

In the Rāmāyaṇa the following piece of Himalayan hydrography is also to be found, in connection with the tale about the lord of monkeys, the successful Sugrīva, who said to a leader of herds and lord of apes, named Vinata . . . »there, in mountain fastnesses, and forests and rivers, do thou search Videha's daughter, Sītā, as well as the abode of Rāvaṇa. And while on the search around for Rāma's beloved wife, Sītā, . . . thou shouldst search the beautiful Bhāgīrathī, and the Sarayu, and Kāuṣikī, the Kālindī, and the charming Yamunā, and the mighty hill bordering thereon; and the Sarasvatī, and the Sindhu, and the Çoṇā with water resembling ruby.»¹

Finally I quote the following passage about the Manasarovar, which for us is the most interesting in the whole Rāmāyaṇa:² »And Bibhishana obtained for his wife the righteous (damsel) named Saramā — daughter unto the high-souled — Çailūsha — sovereign of the Gandharvas. (Saramā) was born on the shores of the lake, Mānasa. And while the lake, Mānasa, was swollen with water on the arrival of the rains, her mother, hearing her cries, affectionately said, — Saromāvardhata — 'O lake, do not swell', and from this circumstance, her name became Saramā.» As the Rāmāyaṇa is the oldest of the Sanscrit epic poems, supposed to have been composed about 500 years B.C., and even if it received its present form one or two hundred years later, the quoted passage must indeed be said to be the first place where not only the sacred lake has been mentioned but also the fact of its swelling or the rise of its surface on arrival of the rains. Nay, it would require some 23 centuries before European geographers and explorers became aware of this most characteristic fact of the periodical fluctuations of the lake, which in later ages gave rise to so many mistakes and misunderstandings, and which I will try to explain, so far as possible, in subsequent chapters.

Through Sir JOHN STRACHEY E. T. ATKINSON is able to give a paraphrase of a portion of the *Skānda Purāṇa*, known as the *Mānasa-khaṇḍa*.³ »It occurs in the usual form of a dialogue between Sūta, a pupil of Vyāsa, and Janamejaya, the son of Parikshit, the Pāṇḍava ruler of Hastinapur, and professes to relate what was formerly communicated by Vyāsa to Vasishṭha. In form and often in verbiage it follows the model of the older Purāṇas and minutely describes the country from the lake Mānasarowar in Tibet to Nanda Devi . . . The work itself is very popular and is deeply interesting as showing the form in which the actual living belief of the people is exhibited.»⁴

¹ Ramayana, op. cit., Vol. IV, Calcutta 1891, p. 808.

² Op. cit. Vol. VII, p. 1594.

³ The Himālayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces of India. Allahabad 1882. Vol. II, p. 297 et seq.

⁴ Supposing that the Library of the India Office should possess some translation of the *Mānasa-khaṇḍa* either in manuscript or print, I wrote to Dr. F. W. Thomas, who, however, communicates me the following: »For the *Mānasa-khaṇḍa* the passage which you cite from Atkinson appears to be the only authority, either English or otherwise. I have found only one reference to a *Mānasa-*