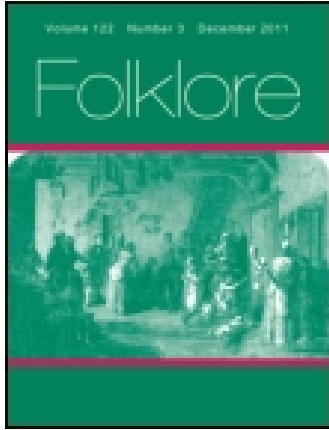


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THE LEGENDS OF KRISHNA.

BY W. CROOKE, B.A.

(Read at Meeting of 21st June, 1899.)

THE cycle of folklore and popular belief which centres round Krishna, one of the most important elements in the neo-Brāhmanical creed of modern India, forms an interesting chapter in the development of Hindu religious myth and cultus. This neo-Brāhmanism is now the working faith which controls the spiritual destinies of two hundred and seven millions of people. It is a faith without a definite creed, with no church, no pope, no convocation. It is the most catholic of the old world religions, providing as it does for the needs of jungle-folk on the borderland of savagery and for those most keen-witted of religious disputants, the Vedantists of Mathura or Benares. It is a great missionary religion, working not in the way with which we are familiar, through societies and an organised body of teachers, but by the agency of shock-headed Jogis and ash-covered Sannyāsis. It is one of the most catholic of faiths, because though it has many gods it enforces the worship of no one deity on any of its members.

Hence for the purpose of estimating the prevalence of different forms of Hindu belief statistics are of little value.

At the last census each person was asked to name the god which he usually worshipped; but this does not exclude the possibility that he may worship more than one. On the contrary, it is certain that to meet the varying needs of his life he combines the belief in his personal god with that of others, few or many. The basis of his belief is animistic, but he supplements this form of worship by the casual or periodical veneration of one or several of the members of the official pantheon. When we find, then, that five and a half millions of people in the Panjab and North-Western Provinces professed devotion to Krishna, we may assume that a very much larger number revere him as a member of the class of deities which are known generally as Vaishnava, or grouped round the personality of Vishnu.

This is not the place or time to discuss in detail the historical development of the cult; but a few words must be said on this point as an introduction to the consideration of his legends, which is the special subject of this paper.

He is, to begin with, a comparatively new god, that is to say, he does not appear in the Vedas. We first hear of Krishna, son of Devaki, in the Chhândogya Upanishad, one of the supplements to the Sâma Veda, which are clearly later than the Sanhitas or Brâhmanas, and in their present recension embody the views of that school of philosophical Brâhmanism which is of course separated by a long interval from that of the nature worship embodied in the earlier hymns. Krishna is here only a scholar, eager in the pursuit of knowledge, and perhaps a member of the military caste.¹ Passing on to the Epic period, in the Mahâbhârata, which was probably composed between the time of the Greek traveller Megasthenes (306—295 B.C.) and the second half of the first century of our era,² we find that Krishna occupies a higher place, but still his divinity is not fully assured. Râma and Krishna are here at once gods

¹ Weber, *History of Indian Literature*, 71.

² *Ibid.*, 186.

and men. They are accepted as incarnations of Vishnu, but at the same time they are regarded as human heroes, acting under the influence of human motives, and taking no advantage of their divine supremacy. Krishna even worships Siva and wins boons from him.¹ Later additions to and interpolations in the text of the Epics assert his divinity; and in particular this view of his nature finds expression in the celebrated philosophical poem known as the Bhāgavad-gīta, which is obviously a late supplement to the Mahābhārata. The same view was again enforced and extended in the Hari-vansa, and especially in the Bhāgavata Purāna, which may be as late as the tenth or eleventh century of our era.

It is impossible, then, to assign a definite date to a cultus thus gradually developed, as we are able to do in the case of other great historical religions, Buddhism, Islām, or Christianity. There seems, however, good reason to suspect that the elevation of Krishna to divine honours was coincident with the rise of the neo-Brāhmanism on the decay of Buddhism. The older Brāhmanism was too esoteric, too much the faith of priests and nobles, to influence the masses. In this respect Brāhmanism learned a lesson from Buddhism, and with a view to popularise its tenets adopted not only the cult of the Saktī, or female element, which may have been one of the indigenous idolatries, but also drew within its fold some of the local or tribal gods, of whom, as we shall see, Krishna was probably one. Nay more, it has been conjectured that in this new alliance it was not Vishnu, but Krishna, who was the predominant partner, and that it was by its combination with the Krishna or other allied cult that Vaishnavism finally won its way to the affections of the masses in Northern India.

It is outside my present purpose to discuss how far the

¹ Muir, *Original Sanskrit Texts*, iv., 169, 182 *seqq.*; Wilson-Hall, *Vishnu Purāna*, i., intro., xv. For a summary of the story of Krishna, see Mahābhārata, *Drona Parva*, sec. ii., trans. Ray, v., 31 *seqq.*

new revelation may have owed its inspiration to Christian or other Western influence. It has been supposed that on the one hand Buddhism profoundly influenced the Western Church, and the analogies between Lamaism in Tibet and the ritual and organisation of the Roman Catholic Church have attracted the attention of many observers. It has been supposed again that the episode in the Mahābhārata where Nārada the Saint visits Sweta-dwipa, "the White Island," implies early relations between Brāhmanism and Alexandrian Christianity.¹ I need hardly dwell upon the indications in the Krishna mythus, presently to be related, which suggest the same inference. The question has, however, hardly yet been settled to the satisfaction of scholars,² and in any case it would lead me too far from the special subject of this paper.

I pass on to the popular traditions concerning Krishna.³

To put the story as briefly as possible, we find a branch of the great Yādava clan of Kshatriyas, who probably owed their origin to a Yu-echi invasion from Central Asia, settled on the banks of the River Jumna, with Mathura as their capital. That they were outsiders or new-comers is important when we come to consider certain elements in the cultus which indicate foreign influence. Krishna, we are told, was the son of Vasu-deva and Devakī. The former, by one interpretation of his name, is one of the old celestial genii, "the bright ones"; the latter, Devakī, "the divine one," has been identified with the seductive water-nymph of folklore. But more probably in Devakī and Krishna we may see representatives of the world-wide group of the divine mother and the fateful child—Nana of Babylon, Isis and Horus in Egypt, Lucina and her child in Latin tradition.

¹ Weber, *Indische Studien*, i., 400, ii., 168; Frazer, *Literary History of India*, 231; Ray, *Mahābhārata*, viii., 752.

² See Dutt, *Ancient India*, ii., 276.

³ The most accessible authorities are Growse, *Mathura, a District Memoir* Allahabad, 1883; Lallu Lāl, *Prem Sāgar*, translated by E. B. Eastwick.

At the time of the birth of Krishna we find the rightful king, Ugrasena, like so many savage half-priests, half-monarchs, when their power of controlling the deities becomes abated, deposed by his son, the usurper Kamsa. He, we are told, cruelly persecuted his rivals, an incident in which some have recognised a conflict of cults, and some have gone so far as to call Kamsa a Jaina, an opponent of the neo-Vaishnava faith. However this may be, Krishna, who was a cousin of the usurper, defeated and slew him and restored Ugrasena to the throne. But his triumph did not last long. He was himself attacked by the father-in-law of Kamsa, Jarasandha, king of Magadha or Bihâr, who was allied with a monarch known as Kala-yavana, the Ionian or Greek, who may have been a king of Kâshmir or one of the Bactrian descendants of the Great Alexander. Krishna, we learn, was forced to abandon Mathura and retire to Dwâraka on the Gulf of Kachh, where, after various adventures, including his interposition on the side of the Pândavas in the great war recorded in the Mahâbhârata, by which their success was assured, he is said to have been slain, and his bones, according to later Brâhmanical tradition, rest inside the famous idol at Jaggan-nâth.

From a saga like this, obviously the work of many hands and embodying many variant traditions, it is hopeless to sift any historical facts. Krishna may have been a local hero of the Yâdava clan of Kshatriyas; they may have brought with them some part of his cultus from their home in Central Asia; they may have absorbed parts of it from the indigenous idolatries; his tale may suggest a conflict between more than one rival faith. For the sober historian it possesses little more value than the myths of the Arthurian cycle. To one school of mythologists, of course, the whole story is only a solar myth.

We are perhaps on safer ground when we suggest that round a single figure, which may possibly be historical, the cultus, as we find it, may be the result of that syncretism

which is so familiar an agency in the growth of religious belief. He may, in other words, be only a figure-head round which local myths have centred, like Alexander or Karl the Great. In the case of the Greek Apollo, for instance, the wolf, the ram, the dolphin, the mouse, the laurel probably represent so many variant cults, some of them possibly totemistic, which came to be grouped round and identified with one dominant divine personage. When from this point of view we come to examine the Krishna mythus we find his connection with cattle specially prominent. His most popular titles are Govinda and Gopâla, "the cowherd;" and as a protector of kine he may be readily compared with similar deities in other parts of the world. Thus, in Greece we have Apollo Nomios, and in another shape Krishna as Murli-dhara, "the flute-player," reminds us of Apollo Mousegetes, the leader of the Muses, the patron of music and song. So in Greece and Rome, Hermes and Pan, Pales and Priapus, Faunus and Lupercus, Bubona and Epona, and possibly the Babylonian Eabani,¹ are in various forms the deities who give increase to the flocks and protect domestic animals from wild beasts and other dangers—a cult in no sense primitive, but based on the needs of a society in which cattle-breeding and husbandry are already well advanced. From this point of view he has his kinsfolk in the local divinities of modern India—Siddhua and Buddhua, Nâgardeo, Chaumu, Kaluva and Bîr-nâth, who shield the herds from harm.² So his brother Bala-râma seems to have been an old agricultural god known as Halabrit, "the plough-bearer," with the lustful temper of Pan or Silenus, just as Sîtâ, "the furrow," was embodied in the Râma myth. He may thus in his most primitive form have been an old cattle god adopted into the Brâhmanical pantheon,

¹ Maspero, *Dawn of Civilisation*, 576.

² Crooke, *Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, ii., 81 seqq.; *Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, i., 63 seqq.

like Siva in his form as Pasupa or Pasupati, "the lord of kine," especially of those set apart for sacrifice.

We may even go further and suggest a conflict of rival agricultural cults. Krishna elopes with Rukminî, "the golden," the betrothed of Sisupâla, whom he encounters and decapitates with his discus. Now Sisupâla means "cherisher of the young," in particular of young animals, the equivalent of the Greek Kourotrophos, the guardian deity of the springs near which the hair of youths and maidens was dedicated. In this view he too would be another rural deity of the same kind.

Like that of so many gods, the birth of Krishna was in wondrous wise. A supernatural voice, what the Greeks would have called a Pnemê, announced to the usurper Kamsa that his slayer would be born in the eighth son of his kinsman Vasudeva and Devakî, niece of the deposed monarch Ugrasena. To defeat the prophecy, Kamsa summoned the pair to Mathura and kept them in ward. Each of their children as it was born was destroyed. But when Devakî became pregnant for the seventh time the embryo was miraculously transferred to the womb of Rohinî, "the red cow," the second wife of Vasudeva, and it was reported that Devakî had miscarried. In due time the fated child was born and was named Sankarshana, "he that was taken from the womb of his mother," and later on Balarâma, or Baladeva, who aided his brother Krishna in overthrowing the tyrant. With this we may compare the many folktales which tell of the birth of the fateful child, and it is needless to suggest the obvious analogy to the tale of Herod.¹

We have, again, here an instance of the common case of a duality of gods—the Asvins, the Dioscuri, Yama and Yamî, Romulus and Remus, Epimetheus and Prometheus, indicating either syncretism, the combination of rival cults,

¹ Compare the Slavonic versions, *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxi., 456 *seqq.*, and the legend of the birth of the successors of the Egyptian Kheops, Maspero, *loc. cit.*, 386 *seqq.*

or perhaps in the cases where male and female deities are grouped in pairs the idea of the world of sense developed by the normal connection of the sexes.

Here, too, we have the familiar case of the god or hero born in some abnormal way. Often he is motherless or unborn or springs from his father alone, as Athena from the thigh of Zeus, which suggests the couvade, or the mother is delivered by the Cæsarean operation. One or other of such incidents presents itself in the tales of Dionysus, Asklepios, Lychas, Sakya-muni, Tristram, Macduff, Dubruno Nikititsch, and Sigfried.¹

But the tale of the transfer of the embryo from one mother to the other is more unusual, and several threads of folk belief seem to be combined which is not easy to disentangle. To begin with, abnormal birth is regarded as auspicious, for instance, in the Hindu belief that children born by the foot presentation are lucky.² Next, we have the common belief in the possibility of birth transference, where by cutting off part of a child's clothes, soaking it in water and drinking it, causes a barren woman to conceive, or the Chinese theory that the soul of a great man is incarnated in one of the women who watch his funeral.³ The Aruntas of Australia, as described by Messrs. Spencer and Gillen, have adopted this as the normal explanation of the fact of conception. We meet similar cases of interference with and transfer of the embryo in the legend of Indra, who fearing that Aditi would bear a child superior to himself, entered her womb and cut the fœtus into forty-nine pieces; of the child born at Kausambi, swallowed by a fish and carried to Benares, where he is adopted by the wife of a nobleman and recognised by his true mother; when the case comes to be

¹ Ploss, *Das Weib*, ii., 405, 407; Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology* (trans. Stallybrass), i., 385; Elton-Powell, *Saxo Grammaticus*, intro., lxiv.

² *Panjab Notes and Queries*, iii., 78.

³ *Ibid.*, iii., 116. Hartland, *Legend of Perseus*, i., 160; Frazer, *Golden Bough*, i., 239.

tried by the king he decides that the child belongs to both mothers, to one by maternity, to the other by adoption, and hence it was called Bakula, "he of the two septs"; of Buddhasatva, who entered into Chandra-devi and was conceived of her.¹

So we have triple maternity in the tale of Siva in his form as Tryambaka, "he who has three mothers,"² as Dionysus was Dimetor, the Bimatrix of Ovid.³ In the same way Heimdall was the son of nine mothers, giantesses. Reinhart, after the Cæsarean operation, was brought to birth in the stomachs of newly-slaughtered swine, and Agni was the son of many mothers.⁴ A further development occurs in the tales of adoption, as that of Herakles and Hera, where the adopting mother goes through the farce of a simulated birth, which Diodorus tells us was a practice of the barbarians of his time.⁵ In the *Legenda Aurea* we read of the birth of Judas, announced to be a fateful child, exposed and taken up by the queen of the Isle Scarioth, who simulates pregnancy, and represents the recovered child to be her own.⁶ Lastly, it has passed into modern folklore in the tale of Seven Mothers and their Son,⁷ naturally suggested by the conditions of a polygamous household.

All the fateful children of the folktales have miraculous powers at birth. Otus and Ephialtes, another case of dualism, who were born of monstrous size;⁸ the new-born Apollo, who in the Homeric hymn, when he tastes the nectar and ambrosia, leaps from his swaddling clothes,

¹ *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Bengal, xxxiv., 226; Ward, *Hindoos*, ii., 55, 395.

² Barth, *Religions of India*, 161.

³ *Metam.*, iv., 12.

⁴ Grimm, *loc. cit.*, i., 234, 389; Rig Veda, iii., 23, 3; x., 45, 2; i., 141, 2; also compare the story of the birth of Huitzilopochtli, Bancroft, *Native Races*, iii., 310 *seqq.*

⁵ Hartland, *loc. cit.*, ii., 419.

⁶ Cap. xlv., a reference for which I am indebted to Mr. Hartland.

⁷ Temple-Steel, *Wideawake Stories*, 98 *seqq.*

⁸ *Odyssey*, xi., 305 *seqq.*

begins to speak, and wanders through the land; Vali, in the Norse tale, when one night old sallies out to avenge the death of Balder; and Magni, son of Thor by the giantess Jarnsaxa, when three nights old flings off the giant's foot with which the monster would have crushed his father.¹ So the Dayaks have a like marvellous child in Seragunting; and Robert the Devil, we are told, bit off his nurse's paps and overpowered all the children of his age; while Tom Hickathrift "at ten years old was six feet high and three feet across, with a hand like a shoulder of mutton, and everything else proportionable."² As St. Benedict sang Eucharistic hymns before he was born, so in the Zulu folktale there is a child who speaks in the womb of his mother; the Kafir Simbukumbukwana speaks on the day of his birth; and the Hindu heroine, Somaprabhâ, talks the moment she is born.³ Thus this long series of precocious imps passes on to the boy Cadi of the *Arabian Nights* and the *Enfant Terrible* of our *Punch*.⁴

The feats of the infant Krishna are of the usual class. He upsets a waggon loaded with pails of milk; when he is tethered to a big wooden mortar he drags it away with him; he pulls down monstrous trees; and so on.⁵ As a good example of the evolution of myth the last miracle has been localised at Girnâr in Kâthiâwar, with the Brâhmanic gloss that the trees were really divine personages compelled by a curse of some saint to enter the form of trees till they were uprooted by Krishna, the merciful saviour.⁶

¹ Grimm, *loc. cit.*, i., 320 *segg.*

² Ling Roth, *Natives of Sarawak*, i., 198 *segg.*; Hazlitt, *National Tales*, 59, 431.

³ Callaway, *Nursery Tales*, i., 6; Theal, *Kafir Folklore*, 73; Tawney, *Katha Sarit Sâgara*, i., 119, 156. The child of Mamatâ speaks in the womb, *Mahâbhârata, Adi Parva*, sec. 104, Ray trans., i., 314.

⁴ Burton, *Arabian Nights* (Library Edition), x., 243; Clouston, *Popular Tales and Fictions*, ii., 12 *segg.*; Miss Stokes, *Indian Fairy Tales*, 279 *segg.*

⁵ Growse, *loc. cit.*, 55 *segg.*; Wilson-Hall, *loc. cit.*, iv., 279 *segg.*

⁶ *Bombay Gazetteer*, viii., 441 *segg.*

Krishna again appears as a slayer of dragons and monsters. Like all great cycles of myth, that of the worm-slayer seems to be founded on more than one train of thought. In one phase, as in the defeat of Ahi or Vritra by Indra, or in the legend of Imra as told by the Kâfirs of the Hindu Kush, it is a pure nature-myth. The snake, like the frog or lizard of many savage mythologies, swallows the waters, which are released when the monster is destroyed. Again, while the theory advanced by some writers¹ that the myth is a reminiscence of the struggles of early man with some

“Dragons of the prime
That tare each other in their slime,”

is opposed to all the conclusions of palæontology, on the other hand the tale may in some cases be based on the discovery of the gigantic bones of some extinct saurian. One famous group of tales of this class, that in which the hero slays the dragon which demands a human victim, an impostor appears and claims the reward, the trick being discovered by the production of the tongue or some other part of the slaughtered dragon, probably, as Mr. Hartland shows,² points to a reaction against an early custom of offering a victim to some water spirit conceived in dragon form.

But in many cases the myth seems to represent a conflict of rival cults. Such, for instance, seems to be the most reasonable explanation of the slaughter of the python by Apollo. Here the dragon may be associated with the worship of Ge or some of the other chthonic powers, which was overthrown by the new-comer god. In other cases, as in that of Athena associated with the earth-snake, Erechtheus-Erichthonios, we may suspect the fusion of

¹ Gould, *Mythical Monsters*, chap. vi.

² Hartland, *loc. cit.*, iii., 66 *seqq.*; Frazer, *Pausanias*, i., 476; ii., 528; v., 60, 143.

divergent cults. The fact, again, that some of our English dragons, like those of Sockburn or Wantley, where the dragon has been euphemised into a roguish attorney, have their home on a hill or prehistoric tumulus, suggests that some cult of the dead may be at the root of the matter. When the myth became Christianised, the overthrow of rival beliefs becomes more obvious, as in the case of St. George, St. Patrick, and St. Mac Creiche in Ireland, St. Philip, who slew the dragon of Hierapolis, St. Martha and the Tarasque dragon in Provence, St. Florent and the dragon of the Loire, St. Cado, St. Maudet and St. Pol in Brittany, St. Keyne in Cornwall, St. O'Heany and the Banagher worm, and many others.¹

The monster-slaying feats of Krishna are of various kinds. One day the children of the herdsmen were playing and entered what they supposed to be a cave in the rocks, but which was really the expanded jaws of the serpent king, Aghâsura. He drew a deep breath and sucked them in, but Krishna bade them be of good cheer, and swelled his body to such a size that the serpent burst, and all the children stepped out unharmed.² Here we have the common myth of the swallowing and the disgorging, which appears in the tale of Jonah and the whale, that of Kronos and Herakles, and all through savage folklore.³

On another occasion an immense boa-constrictor seized Nanda, Krishna's foster-father, on which the youthful god set his foot on the head of the monster, which was forthwith transformed into a lovely youth. For, ages before, a Ganymede of the Court of Heaven, Sudarshan by name, in his insolence danced before Angiras, the sage. The holy

¹ Maury, *Essai sur les légendes pieuses du Moyen Age*, 144; 1st Series *Notes and Queries*, vi., 147, 519; 3rd Series, ix., 29, 158; 8th Series, vi., 113; 2nd Series, viii., 509; Tezcatlipoca in Mexico, Bancroft, *loc. cit.*, iii., 283.

² Growse, *loc. cit.*, 57.

Lang, *Myth, Ritual, and Religion* (2nd ed.), i., 295.

man, who by the force of his austerities was able to overcome the gods themselves, in his wrath cursed him that he should become a snake, and remain in that loathly shape till the advent of the gracious Krishna.¹

Again, while Krishna is bathing, he is attacked by Kâliya, "the black one," the dragon of the River Jumna, the personified spirit of the waters, which in so many tales, that of Narcissus for instance, drags down the beautiful hero into the gloomy depths. Krishna crushed the head of the monster, and would have slain him had not the dragon's wives come out of the water and implored him to take pity on their spouse. Krishna forgave him, adding that he should ever bear upon his brow the impress of the divine feet and be thus safe from his enemies,² one of the many myths invented to explain the marks on the bodies of beasts and birds—the blood on Robin Redbreast, the mottled plumage of the Indian black partridge, the stripes upon the back of the little house squirrel.³

Like Herakles and so many heroes of the folktales, Krishna overcomes other monsters and demons. Thus, when the demon Bachhâsura, in the form of a mighty crane, gobbled up the herd-boys, Krishna allowed himself to be devoured with them; but he proved so hot a mouthful that the demon was only too glad to drop him. Then the divine youth seized the brute by his long bill, and rent him in twain.⁴ So with the demon Dhenuka, who found the boys plucking fruit from his palm-trees, and, taking the form of an ass, kicked Balarâma on the breast. But Balarâma hurled him so high that he fell on the top of one of the tallest trees and caused the fruit to fall in abundance.⁵ The monster, as in the case of Jack and the

¹ Growse, *loc. cit.*, 61.

² *Ibid.*, 57 *seqq.*; Wilson-Hall, *loc. cit.*, iv., 286 *seqq.*

³ Crooke, *Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, ii., 242, 251.

⁴ Growse, *loc. cit.*, 57.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 55; Wilson-Hall, *loc. cit.*, iv., 297 *seqq.*

Beanstalk, is always fair game, and it is rather a respectable act to plunder him.

Again, the demon Pralamba, disguising himself as a youth, challenges Krishna and his companions to race. Balarâma mounted on the shoulders of the demon, who forthwith ran away with him. But Balarâma squeezed and beat him to death, and from this feat gained his name—Râma, "the strong one."¹ Many other demons assumed the forms of savage beasts and met the same fate—Kesin as a wild horse, Byomâsur a wolf, Arishta a bull²—all types of the rude animal forms which have attacked mystics and religious men and women since the dawn of religious history. Of another type is the witch Pûtanâ, who tries to suckle the divine child with her devil's milk; but Krishna sucked so hard at her breasts that he drained her life-blood and caused her to perish miserably.³

But, beside dragon-slaying, Krishna does many deeds of mercy. He cures the hump-backed woman Kubjâ with a touch; he rescues the son of the Brâhman Sandîpani, who had been slain by the ocean-demon Panchajana. Him Krishna drags from the deep of the sea, and then, like so many divine personages, in the spirit of the Homeric Nekuia, he invades the underworld and rescues the Brâhman boy from the clutches of Yama, god of death, as Herakles saves Alkestis.⁴ Another echo of Homeric folklore meets us in his contest with the whirlwind-demon, Trinâvarta, who would have whirled him away; which reminds us of the Thuellai, or wind-gusts, which carry off the daughters of Pandareus, a myth which later on developed into that of the hideous Harpies of Vergil.⁵ The event is commemorated at a cell in Mahâban, where

¹ Growse, *loc. cit.*, 59; Wilson-Hall, *loc. cit.*, iv., 300 *seqq.*

² Growse, *loc. cit.*, 61, *seqq.*; Wilson-Hall, *loc. cit.*, iv., 333, 340.

³ Growse, *loc. cit.*, 55; Wilson-Hall, *loc. cit.*, iv., 276.

⁴ Growse, *loc. cit.*, 63 *seqq.*

⁵ *Iliad*, xvi., 150; *Odyssey*, xx., 66 *seqq.*

the demon-whirlwind is represented by a pair of enormous wings overshadowing the divine child, the same motif which is illustrated on the temple of Apollo at Delos, where Boreas bears away Oreithyia.¹

Another interesting myth is connected with the rescue of the child by his father Vasu-deva. When he was forced to fly from the tyrant Kamsa, he took Krishna in his arms and plunged with him into the waters of the Jumna, then swollen by the autumn rains. At his first step the water reached the child sleeping in his arms, but as he advanced the wave could rise no higher, and they both crossed in safety. The miracle is commemorated by a brass toy, known as "the Vasu-deva Katora," or the bowl of Vasu-deva, a brass cup enclosing the figure of a man so contrived that when water is poured into it, it cannot rise above the child's foot, being drained away by a hidden duct at the bottom.² This same oriental myth is told of the youth Zardusht, who passes over the waste of waters so that the soles of the feet of him and his companions were only moistened.³ It is thus the eastern version of the tale of St. Christopher, of which there are many representations in the windows of our English churches. Later on the tale was allegorised to represent the Saviour bearing the sins of the world, while in Finnish tradition the saint has been identified with the golden river king, who is invoked to send a host of otters into the net of the hunter.⁴ Folklore, in fact, has been busy with this saint, much of whose cult is obviously connected with some primitive worship of a water spirit. Thus, as he waded in the sea, he left his mark on the Dory fish; when he struck his staff into the earth it bloomed and budded, as

¹ Growse, *loc. cit.*, 55; Miss Harrison, *Myths and Monuments of Athens*, Intro., lxvii.

² Growse, *loc. cit.*, 54.

³ Shea-Troyer, *Dabistan*, i., 230.

⁴ 1st Series *Notes and Queries*, v., 372 *seqq.*; 495; Abercromby, *Prehistoric Finns*, i., 339; *Gloucestershire Folklore*, 46 *seqq.*

did the Glastonbury thorn and the tooth-pick of the Indian Buddha.¹

Another remarkable legend is that in which Krishna protects the flocks from rain. The boy, we are told, denied the right of Indra to receive sacrifices, another instance of the conflict of rival cults. The rain-god in his wrath poured down an irresistible deluge, which would have destroyed the flocks had not Krishna raised the hill of Govardhana and shielded them by holding it up on his finger for seven days and nights.² The suggestion of Professor Wilson³ that the story is based on the domed cave or cavern temples in various parts of India hardly explains the matter. We have closer analogues in the Nepalese legends of the peak Tendong, which miraculously elongated itself to save the refugees from the great flood, or the case of the Jaina Saint, Parsva-nâtha, over whom while engaged in his austerities his enemy, Kamatha, caused a mighty rain to fall, on which the Nâga or serpent king, Dharmadhara, shaded him with his hood, a story localised at Ahichhatra in Rohilkhand.⁴ We may also compare the many tales of the raising of the sky from the earth, the heaven-pillars, as in the Atlas myth, and stories of the miraculous acts of gods or demons who drop mountains from their aprons as they fly over the earth. St. Anthony of Padua, we are told, was able to keep the rain off his congregation as they prayed in the open air; and the same tale is told of many other saints.⁵

To quote Mr. Growse's summary of another curious legend: "But who so frolicsome as the boy Krishna. Seeing the fair maids of Braj performing their ablutions in the Jumna he stole along the bank, and picking up the

¹ Brand, *Observations*, iii., 194.

² Growse, *loc. cit.*, 60; Wilson-Hall, *loc. cit.*, iv., 314 *seqq.*

³ *Vishnu Purâna*, iv., 316.

⁴ Waddell, *Himalayas*, 110; Cunningham, *Ancient Geography of India*, i., 359.

⁵ Compare the Australian legend, *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, vii., 257.

clothes of which they had divested themselves, climbed up with them into a kadamb tree. There he mocked the frightened girls as they came shivering out of the water, nor would he yield a particle of vestment till all had ranged before him in a row, and with clasped and uplifted hands piteously entreated him. Thus the boy taught his votaries that submission to the divine will was a more excellent virtue than even modesty."¹ A most excellent moral drawn from a *risqué* story. Here we have a version of the Swan-maiden cycle of tales which has been so fully discussed by other writers that it is necessary only to refer to it. The tale, I need hardly say, is found in many shapes in Indian folklore.²

But the form of the story as it appears in the Krishna cycle is remarkable because it is associated with the *Vastraparvana*, the sacred tree, which is said to be so named, "the seizing of the clothes," from this incident. Now this appears to be one of the rag-trees so common in all parts of the world, where sick people hang their clothes or fragments of them so as to pass the disease on to the tree-spirit, or to gain strength through communion with the spirit which proves its vitality by reviving with each returning spring. It looks very much as if this may have been the basis of the tale, the clothes hanging on the branches suggesting a further development of the myth in the direction of the Swan-maiden cycle. I am not aware if there are other cases in which the two cycles thus converge. If such be the case it would be interesting as another instance of a not unusual method of the growth of myth.

Passing on from folktales to ritual, we notice, in the first place, that the Krishna cult is very closely associated with

¹ Growse, *loc. cit.*, 59.

² *North Indian Notes and Queries*, iii., 120, 153 *seqq.*; Tawney, *loc. cit.*, ii., 453; Miss Stokes, *loc. cit.*, 89; Miss Frere, *Old Deccan Days*, 167 *seqq.* In the *Mahābhārata*, *Adi Parva*, sec. 78 (Ray, i., 240), the Gandharva, Chitraratha, mixes up the clothes of the girls while they are bathing.

the observances of the Holi feast, which is nowhere celebrated with more enthusiasm than in places where the worship of Krishna is most popular. Most people are now agreed that these rites of the sacred fire of spring are in the way of a charm to secure the kindly influence of sunshine and the fertility of crops and cattle. If this be so, it supplies another indication that Krishna was originally a local god of agriculture and cattle, with whose cultus such rites would naturally be connected. To this may be added some facts pointing in the same direction. The first is that in India, as in other places, omens are drawn of the prospects of the coming season from the way in which the smoke and blaze of the fire ascend.¹ It was probably from some rural oracle like this that at the temple of the Ismenian Apollo divination was practised by observing the appearance of the sacrificial flame and the ashes of the burnt offerings. In fact, this habit of observing the smoke and fire was reduced to a regular science, known as *Pyromanteia* or *Kapnomanteia*.²

Another fact from which the same inference may be drawn is the prominence of mock combat and abuse, particularly of women, during the Holi.³ Customs of this kind are found in many parts of the world. In Greece we have the women's race in honour of Dionysus; the contest of the Spartan boys at the Plane-tree-grove; the raillery directed at women; the yearly contest of maidens with stones and clubs in honour of Athena; the rites of the *Dædala*; the sham fight at the Eleusinia; the *Lithobolia* or stone-throwing custom at Troezen; the *Taurokalapsia* or Thessalian bull-fight, and so on.⁴ In Rome the same

¹ Crooke, *Agricultural and Rural Glossary*, 125.

² Sophocles, *Œd. Rex*, 21; *Antig.*, 1005 *seqq.*; Herodotus, viii., 134; Euripides, *Phæn.*, 1285 *seqq.*; Frazer, *Golden Bough*, ii., 270; Smith, *Dictionary of Antiquities* (2nd ed.), i., 646.

³ Growse, *loc. cit.*, 92; Crooke, *Popular Religion*, ii., 316.

⁴ Pausanias, iii., 13, 7; ix., 32, 2; Frazer, *Golden Bough*, i., 91 *seqq.*; Frazer, *Pausanias*, ii., 492; iii., 267 *seqq.*; Herodotus, iv., 180.

custom is represented by the Equirria or Mamuralia, the Matronalia Festa, the Liberalia and the Lupercalia, in which there was a mock human sacrifice, the foreheads of the youths being smeared with the knives still dripping from the slaughter of the victims.¹ This, we know, was a common charm to promote the fertility of the crops, and a survival of rites like these may possibly be traced in the modern carnival.

In India we have many instances of the same type—the Bagwah or stone-throwing in Kumaun; the Barra, or tug of war between adjoining villages, which is part of the funeral rites of the Maghs; the combat between the people of the two quarters of the town of Pushkar; the sham fights in the Hindu Kush, where women are privileged to abuse the Ra or chief; the stone-throwing rite at Ahmadnagar, which if discontinued causes a plague of rats, if well done brings abundant rain; and among the Bhils a branch of a tree is planted in the ground which the men try to uproot and are belaboured by women.²

Going further afield, we have the scramble to ascend a tree among the Nahuas of Western America; the flinging of cocoanuts as a rain charm in Ceylon; the Dayak combat to scare evil spirits; the stoning custom at Seoul in Corea; the Kâfirs of the Hindu Kush flinging an iron ball on a holiday or fighting with snowballs at the Taska feast; the Burmese women at the new year flinging water over each other; the abuse of women and unrestrained sexual licence at the Nanga rites in Fiji, which may be a survival of group-marriage, now invested with a ritual significance; the flinging of stones at the doors of the cells occupied by holy men

¹ Smith, *loc. cit.*, i., 753.

² Crooke, *loc. cit.*, ii., 321; *North Indian Notes and Queries*, iii., 99; Risley, *Tribes and Castes*, ii., 34; Broughton, *Letters from a Mahratta Camp*, 356 *segg.* And compare Frazer, *Pausanias*, ii., 492; iii., 267; *Indian Antiquary*, v., 5; vi., 29.

at the Phapa rites in Siam; and the mock combats of various American Indian tribes.¹

I need hardly refer to the cases of the late survivals of tribal contests in Great Britain which have been illustrated by Mr. G. L. Gomme.² We know that many of the most ancient fairs in this country are connected with the ancient cemeteries and some cult of the dead in which mock combats and even blood-letting were part of the observances. It would be tempting to suggest that we have a similar ritual survival in some of our English games, like "The Raid," "Scotch and English," and "Prisoners' Base."³ Bull-baiting, again, which in some cases seems to be a survival of a water-sacrifice,⁴ often takes the form of a contest between rival villages or townships. Akin to these are other popular ceremonials in which animals take part, such as the habit of horse-riding at certain feasts.⁵ Wren-hunting, which is done by fishermen in the Isle of Man to keep off storms, was originally possibly a procession in honour of the sacred beast which later on turned into a hunt, like the custom of the Munda girls in India, who on a feast-day hunt and kill any pigs, sheep, or goats of neighbouring villages which they can come across, and that of the youths in Bihâr, who have a festival on which they hunt hares and jackals.⁶

¹ Bancroft, *loc. cit.*, ii., 330; i., 84; *Panjab Notes and Queries*, iii., 85; Ling Roth, *loc. cit.*, i., 260, 414; *The Times*, 8th September, 1891; Robertson, *Khâirs of the Hindu Kush*, 584 *seqq.*, 592; Symes, *Mission to the Court of Awa*, ii., 210; *Burmah Gazetteer*, i., 417; *Reports, American Bureau of Ethnology*, 1881-82, 295, 337; Jarves, *History of the Hawaiian or Sandwich Islands*, 153; Bowring, *Siam*, i., 159 *seqq.*; *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxi., 126.

² *Village Communities*, 240.

³ Mrs. Gomme, *Traditional Games*, ii., 79 *seqq.*, 183; *Denham Tracts*, i., 151 *seqq.*

⁴ *Folk-Lore*, vii., 346.

⁵ Martin in Pinkerton, *Travels*, iii., 600, 606, 668, 716.

⁶ Frazer, *Golden Bough*, ii., 140; Bancroft, *loc. cit.*, ii., 336; *Denham Tracts*, i., 203; *North Indian Notes and Queries*, iii., 98; Grierson, *Bihâr Peasant Life*, 401; Gomme, *loc. cit.*, 112 *seqq.*; *Folk-Lore*, iii., 463 *seqq.*

The same idea may underlie some of our most popular village rites in this country—the Hood Game at Haxey;¹ the ball contests at Bury St. Edmunds and Newcastle;² the ram-hunting at Eton;³ the bull-baiting at Stamford and Great Grimsby;⁴ the ball playing on Shrove Tuesday at Whitby, where if the game be not well played the youngsters will be sure to fall ill at harvest time; similar rites at St. Ives, Dorking and Nuneaton; the Whipping Toms at Leicester; the whipping of the cat in Shropshire; the catching of a hare at Cleshill in Warwickshire; and the hurling of pitchers into houses in Cornwall.⁵ A closer parallel to the Hindu rite may be found in the custom of mock-combat round a bonfire at Marlborough on the 5th of November.⁶

The published accounts of many of these rites are very meagre; but we may perhaps see in some or all of them one of two principles—either a racial or tribal contest between the residents of adjoining villages or parts of the same township—or survivals of some form of animal or perhaps human sacrifice, the object being to propitiate the powers of evil which affect the fertility of the crops or injure children or cattle.

Another important rite connected with Krishna worship is that of swinging the idol or one of the devotees before the image of the god. In Bengal this rite is known as the Dola Yātra or swinging rite, and is performed in spring or

¹ *Folk-Lore*, vii., 330 *seqq.*; 2nd Series *Notes and Queries*, iv., 486; 4th series, ix., 158 *seqq.*

² Hone, *Everyday Book* (ed. 1878), i., 215.

³ 7th Series *Notes and Queries*, iv., 416, 467; 2nd Series, vii., 201.

⁴ 5th Series *Notes and Queries*, ii., 224; Hone, *loc. cit.*, i., 741; *Gentleman's Magazine Library, Manners and Customs*, 211 *seqq.*

⁵ 5th Series *Notes and Queries*, vii., 120; 8th Series, viii., 28; 1st Series, ix., 223 *seqq.*; 3rd Series, i., 224; 6th Series, i., 154; 1st Series, vii., 235; 2nd Series, vii., 312; Hone, *Year Book* (ed. 1878), 269; *Gentleman's Magazine, loc. cit.*, 258.

⁶ 1st Series *Notes and Queries*, v., 365.

about the middle of March. The image of the god is carried on a swing or placed in a seat or cradle, which as soon as the dawn appears is set quietly in motion for a few turns. This is repeated at noon and again at sunset. During the day, as at the Holt in Northern India, a good deal of horseplay goes on, sprinkling of coloured powder and water, abuse of women, and so on.¹ In Northern India, at the Tîj or third day of the month Sâvan, in the autumn is a woman's feast, when they bathe, dress in their best, and swing in merry-go-rounds.² In the month of Sâvan in Bengal, Dharmarâja, who is here probably identified with Yama, god of death, has a feast where swinging goes on.³ The rite of swinging Krishna is also performed at Jaggannâth, and Mr. Pegge gives an illustration and account of the rite, while in Bombay a special fair of the same kind is held at Yellama's Hill.⁴ The Bengal hook-swinging rite, at which devotees torture themselves and some swing with hooks passed through the loins, has been often described. It prevailed in many parts of the country, and instances have been reported in quite recent times. The swinging of the god Lingo is prominent in the Gond Epic, and the swinging of witches is still common among some of the jungle tribes.⁵

These swinging rites prevail in many parts of the world. In Greece we have the Aiora, which is based on a legend that Dionysus was received by Icarius and taught the culture of the vine. Icarius gave some of the wine to the neighbouring peasants, who believed that they had been poisoned by it, and slew him. When they came to their senses they buried him, and his daughter, Erigone, guided to the grave

¹ Wilson, *Essays*, ii., 224 *seqq.*; Ward, *Hindoos*, ii., 171; Monier Williams, *Hinduism and Brâhmanism*, 430.

² *North Indian Notes and Queries*, iv., 149.

³ *Ibid.*, i., 76.

⁴ Pegge, *Orissa Mission*, 118 *seqq.*; *Bombay Gazetteer*, xxi., 613.

⁵ Hislop, *Aboriginal Tribes*, App. 28; compare Ling Roth, *loc. cit.*, i., 368.

by her favourite dog, Maera, hanged herself on a tree close by. Dionysus thereupon sent a grievous plague which could be stayed only by the offering to him of the Phallus. Then, in order to appease the ghost of Erigone, the Athenian maidens all began to hang themselves. This madness could be appeased only by the institution of the feast of the Aiora, in which maidens swing themselves on trees, a clear instance of a folktale invented to explain a piece of primitive ritual.¹ By another story the rite seems to have been connected with the suicide of Phædra.² The Aiora has come down to modern times in the Greek islands. "On the Tuesday after Easter the maidens of Seriphos play their favourite game of the swing. They hang a rope from one wall to the other, put some clothes on it, and swing, singing and swinging one after another. Aware of this, the young men try to pass by, and are called upon for a toll of one penny each, a song, and a swing. The words they use are as follows: 'The gold is swung, the silver is swung, and swung, too, is my love with the golden hair.' To which the maiden replies: 'Who is it that swings me that I may gild him with my favour, that I may work him a fez all covered with pearls?' Then, having paid his penny, he is permitted to pass, and another comes and does likewise."³

The origin of these rites is obscure. In some cases they seem to represent merely a fertility charm, as when in Madras the Reddi brings home his bride, a swing is hung from the house-beam, a wooden doll is hung in it, and swung by husband and wife, while the women sing songs, obviously a charm to make their union fertile.⁴ In other cases it may be connected with the rule which prevents divine personages and those under taboo, as girls when

¹ Miss Harrison, *loc. cit.*, Intro., xxxix. ; Frazer, *Pausanias*, ii., 461 ; *Classical Review*, iii., 378 *seqq.*

² Pausanias, x., 29, 3.

³ Bent, *Cyclades*, 5.

⁴ *Bombay Gazetteer*, xviii. (1), 405.

they come of age, from touching either heaven or earth. We have, again, the common custom of hanging masks on trees, which swing about and are supposed to promote their fertility—the Oscilla of Rome and the Dozzils of parts of England.² A bull-roarer is swung in the same way in the neighbourhood of Torres Straits as a fishing charm, and in Celebes dolls are hung on trees to protect the fruit.³ In the same class is probably the cult of Aparchomeme, the “hanging” Artemis. The children, we are told, hung up images of Artemis, and the men of Kaphyæ stoned them. The angry goddess smote their wives with sore disease, and thus the cult of the Hanging Artemis came to be instituted. We find also the same idea in the worship of Helene Dendritis.⁴

It shows itself in India in the custom of hanging up little cots on trees as a remedy for disease. In Madras when cholera appears, a swing is put up in the shrine of Bhargarmâ and worshipped.⁵ In fact, the idea seems to have generally prevailed that the swinging of anything before a god, from the hook-swinging of a devotee to the whirling Dervishes, was a mode of propitiating the divinity, every part of the person or thing offered being brought in succession into the immediate view of the god. Thus, we have in India the Evil Eye protectives of swinging lamps, rice pounders, and what not, round the head of the married pair. The Nahuas of Western America swung censers before their images and before the sun,⁶ and the swinging censer has come down to the Christianity of our own days. It is no doubt in consonance with some ancient rite of propitia-

¹ Frazer, *Golden Bough*, i., 223 *seqq.*

² Vergil, *Georgics*, i., 382 *seqq.*; Smith, *Dictionary of Antiquities*, ii., 305; *Folklore*, vii., 399.

³ *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xix., 406.

⁴ Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States*, ii., 428, 634; Pausanias, vi., 22, 5.

⁵ Crooke, *loc. cit.*, i., 97; Oppert, *Original Inhabitants of Bharatavarsha*,

154.

⁶ Bancroft, *loc. cit.*, ii., 318.

tion that in Bolivia people swing all day long on All Souls' Day in the hope that while they swing they may approach the spirits of their departed friends as they fly from Purgatory to Paradise. They swing as high as they can, so as to reach the topmost branches of the trees, and whenever they are able to pull off one of the higher boughs they think that they release a soul from Purgatory.¹

A large part of the Krishna legend relates to his amours with the Gopis, the wives and daughters of the herdsmen of the land of Braj. On this is based many of the erotic myths which form such a repulsive element in modern Vaishnavism. "Drawn from their lonely homes," as Mr. Growse tells the story,² "by the low sweet notes of his seductive pipe, they floated round him in rapturous love, and through the moonlight autumn nights joined him in the circling dance, passing from glade to glade in ever-increasing ecstasy of passion. To whatever theme his voice was attuned, their song had but one burden—his perfect beauty; and as they mingled in the mystic maze, with eyes closed in the intensity of voluptuous passion, each nymph as she grasped the hand of her partner thrilled at the touch, as though the hand were Krishna's, and dreamed herself alone supremely blessed in his undivided affection. Râdhâ, fairest of the fair, reigned queen of the revels, and so languished in the heavenly delights of his embraces that all consciousness of earth and self was obliterated."

This is the dance known as the Râsa-mandala, or circular dance, and in the popular representations of it "whatever the number of Gopis introduced so often is the figure of Krishna repeated. Thus each Gopi can claim him as a partner, while again in the centre of the circle he stands in larger form with his favourite, Râdhâ." By a similar legend a friend challenged Krishna to bestow on

¹ 8th Series *Notes and Queries*, vi., 345.

² Growse, *loc. cit.*, 61.

him one of his wives. "In whatever room thou findest me not," he answered, "she is thine;" and Saubhari the sage, we are told, visited all the daughters of King Mandhatri at the same time.¹

This is not the place to discuss the question of religious dances at any length. This much seems fairly clear, that they are often intended to act as a charm to promote the fertility of the animal and vegetable world. Pausanias tells us that one part of the cult of the chthonic powers, among whom the vegetation deities hold a prominent place, was the smiting of the underground folk with rods; and to this day at their seasonal dances the Kol girls in India kneel and pat the ground in time to the music, as if coaxing it to be productive.² The dance, then, was apparently a variant of this, and the beating of the ground by the feet of the dancers was an attempt to wake the slumbering gods of growth at each recurring spring. When, as in the Râsa-mandala, the dance took a circular form, another kind of charm was added, of which the tale of instances is legion.

We may, then, in the first place, compare with this dance of Krishna and the women that of the Grecian nymphs, the spirits of wood and spring, through whom the earth gives its increase. Homer tells us that they have fair dancing grounds and dance round Achelous, while the Agronomoi or wild-wood nymphs disport themselves with Artemis.³ Their successors, the modern fairies, dance in the "Midsummer Night's Dream," and rustics sometimes are privileged to see their dances in the England and Germany of our days.⁴ Like these are the dances of the Maenads, that

¹ Shea-Troyer, *Dabistan*, iii., 32; Wilson-Hall, *loc. cit.*, iii., 274.

² Pausanias, viii., 15, 3, with Frazer's note; *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, xxxv. (2), 184.

³ *Odyssey*, vi., 105; xii., 318; *Iliad*, xxiv., 615 *seqq.*

⁴ Aubrey, *Remaines*, 28; Grimm, *loc. cit.*, ii., 555; *Folk-Lore Record*, i., 27; Jones-Kropf, *Magyar Folk-Tales*, Intro., xxxiv.

of the naked youths in honour of Apollo, that of the Lacedaemonian maidens, and that of the Thyiads in Athens, the rite of Mother Dindymene and the Kordax on Mount Sipylus.¹ It is repeated in that of the Saliî at Rome, and in the ritual of the Floralia. Of modern instances it is only necessary to name the puberty- and wedding-dance among savages, the Zulus for instance, and to this day there is a special wedding-dance in Brittany.² It is doubtless with the same motive that the Madonna del Mateno of Sardinia pirouettes in public, that there is a Whitsuntide dance at Echternach in Luxemburgh, and that the Mexicans dance in honour of Our Lady of Guadalupe.³ We have another survival of the same rite in the Furry or Faddy dance at Helston in Cornwall, which is said to commemorate a dragon which once passed over the town without doing any harm, possibly a reminiscence of the great rain-serpent.⁴

Secondly, in the Gopis we may recognise the temple-slaves of the East, concubines of the god, known in India as Devi-dâsis, an institution connected with the custom of marriage to the god, of which I have given many instances in another place.⁵ The same custom prevailed in Egypt; and these divine dancers passed into the Greek world as the Hierodouloi, of whom Strabo tells us there were six

¹ Pausanias, iii., 11, 9; 10, 7; iv., 16, 9; x., 4, 3; vi., 22, 1; Frazer, ii., 411; iii., 320; iv., 95, 147.

² Theal, *loc. cit.*, 217; 8th Series *Notes and Queries*, vi., 481; Frazer, *Pausanias*, iii., 469.

³ 8th Series *Notes and Queries*, x., 397; 7th Series, ix., 381; 8th Series, x., 115, 202.

⁴ 6th Series *Notes and Queries*, xi., 468, 496; 5th Series, v., 507; vi., 32; 7th Series, ix., 424; Hone, *Everyday Book*, ii., 324 *seqq.*; *Gentleman's Magazine*, *loc. cit.*, 216 *seqq.*

⁵ *North Indian Notes and Queries*, iv., 9 *seqq.*; C. Ramachendrier, *Collection of Decisions of the High Court and Privy Council on Dancing Girls*, Intro., 1 *seqq.*; Crooke, *loc. cit.*, ii., 118; *Bombay Gazetteer*, xviii. (1), 546; Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies*, (ed. Beauchamp) 133, 592; Yule, *Marco Polo*, ii., 288 *seqq.*

thousand at the temple of the Cappadocian Comana and three thousand at Morimene, while the early Musalmán invaders found five hundred at the great temple of Somnâth.¹ A variant of this institution leads us to the fable of the Amazons and the Land of Women of Celtic legend.²

I have left to the end of this Paper what is perhaps the most interesting part of the Krishna myths, the explanation of his name. The word means, "the black, the dark, or the dark blue one," and in the popular representations of him he is usually depicted as of a dark blue hue. The popular Hindu explanation, that he was originally born black, does not help us to an explanation. The difficulty of explaining his name was felt at a very early time, as is shown by the attempt to derive it from *krishi*, "ploughing," or from *krishi*, "what existeth," and *na*, "eternal peace."³ He may be, as we have seen, an agricultural god, but his name cannot be derived from his functions. Equally inconclusive is the view of one school of comparative mythologists, which identifies him with the setting sun.

His title opens up a very curious chapter in religious symbolism, that of the black or otherwise coloured gods.

To begin with Egypt, we have black gods in Isis and Osiris, the latter in his form as god of the dead, while he is green when a corn-god.⁴ Ammon is a blue god, which is the colour of the modern Buddhist ghosts, while Krishna is one of the nine black Vasu-devas of the Jainas, and by the early Buddhists he was regarded as the chief of the black

¹ Herodotus, i., 199; Maspero, *Dawn of Civilisation*, 126, 676; *Struggle of the Nations*, 161, 182; Müller, *Dorians*, i., 282 *segg.*; Frazer, *Pausanias*, iii., 30, 450; Smith, *Dictionary of Antiquities* (2nd ed.), i., 959; *Encyclopædia Biblica*, i., 338.

² Nutt, *Voyage of Bran*, i., 30, 146.

³ Muir, *loc. cit.*, iv., 219; *Mahâbhârata*, *Udyoga Parva*, sec. 69, Ray trans., iii., 227.

⁴ Plutarch, *De Iside*, 33; Wilkinson, *Ancient Egyptians* (ed. 1878), iii., 81; Maspero, *Dawn of Civilisation*, 73; Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, 305; Frazer, *Golden Bough*, i., 403.

demons.¹ In Egypt Hâpi, the Nile god, is sometimes red and sometimes blue.²

In Mexico, Acosta describes the idol of Vitziliputzli : " It was an image of wood like to a man, set upon a stoole of the colour of Azure, in a brancard or litter, at every corner was a piece of wood in form of a serpent's head. The stoole signified that he was set in heaven ; the idoll had all the forehead azure, and had a band of azure under the nose from one ear to another."³ The aspect of other Mexican gods was similar, as that of Chalchihuitlicue and Cipattonal.⁴ Blue seems to have been a sacred colour, as in Yucatan the assistants of sorcerers painted themselves blue, which was the colour of the books used by the priests and at special feasts of the gods, the instruments used in every profession, the doors of houses, and even children were daubed with blue.⁵

In India black gods abound. Besides those to whom statues of black stone are dedicated, of which more later on, we have Siva and Râhu, Vishnu, Târâ, and Kâlî-devî. Siva, again, is known as Nîla-kantha, or " blue-necked," to explain which a myth was invented that his colour was derived from the drinking of the deadly poison, which otherwise would have destroyed the world. Sâraswatî, a river goddess, is blue ; and in his form as Nârâyana Vishnu has a blue stone image in Nepâl.⁶ The colour of Nârâyana obviously attracted attention in early times, for we have in the Mahâbhârata a story that it was only in the Iron Age that he became black.⁷

Among other black gods may be named the Japanese Dai

¹ Bunsen, *Egypt's Place*, i., 370.

² Maspero, *loc. cit.*, 37.

³ Bancroft, *loc. cit.*, iii., 291.

⁴ *Ibid.*, iii., 297, 368, 491.

⁵ *Ibid.*, ii., 697, 700.

⁶ Growse, *Râmâyana of Tulsi Dâs*, 49 ; Ward, *Hindoos*, ii., 26, 147 ; *Asiatic Researches*, ii., 313.

⁷ *Mahâbhârata, Vana Parva*, sec. 149 ; Ray, trans., ii., 448.

Gakf, "the great black one," who is a god of riches, like the Hindu Kuvera, "the ugly one," both probably black spirits of the hearth, like Brownie and the Cauld Lad of Hilton.¹ Malignant spirits and ghosts are naturally depicted as black, such as the cruel wood-sprite in Terra del Fuego, and the Ukraine god of evil. Our own Devil and others of his kinsfolk are described as black, and Pausanias speaks of the black ghost of Temesa.²

Passing on to Greece, we have the Nocturnal Dionysus and Dionysus of the Black Goatskin, the Black Erinys, the Black Aphrodite, said to be so called because men indulge in vice at night, but who was really a chthonic deity of the grave, and the Black Demeter.³

English tradition supplies us with a black Godiva, who is doubtless a decayed deity of the older paganism.⁴

In more modern times we have the host of Black Madonnas, a very curious chapter in the history of hagiology.⁵ The legends given in explanation of their colour are of many kinds. Thus the image of Maria Egyptiaca was entirely covered with hair to represent her dwelling in the desert, "al black over all her body of the grate heat and brennyng of the sun," as the Golden Legend describes her.⁶ Others are said to have been buried in the earth or bogs,

¹ Gomme, *Folklore Relics of Village Life*, 88; the Mexican Yxtliton or Ixthilton, "the little negro," or "the black-faced," cured children of various diseases. Bancroft, *loc. cit.*, iii., 409.

² *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, x. 40; xii., 158, 162; xv., 145; Ralston, *Russian Fairy Tales*, 358; Pausanias, vi., 6, 11; Frazer, iv., 357.

³ Pausanias, i., 40, 6; ii., 35, 1; Frazer, ii., 525 *seqq.*; Aeschylus, *Choeph.*, 1038; *Sept. Contra Thebes*, 696, 975; Euripides, *Orestes*, 321; *Electra*, 1345; Pausanias, viii., 34, 3; ii., 2, 4; viii., 6, 5; ix., 27, 5; Farnell, *loc. cit.*, ii., 649 *seqq.*; Pausanias, viii., 5, 8, 42, 1; Frazer, iv., 406.

⁴ Hartland, *Science of Fairy Tales*, 85.

⁵ Grimm, *loc. cit.*, i., 313; Inman, *Ancient Faiths*, ii., 263; Brewer, *Dictionary of Miracles*, 526; 9th Series *Notes and Queries*, ii., 367, 397, 449, 475, 537; iii., 190, 376 *seqq.*, 452; iv., 77, 135, 177, 315.

⁶ Fosbroke, *Cyclopædia of Antiquities*, i., 102, quoting *Golden Legend*, fol. lxxii.

and to have been recovered from thence by some favoured votary. Such is the famous Madonna la Trouche, that found in the Cullen bog near Tipperary, the Madonna of Ballyvourney in the county of Cork, and that of St. Molaise at Innismurray.¹

Blackness is the characteristic of images other than Madonnas, such as the rag images of the Italian Befanas, which take the place of our Santa Claus and have blackened faces.²

The question of the explanation of the origin of these black gods is extremely complex.

In some cases we may suspect that they represent a racial type familiar to the people who first introduced this form of worship. We must remember that among some races blackness of complexion is not alone considered not unbecoming, but is even admired. One of the titles of the Zulu kings, for instance, was "You who are black;" and the lady in the Canticles says, "I am black but comely; O daughters of Jerusalem."³ We find the Egyptian queen, Nofritari, consort of Ahmosis, identified with Isis and depicted as a black-skinned goddess.⁴ Hence we can explain why St. Benedito, a black negro saint is worshipped on the Amazon, and on the Gold Coast the white man's God is said to be black, and he appears at the foot of the fetish-tree in the form of a black dog.⁵

Now it has been often noticed that some of the forms of the Indian Buddha and other black Hindu gods are of a distinctively negroid type, representing the deity with thick lips, long hanging ear lobes, and black curly hair

¹ Rhys, *Hibbert Lectures*, 102; O'Curry, *Manners and Customs*, iii., 206 note; Borlase, *Dolmens of Ireland*, iii., 788, 1115; Southey, *Common-place Book*, iii., 174.

² 6th Series *Notes and Queries*, ii., 409.

³ Darwin, *Descent of Man*, 579; *Canticles*, i., 5; *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xv., 56; Featherman, *Negrïtoes*, 584 note.

⁴ Maspero, *Struggle of the Nations*, 96, 98.

⁵ Bates, *Amazon*, i., 310 seqq.; Featherman, *loc. cit.*, 160 note.

which cannot be referred to any existing Indian people.¹ Dr. Waddell describes the Lama of Tibet as a man with short curly hair, like the conventional images of Buddha; the courtiers depicted in the rock paintings of the Ajanta caves have fair or dark brown curly hair, while the attendants are black with curly negroid hair, and some are dwarfs; the images of the Jaina saint Gautama have crisp curly hair, thick lips, and black skin.² The enlargement of the ear lobe has also been often noticed.³ Mr. Walhouse thus describes the image of Buddha at Karakal in South Kanara:⁴ "Remarkable it is, too, that the features show nothing distinctively Hindu. The hair grows in close crisp curls; the broad fleshy cheeks might make the face seem heavy, were it not for the marked and dignified expression conferred by the calm forward gazing eyes and aquiline nose, somewhat pointed at tip. The forehead is of average size, the lips very full and thick, the upper one long almost to ugliness, throwing the chin, though full and prominent, into the shade. The arms, which touch the body only at the hips, are remarkably long, the large, well-formed hands and fingers reaching to the knees." It may be suspected that in these representations we have a proof of negroid or negrito influence on Indian religious beliefs.

Again, in some cases, the blackness of certain images serves only to connote extreme antiquity. As we have seen, some of them are said to have been found in bogs or buried in the ground, and their dark appearance would corroborate this view of their origin, and sometimes, perhaps, tend to the growth of a conventional type. We know that in the Roman Catholic and Eastern churches it is a common

¹ *Bombay Gazetteer*, xiv., 83; *Gujarat Gazetteer*, i., 458 note; *Asiatic Researches*, iii., 122.

² Waddell, *Among the Himalayas*, 161; *Bombay Gazetteer*, xii., 488; xiv., 67; xv. (1), 232.

³ *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, ii., 192 seqq.

⁴ *Fraser's Magazine*, May, 1875.

incident in the ritual to burn candles or incense before such images; and an ancient Madonna would naturally become darkened in this way, as the fetish stone in an Indian village becomes dark from repeated oblations of oil and butter. The famous Black Rood of Scotland, for instance, seems to have presented the appearance of being blackened all over.¹ It was possibly the natural reverence felt towards old blackened images which suggested to the Greeks the construction of so many of their Xoana from ebony.²

In the same way, too, many of these images are said to have been blackened by fire. Thus we have the image of the Ithomatian Zeus, which was said to have been found in a burned forest, and there was another charred image of Athena.³ So Fryer describes a pagoda at Gokarna in Kanara made of black marble, and particularly venerated because it had escaped the fire.⁴ The same tale is told of a Lingam at Mândhâta in the Central Provinces.⁵ Al Azraki tells us that the black stone of Mecca was once of a refulgent bright colour, but became repeatedly blackened by fire both before and after the rise of Islâm.⁶ We have a similar instance in the image of the rough black stone which represents the jungle goddess Porâ Mât, which is said to have been rescued from a burning forest.⁷

At any rate the worship of black stones is a well-marked phase in the history of early religion. Among these we have the Bâtuli of Syria, a word which is another form of the better known Hebrew Bethel.⁸ One of the Fiji gods is

¹ 1st Series *Notes and Queries*, ii., 409.

² Pausanias, i., 35, 3; 42, 5; ii., 22, 5; viii., 17, 2; 53, 11.

³ *Ibid.*, iii., 26, 6; i., 27, 6.

⁴ *East India and Persia*, 159 *seqq.*

⁵ *Central Provinces Gazetteer*, 261.

⁶ Burckhardt, *Travels*, i., 297.

⁷ Crooke, *loc. cit.*, i., 114 *seqq.* The same story is told of the Santo Nino de Cebú and of a famous Cross in the Philippine Islands. Foreman, *Philippine Islands* (2nd ed.), 196 *seqq.*

⁸ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxxvii., 135; *Encyclopædia Biblica*, 569 *note.*

a black milestone, and in Bengal, Ward informs us, all stone images are of black marble, and the same type is particularly common in Bombay.¹ We may add the Sâlagrâma, or black ammonite, which represents Vishnu, and in Guatemala the famous oracular stone of Patinamit is black.²

We may suspect that many of these sacred black stones may have been originally meteorites.³ It is not difficult to understand why the sudden fall of a stone from the sky, the fall being often accompanied by terrifying sounds, or the train of fire flung behind it by a "falling star," should cause extreme terror to the beholders, and excite awe and reverence. We find in many places traditions of what the Greek called a Diopetes Agalma, which our authorised version of the Acts of the Apostles calls "the image which fell down from Jupiter."⁴ This was the famous image of Diana of Ephesus, of which we know little, save that it was black. Some say that it was a stone, others that it was made of ebony or vine wood, and had never been changed though the temple had been seven times rebuilt.⁵ Other Greek images were said to have fallen from heaven, like the Athena of the Akropolis, the Artemis of Taurus, the Sicilian Demeter, the Aphrodite of Paphos, and the Cybele of Pessinus. In the same way Elegebalus in Sun-form was worshipped at Emesa in the shape of a black conical stone,

¹ Williams, *Fiji*, i., 221; Ward, *Hindoos*, ii., 233; *Asiatic Researches*, v., 240 note; iv., 46, 48; xi., 535; Atkinson, *Himalayan Gazetteer*, iii., 24; *Bombay Gazetteer*, xvi., 517; xix., 450, 486, 530, 546, 582, 611; xx., 438, 442, 448, 450, 452, 455, 459, 465, 467; xxi., 521; xxii., 714, 807; xxiii., 550, 552, 679; xxiv., 300, 377; *Journal of the Asiatic Society, Bengal*, xxiii., 209.

² Bancroft, *loc. cit.*, iv. 123.

³ On this see the paper by Professor H. A. Miers, F.R.S., read at the 1898 meeting of the British Association, from which I have taken several of the following instances.

⁴ Acts, xix., 35.

⁵ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xvi., 79; Farrar, *St. Paul*, 358; *Encyclopædia Biblica*, i., 1099.

which was reported to have fallen from the sky.¹ In Mexico, Quetzalcoatl was represented by a black stone or by several small green stones, most likely aerolites which were said to have fallen from heaven.² In India the image of Vasu-deva, father of Krishna, came down from the heaven of Indra, thus connecting Krishna with an aerolite cult; that of Sítalâ at Jasoli fell from the sky, and the ancestors of the Madaga sept of Kâfirs in the Hindu Kush, and that of the Mech in Assam came down from the sky in a thunderbolt, as the stone which Kronos spewed up was worshipped, and the Syrian Aphrodite sprang from an egg which fell from heaven into the Euphrates.³

As might naturally be expected the worship of aerolites is widespread. Many races call flint weapons "thunderbolts"; healing powers are attributed to them; they are hung over cattle sheds and round the necks of children; they are worshipped by the Khyens of Assam; one was found in South Russia, set in a gold ring, and was no doubt used as an amulet.⁴ So, stone knives, following the potent influence of conservatism in religious matters, were largely used in ritual, in slaying swine in Rome, in Egyptian embalment, in the Hebrew rite of circumcision.⁵

The number of sacred meteorites is legion. Professor Miers mentions one that fell in Ensisheim in Elsass in 1492, which was taken to the village church, where it is still preserved. An aerolite fell in Sugolia on the borders of Hungary

¹ Gibbon, *Decline and Fall* (ed. W. Smith), i., 281.

² Bancroft, *loc. cit.*, iii., 281.

³ Atkinson, *Himalayan Gazetteer*, ii., 785, 800; Robertson, *Kâfirs of the Hindu Kush*, 160 *seqq.*; Pausanias, x., 24, 6; Frazer, iii., 339; Risley, *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, ii., 87.

⁴ Frazer, *Pausanias*, v., 355; 8th Series *Notes and Queries*, ii., 321; Tylor, *Early History*, 208; Grimm, *loc. cit.*, iv., 1221, 1686; Dalyell, *Darker Superstitions of Scotland*, 356 *seqq.*; *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, i., App., lxii.; vi., 149.

⁵ Livy, i., 24; Herodotus, ii., 86; *Exodus*, iv. 25.

in 1514, which was hung in a church on an iron chain.¹ Raffles speaks of one which fell in Java in 1421, which is preserved as a sacred object in a mosque. One at Charcas in Mexico is built into the wall of a church and worshipped by women. Another, which fell at Benares in 1798, was supposed to imply the anger of the gods; and another, seen in Rājputāna in 1867, was promptly ground to powder by the people to render it harmless. At the tomb of Mahmūd in Bijapur is what is called a meteoric stone hanging from a chain which is said to guard the tomb from lightning: it is really a piece of nephrite or jade.² Mr. Walhouse describes a similar stone in Southern India.³ In 1802 one fell at l'Aigle in France, which from the fright it caused is said to have effected the conversion of a sceptic. After the fall of one in Ardèche the peasants would not work near the spot till they had sprinkled it with holy water. In East Africa, in 1853, such a stone was anointed with oil, dressed with beads and set up as a god. An Indian stone was "decked with flowers, daily anointed with *ghi*, or clarified butter, and subjected to frequent ceremonial worship and coatings of sandal-wood powder." Two which fell in Japan more than one hundred and fifty years ago were formerly worshipped yearly at the temple in Ogi. One of them is now in the British Museum, where any member of the Society so disposed may start a local cult of his own. As I write, I find in *The Times*⁴ an account of a stone which fell at Mount Zomba in British East Africa in January last. The people sat round it thinking it miraculous and enchanted.

Finally may be mentioned the well-known meteorite of Aigospotami, the Hajar-ul-Aswad, or great black stone, at the Kaaba in Mecca, which is clearly an aerolite, and that

¹ 7th Series *Notes and Queries*, vi., 325.

² *Bombay Gazetteer*, xxiii., 606.

³ *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, vii., 35 *seqq.*

⁴ 18 May, 1899; other Indian examples in *Bombay Gazetteer*, xv. (2), 275; *Journal of the Asiatic Society, Bengal*, xxx., 415.

worshipped at Sítamarhi in Bengal under the title of Adbhútnátha, or "the miraculous god."¹

We are then, perhaps, justified in suspecting that more than one line of influence may have contributed to the representation of Krishna as a black god.

There is, first, the Negrito element, which shows itself in the popular representations of Buddha.

Secondly, if Krishna in his earliest form be a god of agriculture and cattle, the blackness may connote his chthonic attributes.

Thirdly, if the Rájputs may be identified with the Yu-echi of Central Asia, they may have brought their black god with them. In this part of the world to this day black gods are found. At Tashkent is the shrine of the saint Zangata, "the dark father," who is said to have been dark like a negro; and a black stone near Bukhâra, called Sianghi Murâd, is rubbed by pilgrims, who touch their faces and beards with it.² There is also much in the earlier legends of the Rájputs which suggests an influence which, whatever it may have been, was probably not Hindu. The Pândavas were probably a rude non-Aryan confederation and brought with them foreign practices, such as polyandry, which shows itself in the Draupadi Legend, brutality to conquered enemies, as when Bhima drains the life-blood of Duscâsana.³ The brutal practices of Krishna's own tribe, the Yâdavas, chiefly as regards marriage, are notorious.⁴

It is thus possible that they may have largely absorbed some of the Dravidian or indigenous races among whom, as we have seen, black stone worship was prevalent. In fact there seems reason to believe that this element in the

¹ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, ii., 59; *Asiatic Researches*, iv., 388; Burton, *Pilgrimage*, ii., 300 *seqq.*; Shea-Troyer, *Dabistan*, i., 49; Burckhardt, *Travels*, i., 172, 249 *seqq.*; Crooke, *loc. cit.*, i., 82; *Panjab Notes and Queries*, ii., 145.

² Schuyler, *Turkistan*, ii., 113; i., 138.

³ Frazer, *Literary History of India*, 216 note; *Mahâbhârata, Karna Parva*, lxxxiii., 17; Ray, trans., vi., 316.

⁴ Ragendralâla Mitra, *Indo Aryans*, i., 425.

Krishna cult is more prominent than is generally suspected. The Madura of Southern India is supposed to take its name from the Dravidian Madur, "Old town," and the Krishna cult to have been derived from that of the Southern Indian Kurappan, "the black one."¹ If this be so, the more famous Mathura of the North would be an offshoot from the southern shrine, a development the reverse of popular belief. And the Sanskrit derivation of the former, "the place of milking," may have been a later invention when a cult of kine was added to the ruder form of worship. It is noticeable that the connection between the teachers of Mathura and the Madras Brāhmans is even now well marked.

At any rate, whatever may be the genesis of the dark-hued Krishna, it is clear that his legends absorbed much of the popular folk-beliefs which in this paper I have tried to illustrate.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15th, 1899.

Mr. G. L. GOMME, Vice-President, in the Chair.

THE minutes of the last Meeting of the Society, and of the Joint Meeting of the Anthropological Institute and the Society held on the 27th June, were read and confirmed.

The election of Mr. E. Vincent Evans, Miss C. Burdon, and Mr. A. Shewan as members of the Society was announced.

The resignation of Professor C. de la Saussaye was also announced.

The Secretary exhibited on behalf of the President a photograph of Professor Starr and his two boys, Manuel and Louis.

¹ Senāthi Rāja, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, xix, 578, note 3; Frazer, *Literary History*, 304 note.