

# INTRODUCTION.

## SECTION I.

*Statement of the circumstances which led to the peculiar System of Sanskrit Lexicography introduced for the first time in the Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary of 1872.*

To enable me to give a clear account of the gradual development of the plan of the present work, I must go back to its earliest origin, and must reiterate what I stated in the Preface to the first edition, that my predecessor in the Boden Chair, Professor H. H. Wilson, once intended to compile a Sanskrit Dictionary in which all the words in the language were to be scientifically arranged under about 2,000 roots, and that he actually made some progress in carrying out that project. Such a scientific arrangement of the language would, no doubt, have been appreciated to the full by the highest class of scholars. Eventually, however, he found himself debarred from its execution, and commended it to me as a fitting object for the occupation of my spare time during the tenure of my office as Professor of Sanskrit at the old East India College, Haileybury. Furthermore, he generously made over to me both the beginnings of his new Lexicon and a large MS. volume, containing a copious selection of examples and quotations (made by Pandits at Calcutta under his direction<sup>1</sup>) with which he had intended to enrich his own volume. It was on this account that, as soon as I had completed the English-Sanskrit part of a Dictionary of my own (published in 1851), I readily addressed myself to the work thus committed to me, and actually carried it on for some time between the intervals of other undertakings, until the abolition of the old Haileybury College on January 1, 1858.

One consideration which led my predecessor to pass on to me his project of a root-arranged Lexicon was that, on being elected to the Boden Chair, he felt that the elaboration of such a work would be incompatible with the practical objects for which the Boden Professorship was founded<sup>2</sup>.

Accordingly he preferred, and I think wisely preferred, to turn his attention to the expansion of the second edition of his first Dictionary<sup>3</sup>—a task the prosecution of which he eventually intrusted to a well-known Sanskrit scholar, the late Professor Goldstücker. Unhappily, that eminent Orientalist was singularly unpractical in some of his ideas, and instead of expanding Wilson's Dictionary, began to convert it into a vast cyclopædia of Sanskrit learning, including essays and controversial discussions of all kinds. He finished the printing of 480 pages of his own work, which only brought him to the word *Arim-dama* (p. 87 of the present volume), when an untimely death cut short his lexicographical labours.

As to my own course, the same consideration which actuated my predecessor operated in my case, when I was elected to fill the Boden Chair in his room in 1860.

I also felt constrained to abandon the theoretically perfect ideal of a wholly root-arranged Dictionary in favour of a more practical performance, compressible within reasonable limits—and more especially as I had long become aware that the great Sanskrit-German Wörterbuch of Böhlingk and Roth was expanding into dimensions which would make it inaccessible to ordinary English students of Sanskrit.

Nevertheless I could not quite renounce an idea which my classical training at Oxford had forcibly impressed upon my mind—viz. that the primary object of a Sanskrit Dictionary should be to exhibit, by a lucid etymological arrangement, the structure of a language which, as most people know, is not only the elder sister of Greek, but the best guide to the structure of Greek, as well as of every other member of the Āryan or Indo-European family—a language, in short, which is the very key-stone of the science of comparative philology. This was in truth the chief factor in determining the plan which, as I now proceed to show, I ultimately carried into execution.

<sup>1</sup> This will be found in the library presented by me to the Indian Institute, Oxford.

<sup>2</sup> The main object was really a missionary one, as I have shown in the Preface to this volume (p. ix), and in my Life of

H. H. Wilson appended to my Reminiscences of Old Haileybury College (published by A. Constable & Co.).

<sup>3</sup> His first Dictionary was published in 1819, and his second in 1832, while he was a candidate for the Boden Professorship.