miraculous Siva-linga, already alluded to as having appeared to Brahmá and Vishnú, and being appealed to by the former, falsely affirmed that Brahmá had taken it from the summit of the Linga. Vishnú, knowing this to be untrue, pronounced an imprecation upon the flower, that it should never more be offered to Siva. He was moved, however, by the penitence of the flower, so far to remit the penalty, as to allow its decorating the Linga worshipped at the Sivarátri pújá.

The worship of Siva at this season is permitted to all castes, even to Chándálas, and to women, and the use of the Mantras seems to be allowed to them; the only exception being the mystical syllable "Om." This they are not to utter; but they may go through the acts of worship with the prayer "Siváya nama." The same rewards attend their performance of it with faith, elevation to the sphere of Siva, identification with him and freedom from future birth, and these benefits accrue even though the rite be observed unintentionally and unwittingly, as is evidenced by the legend of a forester which is related

in the second part of the *Síva Purána*, ch. xxxiv. Being benighted in the woods on the *Sivarátri*, the forester took shelter in a *Vilwa*-tree. Here he was kept in a state of perpetual wakefulness by dread of a tiger prowling round the foot of the tree. He therefore observed, though compulsorily, the *Jágarāṇa* or vigil. The forester had nothing with him to eat, consequently he held the fast. Casting down the leaves of the tree to frighten the tiger, some of them fell upon a deserted *Linga* near the spot, and thus he made the prescribed offering. On the ensuing morning the forester fell a prey to the tiger, but such was the fruit of his involuntary observance of the rites of the *Sivarátri*, that when the messengers of *Yama* came to take his spirit to the infernal regions they were opposed by the messengers of *Siva*, who enlisted him in their ranks, and carried him off in triumph to the heaven of their master.

Notwithstanding the reputed sanctity of the *Sivarátri*, it is evidently of sectarial and comparatively modern, as well as merely local institution, and consequently offers no points of analogy to the practices of antiquity. It is said in the *Kalpa Druma*, that two of the mantras are from the *Rig veda*, but they are not cited, and it may well be doubted if any of the *Vedas* recognise any such worship of *Siva*. The great authorities for it are the *Purāṇas* and the *Tantras*; the former—the *Siva*, *Linga*, *Padma*, *Matsya*, and *Váyu*, are quoted chiefly for the general enunciations of the efficacy of the rite and the great rewards attending its performance: the latter for the mantras: the use of mystical formulæ, of mysterious letters and syllables, and the practice of the *Nyása* and other absurd gesticulations being derived mostly, if not exclusively, from them, as the *Ísána Sanhitá*, the *Siva Rahasya*, the *Rudra Yámala*, *Mantra-Mahodadhi*, and other *Tántrika* works. The age of these compositions is unquestionably not very remote, and the ceremonies for which they are the only authorities, can have no claim to be considered as parts of the primitive system. This does not impair the popularity of the rite, and the importance attached to it is evidenced by the copious details which are given by the compilers of the *Tithi Tatwa* and *Kalpa Druma* regarding it, and by the manner in which it is observed in all parts of India.

The performance of the ceremonies of the *Sivarátri* is possessed of enhanced efficacy when conducted at those places which are in an especial manner dedicated to *Siva*, particularly at the shrines which were known to have been celebrated seats of worship of the *Linga* before the Mohammedan invasion. Such is the temple of *Vaidyanáth* in Bengal, about 110 miles w. by n. from *Murshedabad*. The *Linga* worshipped there is one of the twelve great *Lingas* which were wor-

shipped in India at least ten centuries ago, and still retains its reputation. In consequence of the establishment of the Mohammedan rule, and its position in a rugged and mountainous country overrun with thickets, the shrine fell for a season into neglect and decay, but it was repaired and restored to popularity by a Maithila Brahman about two centuries since. An annual Mela takes place at Vaidyanáth, at the Sivarátri, when more than a hundred thousand pilgrims assemble. The meeting lasts three days, and the offerings made to the temple ordinarily exceed a lakh and a-half of rupees. The shrine has some credit as an oracle, and a course of worship and fasting on the spot is productive of dreams, which are believed to convey the answers of Siva to the prayers and petitions that have been preferred to him.

A still more numerous concourse of pilgrims occurs annually on the Sivaratri at the temple of Mallikárjuna in the Dekhin, also one of the twelve ancient Lingas, the temple of which is situated in a country quite as difficult of access as Vaidyanáth. An account of the Mela held here is given by the late Colonel Mackenzie, in the fifth volume of the Asiatic Researches. He calls the place Sri-parvatham—properly Sri Parvata, or Sri Saila, the holy mountain—he specifies the name of the Linga, however, as Mallikarja, that is to say Mallikárjuna.

According to the Bombay Calendar, there is a numerous assemblage of Hindus at the Sivarátri on the Island of Elephanta, the great cave temple of which place contains the well known three-headed image of Siva.

GOVÍNDA DWA'DASI.—*Twenty-seventh solar Phálguna; twelfth day, light half, (13th March.)* This is a festival, which, as observed in Bengal, is held in honour of Krishña, who is worshipped in his juvenile form as a cowherd. In Hindustan it is termed the Nrisinha dwádasi, and is dedicated to Vishnú in his Avatára of the Nrisinha, or man-lion. In neither is it an observance held in much repute.

GHAN'T'A-KARN'A PU'JA'.—*Twenty-ninth solar Phálguna; fourteenth day, light half (15th March).* This is also a minor festival, and apparently confined to Bengal. Ghañta-karña, one of Siva's gañas, or attendants, is to be worshipped under the type of a water-jar: the object of the rite is expressed in this prayer, which accompanies the presentation of fruits and flowers to the jar. "Oh, Ghañta-karña! healer of diseases, do thou preserve me from the fear of cutaneous affections." Ghañta-karña is described in the Siva Puráña as endowed with great personal beauty, and is, therefore, reputed to sympathise

with those who suffer any disfigurement. In Hindustan there are directions for worshipping Maheswara, or Siva himself, on the fourteenth of the light half of Phálguna.

DOLA YA'TRA', OR HOLI.—*Thirtieth solar Phálguna, or first of Chaitra; fifteenth day, light half, or full moon of Phálguna (16th March).*—Although named together, and in various parts of India, especially in Bengal, confounded with each other, yet in other places these festivals are still, as they no doubt were originally elsewhere, distinct¹; the Dolotsava, or Swinging Festival, taking place at a date something later, and this period belonging, most appropriately, to the Holi. It will be convenient to notice them here together however, for the Holi, as a distinct celebration, is not known in Bengal, although many of the observances which are there practised at the Dola Yátrá are in many respects the same, are influenced by the same spirit, and express in the like style of language and deportment the feelings of exuberant gladness which hail the return of spring.

When India was governed by native princes, and the institutions of the Hindus were in full vigour, there is reason to believe, that at this time of the year a series of connected and consistent festivities spread through a protracted period of several weeks, and that the whole constituted the Vasantotsava, the feast of Vasanta or Spring. The proper commencement of this period was, perhaps, the Vasanta Panchami, the fifth of the light half of Mágha, which, as we have had occasion to notice, was regarded as the beginning of Spring. After this, however, ensued the gloomy succession of lustral and purificatory rites which have been described, and which suspend the season of festivity until the period now under consideration, when the Holi takes the place of the initiatory Vasanta Panchamí, and is followed by celebrations in honour of Spring, and the friend of Spring, Love. Whether there has been any dislocation of times and observances here—whether the lustral days did not at one time precede the vernal rejoicings, we have no means of determining; but it is somewhat remarkable, that such was the case with the February of the Romans, which, in the days of Numa, when their year consisted of but ten months, was the last of the year, and therefore, was fitly enough the season for expiating the accumulated iniquities of the preceding months. However this may be, such is now the case, and the vernal festival is broken in upon and interrupted by observances of a different complexion—the effect of

¹ The Kalpa Druma does notice a Dolotsava,—the swinging of Krishn'a on the Phálguní purnimá.

which may, perhaps, have been to heighten by the contrast the sense of exhilaration when the time for it recurred.

It is also to be remarked, that although traces of the original purport of the festival are palpable enough, yet that Love and Spring have been almost universally deposed from the rites over which they once presided, and that they have been superseded by new and less agreeable mythological creations; new legends have also been invented to account for the origin and object of the celebration, having little or no obvious relation to the practices which are pursued. Thus, in Bengal, the divinity worshipped at the Dola Yátrá is the juvenile Krishná, whilst in Hindustan, the personified Holi is a female hobgoblin, a devourer of little children.

As publicly commemorated in Bengal, the Dola Yátrá, or swinging festival, begins on the fourteenth day of the light half of Phálguna (about the middle of March). The head of the family fasts during that day. In the evening fire-worship is performed; after which the officiating Brahman sprinkles upon an image of Krishná, consecrated for the occasion, a little red powder, and distributes a quantity of the same among the persons present. This powder, termed Phalgu, or Abira, is made chiefly of the dried and pounded root of the *Curcuma Zerumbet*, or of the wood of the *Cæsalpinia Sappan*, which are of a red colour, or in some places the yellow powder of Turmeric is substituted. After this ceremony is concluded a bonfire is made on a spot previously prepared, and a sort of Guy Fawkes-like effigy, termed Holiká, made of bamboo laths and straw, is formally carried to it and committed to the flames. In villages and small towns the bonfire is public, and is made outside the houses. The figure is conveyed to the spot by Brahmans or Vaishnávas, in regular procession, attended by musicians and singers. Upon their arrival at the spot, the image is placed in the centre of the pile, and the ministering Brahman, having circumambulated it seven times, sets it on fire. The assistants should then immediately return to their homes. The remainder of the day is passed in merriment and feasting.

Before daylight on the morning of the fifteenth, the image of Krishná is carried to the swing, which has been previously set up, and placed in the seat or cradle, which, as soon as the dawn appears, is set gently in motion for a few turns. This is repeated at noon, and again at sunset. During the day, the members of the family and their visitors, who are numerous on this occasion, amuse themselves by scattering handfuls of red powder over one another, or by sprinkling each other with rose-water, either plain or similarly tinted. The place where the swing is erected is the usual site of the sport, and

continues so for several days. Boys and persons of the lower orders sally forth into the streets and throw the powder over the passengers, or wet them with the red liquid thrown through syringes, using, at the same time, abusive and obscene language. In the villages, the men generally take part in the mischief, and persons of respectability and females are encountered with gross expressions, or sometimes with rough usage, and rarely, therefore, trust themselves out of their houses whilst the license continues.

The people of Orissa have no bonfire at the Dola Yátrá, but they observe the swinging and the scattering of the abír; they have also some peculiar usages. Their Gosains, Brahmans, followers of Chaitanya, carry in procession the images of the youthful Krishná to the houses of their disciples and their patrons, to whom they present some of the red powder and a tr of roses, and receive presents of money and cloth in return.

The caste of Gopas, or cowherds, is everywhere prominently conspicuous in this ceremony, and especially so amongst the Uriyas; and at the Dola Yátrá, or Holi, they not only renew their own garments, but all the harness and equipments of their cattle; they also bathe them and paint their foreheads with sandal and tumeric. They themselves collect in parties, each under a leader or chorægus, whom they follow through the streets, singing, and dancing, and leaping, as if wild with joy. A curious part of their proceeding, suggesting analogies, possibly accidental, with some almost obsolete usages amongst ourselves, is their being armed with slender wands; and as they go along, the leader every now and then halts and turns round to his followers, and the whole clatter their wands together for an instant or two, when they resume their route, repeating their vociferations and songs, chiefly in praise of Krishná or in commemoration of his juvenile pastimes.

Although the Holi is considered in some parts of Hindustan to begin with the vernal fifth, or Vasanta Panchamí, yet the actual celebration of it, even in Upper India, does not take place till about ten days before the full moon of Phálguna. The two first days of this term are of preparation merely; new garments, red or yellow, are put on, and families feast and make merry together; on the eighth day, the work proceeds more in earnest: images of Krishná are set up and worshipped, and smeared with red powder, or sprinkled with water, coloured with the same material. In the villages and towns, where there is no Anglo-Indian police to interfere, the people, having selected an open spot in the vicinity, bring thither gradually the materials of a bonfire,—wood, grass, cowdung, and other fuel. The head men of

the villages, or the chiefs of the trades, first contribute their quotas; the rest collect whatever they can lay hands upon,—fences, door-posts, and even furniture, if not vigilantly protected. If these things be once added to the pile, the owner cannot reclaim them, and it is a point of honour to acquiesce—any measures, however, are allowable to prevent their being carried off. During the whole period, up to the fifteenth day, the people go about scattering the powder and red liquid over each other, singing and dancing, and annoying passengers by mischievous tricks, practical jokes, coarse witticisms, and vulgar abuse. In the larger towns, which are subject to British authority, the festival is restricted to three days, and the celebrants are not permitted to attack indifferent passers by of any degree. In Calcutta little of the festival is witnessed, except among the palankin bearers, who are generally permitted by their masters to devote a few hours of the forenoon, for two or three days, to amuse themselves by staining each others' faces and clothes, and singing and dancing, and sometimes getting tipsy. They do not venture to throw the powder over their masters, but they bring a small quantity with some sweetmeats on a tray, and the courtesy is acknowledged by those who do not despise national observances and the merry-making of their dependants by placing two or three rupees upon the platter. In the native regiments a little more licence is allowed, and the officers are gently bepowdered with the *abír*; and at the Courts of Hindu princes, when such things were, the British Resident and the officers of his suite were usually participators in the public diversions of their Highnesses. An amusing account of the proceedings at the Court of Maharaj Dowlat Rao Sindhia is given by Major Broughton, in his letter from a Marhatta camp.

We have, however, in this digression rather anticipated matters, and must return to the fourteenth day, by which time the pile of the bonfire is completed. It is then consecrated and lighted up by a Brahman, and when the flames break forth, the spectators crowd round it to warm themselves, an act that is supposed to avert ill-luck for the rest of the year; they engage also in some rough gambols, trying to push each other nearer to the fire than is agreeable or safe, and as the blaze declines, jump over and toss about the burning embers; when the fuel is expended and the fire extinct, which is not until the fifteenth or full moon, the ashes are collected and thrown into the water. Such of the celebrants as are Saivas take up part and smear their bodies over with them in imitation of Siva. According to Colonel Tod, the practice of the Rajputs conforms so far to the original institution, that for forty days after the *Vasanta Panchamí*, or up to the

full moon of Phálguna, the utmost licence prevails at Udaypur, both in word and action; the lower classes regale on stimulating confections and intoxicating liquors, and even respectable persons roam about the streets like bacchanals, vociferating songs in praise of the powers of nature. The chief orgies, however, take place after the beginning of Phálguna, when the people are continually patrolling the streets, throwing the common powder at each other, or ejecting a solution of it from syringes, until their clothes and countenances are all of the same dye. A characteristic mode of keeping the festival is playing the Holi on horseback, when the riders pelt each other with balls of the red powder, inclosed in thin plates of talc which break when they strike.

On the full moon, or Purnimá, the Rána goes in state to an open pavilion in the centre of a spacious plain, where he is attended by his chiefs, and passes an hour listening to the Holi songs. The surrounding crowd amuse themselves with throwing the red powder on all within their reach. After this, the Rána feasts his chiefs, and presents them with cocoa-nuts and swords of lath, in burlesque of real swords; "in unison," Tod observes, "with the character of the day, when war is banished, and the multiplication not the destruction of man is the behest of the goddess who rules the Spring." At nightfall the forty days conclude with the burning of the Holi, when they light large fires into which various substances as well as the abír are cast, and around which groups of children are dancing and screaming in the streets. The sports continue till three hours after sunrise, when the people bathe, change their garments, worship and return to the state of sober citizens; and princes and chiefs receive gifts from their domestics.

Amongst the Tamils, or people of Madras and the farther south, the Dolotsava, or Swing Festival, does not occur until about a month later; but on the fifteenth of Phálguna they have a celebration more analogous to the Holi of Hindustan, and which is no doubt a genuine fragment of the primitive institution, the adoration of the personified Spring, as the friend and associate of the deity of Love. The festival of the full moon of Phálguna is the Káma-dahanam, the burning of Kámadeva, whose effigy is committed to the flames. This is supposed to commemorate the legend of Káma's having been consumed by the flames which flashed indignant from the eye of Siva, when the archer god presumed to direct his shaft against the stern deity, and inflame his breast with passion for Párvatí, the daughter of the monarch of the Himálaya Mountains. Kámadeva was reduced to a heap of ashes, although he was afterwards restored to existence by the

intercession of the bride of Mahádeva. The bonfires in the Dekhin are usually made in front of the temples of Siva, or sometimes of Vishnú, at midnight, and when extinct the ashes are distributed amongst the assistants, who rub them over their persons. The scattering of the abír, the singing and abuse, and the ordinary practices of the festival in Upper India, are also in use in the South.

The prominence given to Kámadeva at this season by the Tamil races, and their preserving some remnant of the purport of the primitive festival, are the more interesting, that little or no trace of the chief object of worship is preserved in Upper India. Kámadeva and Vasanta are quite out of date, and legends of a totally different tendency have been devised to explain the purpose of the bonfire and the effigy exposed to it. The heroine of these legends is a malignant witch, or a foul female goblin, or Rákshasí, named Hori, Holi, or Holiká, a word which, although it occurs in some of the Puráñas, is not of a very obvious Sanskrit etymology¹.

According to one account Holi is the same as the female demon Pútaná, of whom it is related in the Vishnú and Bhágavata Puráñas, and in the popular biographies of Krishná taken from them, that she attempted to destroy the baby Krishná, by giving him her poisoned nipples to suck. The little god, knowing with whom he had to deal, sucked so hard and perseveringly, that he drained the Rákshasí of her life. The popular legend adds, that the dead body disappeared, and the Gopas, or cowherds of Mathurá, burnt the Rákshasí therefore in effigy. The chief authority for the institution of the Holi, however, is the Bhavishyottara Purána, and as an authentic representation of the popular notion which now prevails, and which is nevertheless no doubt erroneous, I shall give a translation of the legend told in that compilation.

“Yudhishtira said, ‘Tell me, Janárdana, wherefore on the full moon of Phálguna, a festival is celebrated in the world, in every village, and in every town; why are children playing and dancing in every house, why is the Holiká lighted, what words are uttered, what is the meaning of the name Attátájá, what of Síloshná, what divinity is worshipped at this season, by whom was the rite instituted, what observances are to be practised? Give me, Krishná, a full account of these things.’ Krishná replied: ‘In the Krita age, Yudhishtira, there was a king named Raghu, a brave warrior, endowed with all good

¹ It appears from the Bhavishyottara Purán’a, as given below, to be derived from Homa, burnt offering, and Loka, mankind; because the latter are made prosperous by the performance of the former on this occasion; an evidently fanciful derivation.

qualities, a kind speaker, and deep read in the Vedas; he had subdued the whole earth, had brought all its princes under his authority, and virtuously cherished his subjects, as if they had been his own children. In his reign there was neither famine, nor sickness, nor untimely death, nor any iniquity, nor departure from the precepts of religion. Whilst he was thus governing his kingdom, agreeably to the duties of his regal caste, all his people came to him and called upon him to preserve them. They said, 'Lo, into our houses a female Rákshas named Duúdhá enters, both by day and by night, and forcibly afflicts our children, and she cannot be driven out either by charmed bracelets, or by water, or by seeds of mustard, or by holy teachers skilful in exorcisms. Such, oh king! as we have related, is the story of Duúdhá.'

"When the king heard these things, he consulted the Muni Nárada. The Muni replied: 'I will tell you by what means the fiend is to be destroyed. This day is the fifteenth of the light fortnight of Phálguna; the cold season has departed, the warm weather will commence with dawn. Chief of men! let the assurance of safety be this day given to your people, and let them, freed from terror, laugh and sport; let the children go forth rejoicing, like soldiers delighted to go to battle, equipped with wooden swords. Let also a pile of dry wood and stones be prepared, and let it be lighted according to rule, while incantations are recited destructive of wicked fiends. Then let the people, fearless, thrice circumambulate the fire, exclaiming, 'Kila, kila!' and clapping their hands; and let them sing and laugh, and let every one utter, without fear, whatever comes into his mind. In various ways, and in their own speech, let them freely indulge their tongues, and sing and sing again a thousand times, whatever songs they will. Appalled by those vociferations, by the oblation to fire, and by the loud laughter (*attahása*) of the children, that wicked Rákshasí shall be destroyed, and thenceforth the festival of the Holiká shall be renowned among mankind. Inasmuch as the oblation to fire (*homa*), offered by the Brahmans upon this day, effaces sin and confers peace upon the world (*loka*), therefore shall the day be called the Holiká; and inasmuch as the day of full moon comprises the essence of all lunations, so from its intrinsic excellence is Phálguna the bestower of universal happiness. On this day, upon the approach of evening, children should be detained at home; and into the court-yard of the house, smeared with cowdung, let the master of the house invite many men, mostly youths, having wooden swords in their hands: with these they shall touch the children, with songs and laughter, and thus preserving them, shall be entertained with boiled rice and sugar. Thus Duúdhá is to be got rid

of at the hour of sunset, and by this means the safety of children is ensured on the approach of night.' ”

The same authority describes a domestic ceremony to be held on the following morning, when offerings are to be made to a water-jar, as a type of Vishnu; and presents are to be given to bards, singers, and Brahmans. The observance of this secures the enjoyment of all desires, and the continuation of life, wealth, and posterity.

Of the songs that are sung at this season, the character is generally said to be highly exceptionable. All that I have had an opportunity of seeing are characterised by little else than insipidity; they are short, seldom exceeding two or three stanzas, the first of which is repeated as a sort of refrain or burden, and the whole song is sung *da capo*, over and over again. They are either praises of the month or allusions to the juvenile Krishna, in connexion with the festival, and are supposed to be uttered by the female companions of his boyish frolics in Vrindavana. The following are a few of them:

I.

“Oh friend! proud as you are of your youth, be careful of your garments. The month of Phalguna fills with grief those whose lovers are far away. Oh friend! proud as you are of your youth,” &c.

II.

“The month of Phalguna has arrived; I shall mingle with the crowd, and partake of the sports of the Hori. Oh friend! an hour of pleasure is worth a night of mortification. The month of Phalguna has arrived,” &c.

III.

“I met on my way the lord of Vrindavana: how can I go to fetch water? If I ascend the roof, he pelts me with pellets of clay; if I go to the river, he sprinkles me over with red powder; if I repair to Gokul, he showers upon me tinted dust. Thus he drives me distracted. I met in the way the lord of Vrindavana.”

IV.

“My beloved has sent me a letter to summon his bride home; I blush for my unworthiness. How can I repair to one who knows my imperfections? I blush for my unworthiness. The litter is prepared, but no female friend accompanies me. I blush for my unworthiness, now that my lover summons me home.”

V.

"My boddice is wet through; who has thrown the tinted liquor upon me? It is Kanhaiya, the son of Nanda. It is the month of Phálguna. My boddice is wet through," &c.

VI.

"Oh lord of Vraj! gaily you sport to the merry sound of the tabor, and dance along with the nymphs of Vrindávana. Oh lord of Vraj!" &c.

The deviation from ancient times and practices which marks the recurrence of the Vernal Festival among the Hindus themselves, renders it far from surprising that we should fail to find an exact accordance, in all respects, between the Indian observance, as now followed, and that which has prevailed in other seasons and places, with respect to celebrations, the general purport and character of which present probable analogies. We have no right to look for a minute agreement, but it can scarcely be doubted, that there were festivals among the Romans, and that there are even yet observances in Europe which express a similar intention, and originated in the same feelings, and which are, possibly, as well as the Hindu Holi, reliques of what was once the universal method adopted by mankind to typify the genial influence of Spring upon both the inanimate and animated creation, and to express the passionate feelings inspired by the season, and the delight which the revival of nature diffused.

The season of Spring began with the Romans, as with the Hindus, as has been observed, early in the year, on the fifth of the Ides of February; between this and the middle of March different festivals occur, which exhibit some, though not very striking points of coincidence with the Holi.

It is clear, however, that their origin and character were not very well understood by the Romans themselves. Thus of the Lupercalia, when young men ran naked through the city, and married women placed themselves in their way to be struck by them as they passed with leather thongs, under an idea that they were to become prolific thereby, little seems to have been known, except that the festival was of foreign origin and high antiquity, and that it was referable to the rustic sports of the shepherds and cowherds, the Gopas of Arcadia. Again, of the Festum Stultorum, the accounts are meagre and by no means satisfactory. The Matronalia Festa, on the Kalends of March, were more intelligible, and had for their object the increase of progeny, in harmony with the foliation of the trees, the budding of the

grass, the pairing of birds, which were the effects of the season of Spring, and which are equally held in view in the celebration of the Holi, which is considered to be especially promotive of the multiplication of offspring, and preservative of the health and life of children. Another festival of the period, held on the fifteenth of March, is very imperfectly described, and still more imperfectly explained, the worship of the goddess Anna Perenna; a goddess identified with Themis, with Io, with Atlantis, with Luna, or with Anna, the sister of Dido. This was celebrated in the open air by country people with rustic sports, as drinking, singing, and dancing; and a remarkable and unaccountable part of the celebration was the use of ancient or vulgar jokes and obscene language, *joci veteres obscænaque dicta canuntur*. Finally, on the sixteenth of the Kalends of April, or the seventeenth March, occurred the Liberalia, or Festival of Bacchus, of whom, in this place, Ovid makes a singular remark, possibly embodying an ancient tradition, that burnt-offerings and oblations originated with Bacchus after his conquest of India and the East.

Ante tuos ortus aræ sine honore fuere,
Liber, et in gelidis herba reperta focis,
Te memorant Ganga, totoque oriente subacto,
Primitias magno seposuisse Jovi.—Fasti III., 726—30.

The character of these festival days in the Roman Calendar, and the period during which they took place, suggest probable analogies to the practices of the Hindus at the same season. The analogies are, it is true, very general and unprecise, but to use the words of Brand, "in joining the scattered fragments that survive the mutilation of ancient customs, we must be forgiven if all the parts are not found closely to agree. Little of the means of information have been transmitted to us, and that little can only be eked out by conjecture." Nothing can be more meagre than the Fasti of Ovid in respect to the celebrations above adverted to, and it is obvious that some of them, at least, had become obsolete, even in his day, and that he knew little concerning their origin, or their mode of observance¹; yet little doubt can be entertained that their influence is traceable in practices which are to be found about this time of the year in several of the nations of Europe, particularly in the Carnival and in the day of All Fools.

¹ That this was by no means singular is plain, from the admission of Macrobius, which he puts into the mouths of two of his interlocutors, Horus and Vettius.—1 Saturn. cap. XV.

The Carnival is derived, according to Moresin, from the times of Gentilism, and he quotes Joannes Boemus Aubanus for an account of the extravagancies and indecencies with which it was formerly observed in Germany, that identify its affinity to the Lupercal on the one hand, and, as we should say, the Holi on the other. On the three days preceding Lent he observes¹, "the whole of Germany eats and drinks and gives itself up to jokes and sports, as if there was not another day to live, and people wear disguises and masks, or stain their faces and vestures with red and black paint, or run about naked like the Luperci, from whom, I think, this annual exhibition of insanity has descended to us."

The practices of the Carnival, as now observed in Italy, have been trimmed of their excesses, but even in them there remain vestiges which denote their community of origin with the Holi of the Hindus. The time properly embraces the whole period from the beginning of the year², but as in the festival of Phālguna, the last few days are those on which the principal demonstrations take place, and in the licence which is permitted both in speech and conduct, the wearing of masks and disguises, the reciprocal pelting with real or with mock

¹ Quo item modo tres præcedentes quadragesimale jejunium dies peragat, dicere opus non erit, si cognoscatur qua populari qua spontanea insania cætera Germania, a qua et Franconia minime desciscit, vivat, comedit enim et bibit, seque ludo jocoque omnimodo adeo dedit, quasi usus nunquam veniant, quasi cras moritura hodie prius omnium rerum satietatem capere velit; atque ne pudor obstet qui se ludicro illi committunt, facies larvis obducunt, sexum et ætatem mentientes, viri mulierum vestimenta, mulieres virorum induunt. Quidam Satyros aut malos demones potius repræsentare volentes, minio se aut atramento tingunt; habituque nefando deturpant; alii nudi discurrunt Lupercos agunt, a quibus ego annum istum delirandi morem ad nos defluxisse existimo.

Naageorgus, in his description, has a variety of passages as applicable to the Holi as the Carnival:—

Then old and young are both as much as guests of Bacchus' feast;

And four days long they tittle, square, and feede, and never rest.

———— feare and shame away;

The tongue is set at libertie, and hath no kind of stay.

All things are lawfull then and done, no pleasure passed by,

That in their minds they can devise, as if they then should die.

He also speaks of the nudity of some of the revellers, an indecency of which even the Holi players are never guilty:—

Some naked runne about the streets, their faces hid alone

With visors close, that so disguised they may of none be knowne,
and of the insults to which decent people were subjected,—

No matron old, nor sober man can freely by them come.

² According to Spalding, the Carnival is supposed to begin from New Year's Day. Matthews says it lasts eight days, with intervals, before Lent.

comfits, and in some places sprinkling with water or throwing powder over each other, obvious analogies exist¹.

There is another practice which presents also a parallel, the extinguishing of the Carnival. This, in Italy, is refined into frolicsome attempts to blow out each other's lighted candles; but the notion appears to be the same as the burning of the Holi, the lighting and extinction of the bonfire, and scattering of the ashes.

There is another of the usages of the Holi which finds a parallel in modern times, although at a somewhat later period. It is mentioned by Colonel Pearce, that one subject of diversion during the Holi, is to send people on errands and expeditions that are to end in disappointment, and raise a laugh at the expence of the person sent. He adds that, Sura-ad-dowla, the Nawab of Bengal, of Black Hole celebrity, was very fond of making Holi Fools². The identity of this practice with making April Fools as noticed by Colonel Pearce, is concurred in by Maurice, who remarks, "that the boundless hilarity and jocund sports, prevalent on the 1st day of April in England, and during the Holi Festival in India, have their origin in the ancient practice of celebrating, with festival rites, the period of the vernal equinox, when the new year of Persia anciently began."

There was a *Festum Stultorum* about this period amongst the Romans, the purport of which is not very clearly expressed, but some antiquaries have supposed that it constituted the original of the festivals of the Romish Church, the *Festa Stultorum*, *Innocentium*, and the like, the extravagances of the Abbot of Unreason, and the sleeveless errands of All Fools, or April Fool day. The periods at which these rude and boisterous manifestations of merriment took place were something different; but, as Brand observes, the crowded state of the Romish Calendar often led to the alteration of the days set apart for festivity, and in the case of the feast of Old or All Fools he quotes authority for its removal to the first of November from some other date, it being expressly stated in the calendar, *Festum Stultorum veterum huc translatus est*. The period, therefore, is little material—the identity of designation, and similarity of practice render it not unlikely that the day of All Fools had originally something in common with the *Festum Stultorum* and with the Holi.

¹ Amongst the Portuguese the practices on the Sunday and Monday preceding Lent, as on the first of April in England, people are privileged here (Lisbon) to play the fool. It is thought very jocose to pour water on any person who passes, or throw powder in his face, but to do both is the perfection of wit.—Southley's Letters.

² Asiatic Researches, Vol. II., page 334.

BU'RWÁ MANGAL.—On the first Tuesday after the Holi, a supplementary repetition of it is held at Benares, with sundry modifications of a not uninteresting description. An account of the festival has been given by the late Mr. J. Prinsep, in his valuable views of Benares, and I had also an opportunity of witnessing its observance. During the day the people go in crowds to a place called Durgá kuñda, a large tank and temple dedicated to Durgá, who is worshipped on this occasion. Although there are no regular processions, yet horses and elephants, gaily caparisoned, are plentifully scattered amongst the throng, and the garden walls along the road are crowded with spectators. Strolling actors, disguised as religious mendicants, or as individuals of inferior caste, both male and female, mingle with the crowd, and divert them with singing and dancing and absurd buffoonery. Sometimes different parties oppose each other in a contest of poetical improvisation. In the evening, the more opulent inhabitants of Benares embark on board boats fitted up for the occasion with platforms and awnings, and parade up and down the river throughout the night, having with them bands of musicians, and singers, and dancing girls. When the evening is advanced, the pinnacle of the Raja of Benares moves from his residence at Ramnagar, and slowly descends the stream, followed by other boats, lighted up, and displaying fireworks from time to time, until they take their station off one of the principal gháts. The boats on the river are also illuminated, and are rowed up and down the stream, accompanied by numerous lesser craft selling refreshments, or bearing less wealthy amateurs to catch the strains of some popular songstress. The shore is thronged with people, and discharges of fireworks, with the river pageantry, amuse them until the end of the night. At day break they are again clustered along the magnificent gháts of Benares, and by their numbers, their order, their diversified and many tinted costumes, in harmony with the elegant architecture of the surrounding edifices, the broad river, and the unclouded sky, present a picture of singular richness, gracefulness, animation, and beauty.

Upon the occasion on which I witnessed this festival, the Raja, on the morning, received the visits of the Governor-General's agent, Mr. Brooke, and other European gentlemen of the station. They were entertained as usual with naching, but upon taking leave, in addition to the ordinary aspersion of rose-water, which was bestowed so copiously as to amount to a ducking, the guests were pelted with rose-leaves, immense trays of which were brought in for the purpose. The attack was retaliated by a shower of the same missiles, which have at

least the character of greater refinement than the confitti di gesso, the plaster of Paris pellets of the Carnival.

According to Mr. Prinsep, the ceremony originated with Zemindar Bulwant Sing, the father of Raja Chait Sing, who adopted the celebration of the Holi on the river, for the gratification of Mir Rustam Ali, the Mohammedan Governor of the province, who had a house on the river-side. As he observes, however, the name Búrwa, old, indicates higher antiquity.

[*To be continued.*]
