

and Pāvani going east, the Chakshu, Sītā, and Sindhu to the west, and the Ganges to the south.¹

The hydrography of the Vishnu Purāṇa begins: »The Çatadru, Chandrabhāgā, and other rivers, flow from the foot of Himalaya, etc. . . .»² Wilson tells us that the other Purāṇas enumerate many other rivers beyond those of the Vishnu. Çatadru is »the hundred-channelled», the Zaradrus of Ptolemy, the Hesidrus of Pliny, or Satlej. The Chandrabhāgā, Sandabalis, or Acesines, is the Chinab. Thus even the Satlej is regarded as coming from the foot of the Himalaya, not from beyond the mountains. This is the same view as that of Ptolemy who makes all the rivers start from the southern side of the Himalaya.

According to Wilson the popular notion concerning the origin of the Ganges is that Çiva or Mahādeva receives the river on his head, though this is referred to the descent of the Alakanandā, or Ganges of India, not to the celestial Ganges. In the Vishnu Purāṇa we read:³ »From that third region of the atmosphere, or seat of Vishnu, proceeds the stream that washes away all sin, the river Gangā, embrowned with the unquents of the nymphs of heaven, who have sported in her waters. Having her source in the nail of the great toe of Vishnu's left foot, Dhruva receives her and sustains her day and night devoutly on his head; and thence the seven Ṛishis practise the exercises of austerity in her waters, wreathing their braided locks with her waves. The orb of the moon, encompassed by her accumulated current, derives augmented lustre from her contact. Falling from on high, as she issues from the moon, she alights on the summit of Meru, and thence flows to the four quarters of the earth, for its purification. The Sītā, Alakanandā, Chakshu, and Bhadrā are four branches of but one river, divided according to the regions towards which it proceeds. The branch that is known as the Alakanandā was born affectionately by Mahādeva, upon his head, for more than a hundred years, and was the river which raised to heaven the sinful sons of Sagara, by washing their ashes. This sacred stream, heard of, desired, seen, touched, bathed in, or hymned, day by day, sanctifies all beings; and those who, even at a distance of a hundred leagues, exclaim 'Gangā, Gangā', atone for the sins committed during three previous lives. The place whence this river proceeds, for the purification of the three worlds, is the third division of the celestial regions, the seat of Vishnu.» To which Wilson adds: »The situation of the source of the Ganges of heaven identifies it with the milky way.»

¹ Dowson, op. cit. p. 281. In the Vāyu Purāṇa the story of Bhāgīrathī runs thus: »the river . . . ran into seven courses, three towards the east, namely Nalini, Hladini, and Pavani, three towards the west to wit, Sītā, Chakshu, and Sindhu», the seventh, Bhāgīrathī, ran to the south. These seven rivers are said to have sprung from the Vindu lake, situated at the foot of a mountain to the north of Kāilāsa. They flow through the Himavant, inundate several countries, and go to the place, whence Indra rains, that is to the ocean. Sītā follows the Sindhu to the western ocean. Chakshu falls into the ocean. Sindhu flows through Darada, Kaçmīra, Gandhāra, etc. The course of the three eastern rivers cannot be followed.

² Op. cit. p. 175.

³ Op. cit. p. 228.