

from the matted hair of the great god Çiva, through the influence of the sage Bhagīratha; the river Gangā wife of Sumudra, pure and destroying sin.»<sup>1</sup>

Again, the Rāmāyaṇa tells us how Çiva »cast Gangā off in the direction of the Vindu lake. And as she was let off, seven streams branched out from her. And the three streams of the excellent Gangā of auspicious waters took an easterly direction; while the Suchakshu, the Sītā, and that mighty river the Sindhu flowed on the auspicious west. And the seventh followed Bhagīratha's car. And that royal saint, the exceedingly puissant Bhagīratha, mounted on a superb car, went before; and Gangā followed him . . .»<sup>2</sup>

At another place Gangā is described as the daughter of Himalaya: »And having repaired to the north side of that mountain (Himalaya), Maheçvara along with the goddess became engaged in austerities on the peak Himavatprabhava. I have now related unto thee, O Rāma, the spread of the Mountain's daughter (Gangā).»<sup>3</sup> And further: »When Rāvaṇa proceeded by the aerial way . . . and again going up ten thousand leagues he reached the eighth aerial region where Gangā, known as the Ganges of the sky, having strong currents and sending high roars, and upheld by air, is situated on the sun's way.»<sup>4</sup>

On account of the Ganges' descent from heaven this river is also called Devabhūti, »produced in heaven», and Khāpagā, »flowing from heaven».

The Ganges descended from Çiva's brow in seven rivers, the Sapta-sindhavas. According to Dowson this expression is often met with in the Vedas and was widely known, even by the Romans in Augustus' days, for Virgil, Eneid, IX. 30, says: *Ceu septem surgens sedatis amnibus altus — per tacitum Ganges.* In Zend they are called Hapta-hendu. Dowson relates the hymn in which the names of the rivers have been given: »Each set of seven (streams) has followed a threefold course. The Sindhu surpasses the other rivers in impetuosity . . . Receive favorably this my hymn, O Gangā, Yamunā, Sarasvatī, Çatudrī, Parushnī; hear, O Marud-vṛidhā, with the Asiknī and Vitastā, and thou, Ārjīkiyā, with the Sushomā. Unite first in thy course with the Trīshṭāmā, the Susartu, the Rasā, and the Çvetyā; thou meetest with the Gomatī, and the Krumu with the Kubhā and the Mehatnū!» According to this the seven rivers are — 1) Gangā (Ganges); 2) Yamunā (Jumna); 3) Sarasvatī (Sarsuti); 4) Çatudrī (Satlej); 5) Parushnī; 6) Marud-vṛidhā; 7) Ārjīkiyā (the Vipāçā, Hyphasis, Byas) . . . In the Mahābhārata the seven rivers are named in one place Vasokasārā, Nalinī, Pāvanī, Gangā, Sītā, Sindhu, and Jambūnadī; and in another, Gangā, Yamunā, Plakshagā, Rathasthā, Sarayu (Sarju), Gomatī, and Gaṇḍakī (Gandak).» In the Rāmāyaṇa and the Purāṇas the seven streams are the Nalinī, Hlādinī,

<sup>1</sup> The History of India from the earliest ages. By J. Talboys Wheeler, Vol. II, p. 45 and 138.

<sup>2</sup> The Ramayana, Vol. I, p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem p. 91.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, Vol. VII, Calcutta 1894, p. 1642.