INTRODUCTION.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

THE CRITICAL STUDY OF THE VEDIC LITERATURE.

THE VEDAS.

IMPORTANCE:

As an oldest Indian, at the same time, the oldest Indo-European literary monument, a prominent place in the history of world literature is due to the Vedas. This is the case too when we find that throughout 3000 years at least, millions of Hindus have looked upon the words of the Vedas as the word of God and that the Vedas have inspired them with feeling and thought. As the Vedas are the fountain-head of the Indian thought and culture, it is impossible for a man to understand and appreciate the cultural and spiritual life of India, without having deep insight into the Vedic literature.

BUDDHISTIC FAITH AND THE VEDAS:

Even the Buddhistic faith whose birthplace is India, would remain improperly understood for him who is stranger to the Vedic lore. The teaching of Buddha is in the same relation to the Vedas as the New Testament is to the Old Testament. No one can understand India without knowing the Vedas.
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IMPORTANCE FOR THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD.

The study of the Rg Veda is essential not only for complete understanding of the Indian culture and thought and also of history of India, whether ancient or modern, it is essential also for the elucidation of the history of the world. To quote Professor Max Muller:

"In the history of the world, the Veda fills a gap which no literary work in any other language could fill. As long as man continues to take an interest in the history of his race and as long as we collect in libraries and museums the relics of former ages, the first place in the long row of books will belong for ever to the Rg Veda."

(Ancient Sanskrit Literature p.65)

STUDY OF THE VEDA IS ESSENTIAL FOR EVERY INDIVIDUAL.

He further remarks:

"I maintain that to every body who cares for himself, for his ancestors, for his history, for his intellectual development, a study of the Vedic literature is indispensable."

ANTIQUITY:

Mons. Leon Delbos says:

"There is no monument of Greece or Rome more precious than the Rg Veda."

Regarding the antiquity of the Veda Sir, W.W. Hunter remarks:

"The age of this hymnal (Rig Veda) is unknown."

THE VEDA AND THE PHILOLOGY:

Above all, the study of the Vedas, is most important from the point of view of Philology or the Science of Languages. The study of Languages as distinguished from the mere acquisition of languages, is
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a growth of the last century, though it must be admitted that researches into the genealogies and affinities of words have exercised the ingenuity of numberless generations of acute and inquiring minds. Still nothing deserving the name of science was the result of these older investigations in the domain of languages. Those were merely hasty generalisations, baseless hypotheses, and inconclusive deductions. As in the case with every science in its early stage, the science of language, too, was attended with difficulties, namely, paucity of observed facts and faulty standpoint. Whitney has rightly said:-

"National self-sufficiency and inherited prepossession long helped to narrow the limits imposed by unfavourable circumstances upon the extent of linguistic knowledge, restraining that liberality of inquiry which is indispensable to the growth of a science."

(Language and Its Study P. 2)

OLD PREJUDICE REMOVED:

Thus in ancient times, every one thought, his own dialect to be the oldest one with which to start and compare other dialects. Until very recently Latin and Greek were supposed to be the oldest and the most primitive known languages from which every European language was derived. But the restless and penetrating investigation which characterised the last century, changed the whole aspect of the study and linguists busied themselves with the study of the special relationship of the principal languages of Europe with one another and with the languages of South-Western Asia, which led to the postulation of the Indo-European family languages.

FIRST PLACE IN INDO-EUROPEAN FAMILY:

Whitney further remarks:-

"No single circumstance more powerfully aided the onward
movement than the introduction to Western scholars, of Sanskrit, the ancient and sacred dialect of India. Its exceeding age, its remarkable conservation of primitive material and form, its unequalled transparency of structure give it an indisputable right to the first place among the tongues of the Indo-European family. Upon their comparison, already fully begun, it cast a new and welcome light, displaying clearly their hitherto obscure relations, rectifying their doubtful etymologies, illustrating the laws of research which must be followed in their study and in that of all other languages."

(Ibid P. 4)

I may be excused for making another quotation owing to the importance of the subject. Sayce, in his work 'The Science of Language' says:-

"What has been termed the discovery of Sanskrit by Western scholars put an end to all the fanciful playing with words and created the Science of Language." (Vol. I P. 38)

STUDY OF THE VEDA IN FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES:

From all this we can easily see what an important part the ancient Vedic Sanskrit has played in the domain of the Science of language. The study of the Vedic literature has created, in reality, the Philology. What I want to say here is that the Vedic Sanskrit is much older than the later Sanskrit which precedes Latin and Greek and that it represents a state of civilisation nowhere else represented. It provides us with many links which are otherwise obscure. It is a matter of national pride for us that the Rig Veda and other allied Vedic literature form a special and important subject of study at most of the important Universities of Europe and America, an
unparalleled activity in the domain of Vedic study is manifested everywhere, single words are studied critically and their history traced through all available works, indexed and glossaries are multiplied and exhaustive commentaries are produced.