

few salient facts naturally grouped around them, the foundation of new kingdoms, the hostility or help met with at the hands of the aborigines; names, geographical situation, the relative importance of indigenous tribes; the mention of mountains, rivers, strongholds etc. Mr. F. E. Pargiter, a scholar who has contributed much towards the reconstruction of the map of ancient India, gives it as his opinion that the geographical attainments of the old bards often contrast favourably with more modern knowledge¹. Even myths are not always useless, so transparent at times is the veil under which they present some historical fact. Interpolations can often be detected: the very ingenuity with which contradictory statements are set side by side will often enable us to see at a glance which of the two is, in the circumstances, unlikely or impossible.

In short, when dealing with the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, historical research must be given a free hand to take or to discard: good reasons for the one or the other are all that can reasonably be asked for.

§ 2. Identity of the *Kārusha* tribe of heroic times with the modern Oraons.

In the *Bhishma-parva*, or sixth book of the Mahabharata, ch. 9, *Dhritarāshtra*, the aged and blind king of Hastinapur, is represented as patiently listening to the enumeration of some 300 names of tribes, all of which are living "north and east". Hastinapur, it must be remembered, was situated on the Ganges, 57 miles N.E. of Delhi. Among these aboriginal tribes, one is named which, in the rest of the poem, is frequently alluded to: the *Kārushas*. I suggest that these *Kārushas* were no other than the progenitors of the modern Oraons. My reasons are the following:

a) Identity of the two names. — The Oraons refuse to recognise this name, Oraon, as the correct designation of their tribe. They consider it to have been in its origin a pure nickname; it did not, so they say, obtain any currency previous to the English occupation. However this may be², it is a fact that the Oraon rejects this modern name and does not call himself otherwise than *Kūrukhas*³. The first vowel, *ū*, is uttered with a strong nasalisation. My suggestion is that the word *Kūrukhas* is identical with *Kārushas*.

Let us, first of all, note that *Kārushas*, being written in Sanskrit क्राश्रस, may as well be read and transliterated *Kārukhas*, because the letter क् has two equally admissible pronunciations, *sh* and *kh*. The pronunciation *sh* has come to be preferred by scholars; but the other one has (and most

¹ It is a remarkable fact, he says, that the early Sanskrit writers had a much better knowledge of the geography of India than their successors; the Ramayana and Mahabharata contain a considerable quantity of fairly accurate information, while the Raghuvansa, Sisupala-bandha and modern poems are singularly barren in this respect. Journal of As. Soc. of Bengal, 1896, p. 254.

² I wonder whether *Dumraon*, in the Shahabad district (the old home of the tribe) has nothing to do with *Oraon*.

³ Pronounce *kh* like the Arabic خ.