

many rivers and places seen and passed over by the cloud on its lofty way to the mountains.

It is not the object of this work to search the whole Sanscrit literature for geographical extracts. The above quotations will be quite sufficient to give an idea of the geographical knowledge of Indian antiquity, concerning the country north of India. We have found that Kailas and Manasarovar were best known, and formed, as it were, the central points round which the rest of the geographical knowledge was grouped. The further north, east or west from the sacred mount and lake, the more foggy became the conception of the mountainous country. This is quite natural, for Manasarovar was, probably already in a very remote antiquity, an important *tīrtha*, and the pilgrims wandered to its shores to bathe in the sacred water, as they still do in our days. Therefore their geographical knowledge was most substantial regarding the region nearest to the lake. The country beyond they knew only from hearsay.

In the preceding pages I have already had an opportunity to quote Professor Wilson and some other scholars in connection with the Sanscrit geography of south-western Tibet. It may be of interest to hear what Ritter, Lassen, and two or three other scientists think of the same subject and how they try to reconcile the ancient poetical geography with actual facts.

CARL RITTER believes that the cosmography of these oldest religious books and epic songs embraces the whole of the Asiatic highlands, and emphasizes the relation of the mountainous upheaval with the whole continent. To him mount Meru does not indicate any special mountain range, but the whole grand mountainous region of the continent, which we call High-Asia, the whole plateau of High Tartary and Tibet. And the different ranges surrounding mount Meru, according to the Mahābhārata, he identifies with the highest regions of the snow-covered Himalayas and Tibet, the sacred Kāilāsa, Śiva's paradise and the abode of gods, the world of mountain giants round the sacred lakes, and beyond the inaccessible sources of the Ganges and the Indus.<sup>1</sup>

In his classical work »*Indische Alterthumskunde*» CHRISTIAN LASSEN has brought together the most important ancient knowledge of the region in question. The elevated country, so difficult of access, and dreaming in undisturbed peace, situated round the two lakes and mount Kailas, was regarded by the Indians as one of the holiest *tirthas* or places of pilgrimage; Kāilāsa was the dwelling place of gods and of wonderful heroes of the mythical poetry. He says of the source of the Indus that it is situated in a region which is not less remarkable from a geographical point of view than in the conception of the Indians, to whom it is one of the holiest in the world.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Die Erdkunde von Asien, Band I, Berlin 1832, p. 11, and 13.

<sup>2</sup> »Es ist die Gegend der heiligen Alpenseen, des Göttenbergs Kāilāsa und das Quellenland der fünf grossen Indischen Ströme: des Indus, des Çatadru, des Brahmaputra, der Gangā und der Yamunā.