



ANCIENT INDIA, ITS LANGUAGE AND RELIGIONS

HERMANN OLDENBERG

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**BY
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CONTENTS

Publishers' Note

The Study Of Sanskrit

The Religion Of The Veda

Buddhism

philosophy, but rather the regions of the Gospels, into which the Buddhistic tradition now seems to conduct us. In fact, some have gone so far—though in my opinion without sufficient reason—as to draw from the striking resemblances of these two fields the conclusion that direct transfers have been made from India to the West. As it was formerly supposed that Pythagoras had drawn his doctrines from Indian sources closely related to Buddhism, so, too, the assumption has found believers—corresponding to the various views taken of Buddhism—that Buddhistic prototypes underlie extensive portions of the Gospels, and that either at Alexandria or at Antioch the intercourse of Christian writers with Buddhistic envoys led to the introduction of a large number of stories, proverbs and parables from Indian literature into that of the New Testament.

It would be possible to carry this identification still further. If along with the person of Buddha and with his doctrine we glance at the third member of the ancient Buddhistic trinity—the ecclesiastical brotherhood or church—we shall be reminded, with sufficient vividness, by the immemorably ancient rules of the Buddhistic order of mendicant monks,—with its deep-rooted aversion to the world, the austerity of its precepts as to poverty and chastity, with its long list of instructions concerning the observance of dignity and reserve, which are manifested after a set fashion in mien and glance, in the manner of eating and drinking, in short, in every gesture,—of Christian monasticism, whether viewed as a whole or in its minutest details.

I think that we may and must be satisfied with the similarity of historical causes at work in the two separate quarters of the world as the explanation for all these resemblances,—a similarity which in my judgment amply accounts for our meeting among civilisations nearer to us in time and place with formations, isolated and scattered, yet closely resembling those which at the height of Indian history, pulsating with Indian life-blood, were united, in Buddhism, into so compact and remarkable a whole.
