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VEDAS.



VEDAS

OR

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE HINDUS.

SECOND EDITION.

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THE SOCIETY FOR THE RESUSCITATION  
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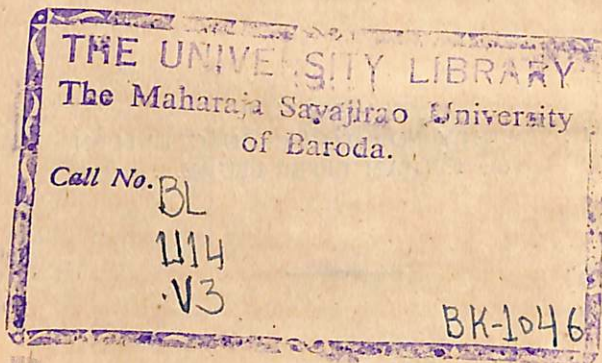
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## Dedication.

To

BABU SRI GOPAL DASU MULLICK

SIR

Your well-known interest, in our Vedas and Vedanta, induces me to couple your great name with my this humble little work. In these days of India's decadence, we have only our great sacred books to look at for consolation, for future regeneration, nay for our salvation, but it is much to be deplored, though the fact is painfully true, that only a very few of our wealthy men take any interest in them. You are, however, an honourable exception. Your name stands at the top of all names in connection with the revival of the Vedantic study. I therefore, most humbly, venture to dedicate this little work to you, hoping that you will kindly accept it as an humble offering of an admirer.

THE AUTHOR.



## PREFACE.

*To the first Edition.*

IN this little work we have tried to arrange all the researches on the ancient Vedic literature in such an order as will enable every one to have an idea of their contents without going through the voluminous works published on the subject. In our analysis of the four Vedas we have received a considerable help from Colebrook's splendid essay. Nor less is our obligation to the learned works of other oriental scholars of the West the foremost of which is "the original Sanskrit Text" of Dr. Muir. In our interpretation of the various texts for ascertaining the religious faith of the Vedic Aryans we have followed as much as possible the views of the Indian scholars. It is not at all possible to do justice to all the most important questions connected with the study of the Veda which is absolutely necessary to a student of religion in such a little work as this. We have however slightly touched upon all the important questions and tried to put in a nut-shell the opinions of various scholars regarding them.

CALCUTTA; }

June 1897. }

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Job

# THE VEDAS.

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## INTRODUCTION.

:O:

*Veda* (from the Sanskrit root *vid* to know) means the sum of knowledge; or according to another etymology, the knowledge which contains the evidence of its truth within itself—that is revelation. But this term, although in some instances it really implies the whole learning (the eighteen *Vidyās* or sciences) of the Hindus, is especially applied to the four principal books of their sacred writings. These are *Rick*, *Yajus*, *Sāman* and *Atharvan*. The *Rig-veda*, from the radical *rich* to laud, is intended to be read on occasions when encomiastic prayers and hymns to the elemental deities are prescribed



by the law; the Yajush (*yaj*, to sacrifice), relates chiefly to oblations and sacrifices and contains prayers adapted for certain rites to be performed at the full and change of the moon and hymns and directions regarding oblations to the manes: the Sāma Veda contains songs of lyrical character to be recited with melody; and the Atharva Veda, which is considered to be of a late date and is seldom included in the terms 'the Vedas,' consists of various hymns and incantations, the greater part of which are intended for the destruction and perdition of enemies. Or more particularly the Rig Veda is an assemblage of the ancient religious hymns, as such, arranged chiefly according to their authors and the divinities to whom they are addressed; the Sāma Veda is a liturgical collection of single verses and brief passages, almost all of them parts of hymns, which are contained in the Rig-Veda, employed in certain Soma ceremonies and chanted by priests called *Sāmagas* or *Chhandogas*; the Yayur-Veda is also liturgical, made up of the utterances of the *adhvaryu* priests in the per-

formance of their sacrifices, in part metrical and mainly extracted from the hymns of the Rig-Veda, in part prosaic.

The Vedas are the earliest works on our theology bequeathed by the great Rishis to whom the whole world is indebted for the original and earliest conception of God and that recorded in a language which still reigns supreme over other classical languages of the world.

According to the tradition they were coeval with creation which had itself taken place according to the laws of a pre-existing Veda. They were however scattered; some legends state they were lost; and it was not till after many years that a Rishi or sage arranged them and gave them the form in which they are now known. This arrangement procured to the editor the name of *Vyasa* or 'arranger.' He is said to have lived in the second yuga and hence is his surname 'Dwaipāyana' that is, he who belongs to the second age or yuga of the world. Various sages assisted him in his labour and when he had divided the whole of the fragments of the



Vedas into four parts he taught them severally to four different pupils. Paila learnt the Rig-Veda, Vaishampāyana was instructed in the Yajur-Veda, whilst the Sāman was taught to Jaimini and Sumantu had to promulgate the Atharva. However in the course of time the pupils of these four sages altered some things in arrangement of the several Vedas which had been handed down to them, and thereby they became founders of different schools which are *Sākhās*; these are very numerous, as may be collected by the fact that there are not less than a thousand *Sākhās* of the Sāma Veda. But the difference, between these various schools of the Veda theology, is not material: it briefly rests upon a mere transposition of the various hymns which, constitute their *Sanhitās* or collection of sacred songs and has consequently no influence on the doctrine which they contain.

Each of these four Vedas is divided into two parts, the *Sanhitā* and the *Brāhmaṇa*. The complete collection of the hymns, prayers and invocations belonging to one Veda is entitled its *Sanhitā*. The *Brāhmaṇas* com-

prise precepts which inculcate religious duties, maxims which explain these precepts and arguments which relate to theology. Under this head are also comprehended the various Upanishadas which belong to it. The four Upavedas and the six Vedāṅgas or supplementary parts of the Vedas with the Upāṅgas or subordinate parts constitute in great measure that kind of literature which enables one better to understand the tenor of the sacred Trayi (the name under which the three Vedas are collectively understood: it means Triad).

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## CHAPTER I.

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### THE ORIGIN OF THE VEDAS.

We will in this Chapter attempt to give in a condensed form the account of the origin of the Vedas as found in the writings of the various Rishis.

*Vedic account.*—In the ninth verse of *Purusha-Sukta* in Rig-Veda the three Vedas are said to have been produced from the mys-



tical victim Purusha. In the Atharva-Veda, the following texts refer to that subject (X. 7, 14). We give the translation. "Declare who is that Skambha from whom they cut off the Rich verses, from whom they scraped off the Yayush; of whom the Sāman verses are the hairs and the verses of Atharvan and Angiras the mouth." The following account occurs in *Satpātha Brāhmaṇa*:—"From them so heated the three Vedas were produced—the Rig-Veda from Agni (fire), the Yajur-Veda from Vāyu (wind) and the Sāmā-Veda from Surya (the sun)." A similar account also occurs in *Chhândogya Upanishad*. The same origin is also assigned to the three Vedas by Manu. Medātithi, a commentator on Manu, however explains this passage in a more rationalistic way "by remarking that the Rig-Veda opens with a hymn to fire, and the Yajur-Veda with one in which air is mentioned." In the *Satpātha Brāhmaṇa* it is said: "The three Vedas are identifiable with speech, mind and breath."

2. *Paurāṇik account*.—In the Vishnu and Bhāgvat Purāṇas we find a quite different

tradition regarding the origin of the Vedas according to which the four-faced Brahmā created them. The following account occurs in Vishnu Purāṇ:—

"From his eastern mouth Brahma formed the *Gayatri*, the *rich* verses, *trivrit*, the Sama-rathantara, and of sacrifices, the *agnistoma*. From his southern mouth he created the *Yajush* verses, the *trishtubha* metre, the Panchadesa-stōma, the Vrihat-Saman and the Ukthya. From his western mouth he formed the *Saman* verses, the *Jagati* metre the Saptadasa-Stoma, the Vairupa and the Atiratra. From his northern mouth he framed the *Ekavinsa*, the *Atharvan*, the *Aptoryaman* with the *Anushtubha* and *Viraj* metre."

A similar account occurs in the Bhāgavat Purāṇa with a single variation. In the Hari-vamsha we find the following account:—"In order to the accomplishment of sacrifice, he formed the Rick, Yajush and Sāman verses." The Mahābharata, in one passage, speaks of Saraswati and the Vedas as being both created by Achyuta from his mind.

The following account regarding the origin of the Vedas occurs in the Mārkaṇdeya Purāṇa:—



"From the eastern mouth of Brahma came the *Rich* verses characterised by the quality of passion (*Rajas*). From his southern mouth came the *Yajush* verses characterised by purity; from his western mouth appeared the *Saman* verses characterised by darkness (*Tamas*); from the northern mouth came the entire *Atharvan* characterised by both darkness and purity."

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## CHAPTER II.

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### THE DIVISION OF THE VEDAS.

Some of the Purānas represent the four Vedas as having issued from Brahmā's different mouths. On the other hand it is held by some that there was originally but one Veda which was subsequently divided into four portions.

We find in Vishnu Purāna the following account describing that the Veda was originally one and was subsequently divided into four parts.

"Assuming the form of Veda Vāysa the all-pervading Being repeatedly divides the single

Veda into four parts and multiplies it by distributing it into hundreds of Sākhās. Having thus divided the Vedas in the Dwāpara age &c."

Again it is elsewhere said in the third Chapter of the third book of the same work :

"A friend to the world, Vishnu, in the form of Vyāsa, divides the single Veda into many parts."

It is again said in the fourth Chapter of the same book :—

"The original Veda, consisting of four quarters, contained a hundred thousand verses. From it arose the entire system of sacrifice, tenfold and yielding all the objects of desire; subsequently in the twenty-eighth Manwantara, my son, the mighty Vyasa divided into four parts the Veda which was one with four quarters. In the same way as the Vedas were divided by the wise Vyasa, so had they been divided by all the preceding Vyasas including myself. Hear now correctly how the Vedas were divided by him at this Dwapara age. When commanded by Brahma, Vyasa undertook to divide the Vedas, he took four disciples who had read through those books. The great Muni took Paila as teacher of the *Rich*, Vāishampayana of the *Yajush* and Jamini of *Saman* while Sumantu, skilled in the *Atharva-Veda*, was also his disciple.



He took too, as his pupil of the Itihasas and Puranas the great and intelligent Muni, Suta called Romaharshana."

In the same way Vāyu Purāna gives an account of the division of the Vedas in the Dwāpara age. It is merely a counterpart of the description found in Vishnu Purāna :—

"In this (Dwāpara) Yuga, he, being commanded by Brahmā, began to divide the Vedas. For this purpose he took four pupils, Jaimini, Sumantu, Vaishampāyana and Pata and as a fifth Lomaharshana"

The following occurs in the fourth Chapter of the first book of Bhāgavat Purāna :—

"Discerning that the pure Vedic ceremonies ought to be performed for men by the agency of four classes of priests, he divided the one Veda into four parts with a view to the performance of a sacrifice. Four Vedas called the Rik, Yajush, Sāman and Atharvan were drawn forth from it; while the Itihāsas and Purānas are called the fifth Veda."

Yayur-Veda is again divided into two schools, the black and the white. The follow-

ing legend occurs in Vishnupurāna regarding the origin of these two schools :—

"Formerly at one time the Munis had entered into a covenant that any one of them, who at a certain time, did not join a council held on mount Meru, should perpetrate the crime of Brahmanicide within a period of seven nights. Vaishampayana alone was not present at the appointed hour and so broke the engagement. And he accidentally slew the child of his sister by a kick of his foot." Thereupon he said to his disciples :—"O my disciples, do ye engage in such ceremonies as will remove the sin consequent upon the destruction of a Brahmin on my behalf, you need not hesitate in this." Thereupon Yajnavalka said :—"What is the use of troubling these miserable and inefficient Brahmanas, I shall alone perform this penance." Thereupon the high-minded preceptor, enraged, said to him :—"O thou, who has insulted these Brahmanas, relinquish all thou hast learnt from me. Dost thou say that these Brahmins are inefficient? What is the use of a disciple who disobeys my commands?" Where to Yajnavalka replied :—"I spoke this out of my devotion to thee. It is more than enough—do thou take, O twice-born one, what I have learnt from thee."

Having said this, he ejected from his stomach the texts of Yajus stained in blood. He then went away. The other pupils of Vaishampayana transfor-



ming themselves into partridges (tāittiri) picked up the texts which he had ejected and which, in consequence thereof, were called Taittiriya. Yajñavalka then eulogised the sun who being pleased assumed the form of a horse and said, "Ask of me what you desire." Having bowed unto him Yajñavalka said :—"Confer upon me a knowledge of those texts of Yajush which even my preceptor does not know." Thus addressed the sun gave to him the texts of Yajush called Ayatayama which Vāishampayana even did not know."—Dutt's translation.

It is clearly evident from this legend that the followers of the two different divisions of the Yajur Veda (the Taittiriya or black, and the Vājasaneyi or white) must have cherished hostilities towards each other. This sectarian jealousy was not confined only to the different schools of Yajur Veda. The followers of the Atharva-Veda seem to have cherished similar feelings of hostility towards the followers of other Vedas.

From the above extracts it is clear that originally the Veda was only one: All the prayers, dedicated to the different powers of nature, passed by the general name of the Veda. They existed for several centuries

in this form when they were divided and arranged into different classes. It is often times seen that the same *Mantras* occur in the three Vedas, and the various schools regard one another with feelings of the greatest hostility. The general belief is that the Rik, Sāma and Yayur are the original three Vedas. The Atharva was composed long after. In some of the Vedic writings there is no mention of the Atharva Veda though in the Purānas we meet with an invariable mention of the four Vedas.

According to the view of the modern oriental scholars both of the East and the West there is but one real *Veda* which is the Rig-Veda Sanhita. It is the only key which can unlock the portal of ancient Indian thought.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### THE AUTHORITY OF THE VEDAS.

The Vedas have always exercised and do still exercise the highest influence upon



the life of the Hindus. Whatever may be the feelings of animosity among the different sects all of them hold the Vedas in the highest respect. We will, in the following pages, consider the authority of the Vedas as held by ancient Indian writers. By them the Vedas are regarded as the earliest authority on the religion of the Hindus upon which the subsequent writers have drawn to a considerable extent for the various doctrines they have preached. So much is the respect of these writers for this grand repository of the religious ideas of the great Rishis and so great is their admiration for the same that the Vedas have been regarded by them as eternal and superhuman. In these pages we will attempt to place before our readers a consensus of the opinions of the various writers on these momentous questions.

First of all we will describe the opinions of the commentators on the Vedas in support of the authority of the Vedas.

The most important commentary on the Rig-Veda is that of Sāyana. According to this learned commentator "the Veda has an in

independent authority in respect of its own sense as the sun has of manifesting forms." The Veda, he considers, is no work of human creation. The Veda has the inherent power of proving itself as well as of proving other things. It is able to make known the past, the future, the minute, the distant and the remote.

According to Mādhava who was the brother of Sāyana Veda is the book "which makes known the supernatural means of obtaining desirable objects and getting rid of undesirable objects." According to him the Veda is eternal because no human author is remembered. And it is considered of very great authority on account of its communicating knowledge. It exists from the very beginning of creation and will exist till the end of creation. Therefore it is eternal and this eternity is proved by itself.

Next we will give an account of the various schools of philosophy regarding the authority of the Vedas.

Amongst the various schools that of *Purva Mimāṃsā* deals particularly with the



authority of the Vedas. According to this school the Veda is maintained to be primeval and superhuman; although different portions of it pass under the names of men, "those denominations of particular portions, it is affirmed, have reference to the tradition by which a revelation has been transmitted." They are named after the person who uttered them as to him revealed. The eternity of the Veda or authenticity of its revelation is attempted to be proved by showing that it had no human origin, and for this the principal argument is that no human author is remembered. In the case of human compositions, it is said, contemporaries have been aware that the authors of them were occupied in composing those works: not so with the Veda which has been handed down as primeval, and of which no mortal-author was known. Another argument of the *Purva Mimāṃsā* is that the words of the Vedas have an eternal connection with their meanings, and therefore the Vedas are eternal and consequently perfect and infallible.

The *Uttara Mimāṃsā* or the Vedānta thus

expresses itself on the authority of the Vedas. "Brahma is the source of the great Sāstra consisting of the Rig-Veda ect. Now such a Sāstra, possessed of the qualities of an omniscient being, could not have originated from any other than an omniscient being." *Sankara on Brahma Sutra*. From the above extract it is clear that the Vedas have no human author, though the doctrine of the *Vedānta* differs from that of *Purva Mimāṃsā*.

The followers of *Nyaya* deny the eternity of sound but admit the eternity of the Vedas, which, according to them, consist in the unbroken continuity of their tradition, study and application. According to Gotama "the Veda is not false; it is owing to some fault in the ceremonial or the performer or the instrument he employs, that any sacrifice is not followed by promised results."

According to the *Vaiśeṣika* school "the authority, of Vedas, arises from their being uttered by Him. Here Him, according to the commentator, refers to God. The authority,



of the Vedas according to them, is proved first by their extent and subject matter and secondly by their unanimous reception by great men.

The *Sānhhyas* do not consider the Vedas to be eternal. According to them the Vedas are not derived from any personal author science there is no person to make them. The Vedas come out from Sayambhuva without any consciousness on his part. Hence they are not formed by any person. The Vedas have a self-proving authority since they manifest their own inherent power.

Thus declaration of Kapila however is very vague. He does not positively deny the authority of the Vedas, but follows the orthodox schools with a good deal of difficulty.

Thus we have given a summary account of the views of the various schools of philosophy regarding the authority and eternity of the Vedas. Whatever may be the view of the orthodox school regarding this question and whatever apparent contradictions there

may be in the argument of the various schools it is evident that the ancient Hindus never meant a book by the word *veda*. We have already attempted to prove that the name *Veda* is not only given to the four great books but also to various branches of learning and other literary works constituting the fifth *veda*. The proper meaning of the term is not the book designated by it but the knowledge that has been revealed to the humanity through books. Such being the case, there is no objection to its being always declared as eternal. The following extract from the speech of Swami Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religion will give our readers some idea about our argument:—

“The Hindus have received their religion through the revelation, the Vedas. They hold that the Vedas are without beginning and without end. It may sound ludicrous to this audience, how a book can be without beginning or end. But by the Vedas no books are meant. They mean the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times.



Just as the law of gravitation existed before its discovery and would exist if all humanity forgot it, so with the laws that govern the spiritual world. The moral, ethical and spiritual relations between souls and souls and between individual spirits and the Father of all spirits were there before their discovery and would remain if we forgot them. Here it may be said that the laws as laws may be without end but they must have had a beginning. The Vedas teach us that creation is without beginning or end. Science has proved to us that the sum total of the cosmic energy is the same through all. Then if there was a time when nothing existed where was all this manifested energy? Some say it was in a potential form in God. But when God is sometimes potential and sometimes kinetic which would make him mutable and everything mutable is a compound and everything compound must undergo that change which is destruction. Therefore God would die. Therefore there never was a time when there was not creation. If I may be allowed to apply a simile, creation and creator are two

lines running parallel to each other, and God is power and ever active Providence under whose power, systems after systems are being evolved out of chaos."

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#### CHAPTER IV.

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#### THE VARIOUS SCHOOLS OF THE VEDAS.

Different schools of priests have admitted some variations in works which appear under the same title. This circumstance is accounted for by the commentators on the Vedas who relate the following story taken from the *Purānas* and other authorities. Having arranged the Vedas, Vyāsa taught them severally to his pupils viz the *Rick* to Paila, the *Yajush* to Vaishampāyana and the *Sāman* to Jaimini, the *Atharvan* to Sumantu and the *Itihāsa* and *Purāna* to Suta.

These disciples instructed their respective pupils who, becoming teachers in their



which have separately branched off into various *Sākhās*. The *Yajush*, in its original form, was at first taught by Vaishampāyana to twenty-seven pupils. The two different portions are respectively called *Taittiriya* and *Vajasaneyi* or black and white as designated by European scholars. The legend concerning this division we have already narrated. The index, of the black *Yajush*, gives a different and more rational account. Vaishampāyana, according to this authority, taught the *Yajur-Veda* to Yaksha who instructed Tittiri; from him Ukha received it and communicated it to Atriya, who framed the *Sākhā* which is named after him.

The white *Yajush* was taught by Yājñavalka to fifteen pupils who founded as many schools. The most remarkable of them are the *Sākhās* of Kanwa and Madhyandina; and next to them those of the *Jābālas*, *Baudhāyanas* and *Tāpaniyas*. The other branches of the *Yajush* seem to have been arranged into several classes. Thus the *Charakas* or the students of a *Sākhā*, so denominated from the teacher of it *Charaka*, are stated as in-

cluding ten sub-divisions; among which are the *Kathas* or disciples of Katha, a pupil of Vaishampāyana; as also the *Swetaswataras*, *Aupayamavas* and *Maitrayaniyas*; the last named comprehends seven others. In the same way the *Taittiriya* are, in the first instance, sub-divided into two, the *Aukhyāyas* and *Khandikeyas*: and these last are again sub-divided into five. Among them Apastamba's *Sākhā* is still subsisting and so is Atreya's: but the rest are become rare, if not altogether obsolete.

Sumantu, son of Jaimini, studied the *Sāmaveda* or *Chhandogya* under his father; and his own son, Sukarman, studied under the same teacher, but founded a different school which was the origin of two others, derived from his pupils, Hiranyanābha and Paushyinji, and thence branched off into a thousand more: for Lokākshi, Kuthumi and other disciples of Paushyinji, gave their names to separate schools which were increased by their pupils. The *Sākhā* called *Kauthumi* still subsists. Hiranyanābha, the other pupil of Sukarman, had fifteen disciples, authors of



*Sanhitas*, collectively called the northern *Sāmagas*, and fifteen others called the southern *Sāmagas*: and Kriti, one of his pupils, had twenty-four disciples by whom and by their followers, the other schools were founded. Most of them are now lost. The principal *Sākhā* now subsisting is that of the *Rāṇāyanīyas* including seven sub-divisions. That of the *Talavakāras*, likewise, is extant at least in part.

The *Atharva-Veda* was taught by Samantu to his pupil Kabandha who divided it between Devadasrya and Pathya. The first of these has given name to the *Sākhā* called *Devadarsi*, so, *Paippalada* the last of his four disciples has to the *Sākhā* of *Paipaladis*. Another branch of *Atharvan* derives its appellation from Saunaka, the third of Pathya's pupils. The rest are of less note.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE VEDIC AGE.

It is not easy to determine accurately the age of Vedic composition. Many European scholars have exhausted, with no useful result, their ingenuity on this question. Professor Max-Muller maintains that Sanskrit-speaking Aryans lived in India about at least 3000 B. C. This he proves from the mention of *Sindhu*, a vegetable fibre, in the list of vegetable-clothing made for the library of Assur-bam-pal in Babylonia. This vegetable fibre, which is cotton, is not mentioned in the Vedic hymns or the *Brāhmanas* but in the *Sutras*.

According to him, however, there are three literary periods of the Vedic age, *viz.*, that of the hymns, the *Brāhmanas* and the *Sutras*. He then attempts to fix dates for these periods. The only historical date on which we can rely is that of the rise of Buddhism. This, according to the information contained in the Buddhist cannon, is about 500 B. C.



Buddhism is really the protestantism of India and is decidedly a movement against the rise of the Brāhmanas. The word Upanishada is also mentioned in the cannon of the Southern Buddhists. This fact goes to prove that Buddhism presupposes the period of the Brāhmanas. Thus the learned professor attempts to build up the Vedic age beginning with the rise of Buddhism. His conclusion is in his own words thus summed up :—"If then we place the rise of Buddhism between 500 and 600 B. C., and assign provisionally 200 years to Sutra period, another 200 years to Brāhmana period we should arrive at about 1,000 B. C., as the date when the collection of the ten books of the ancient hymns must have taken place." But he gives no reason which justifies him to give 200 years to each period. If this duration of several periods be a child of imagination we may as well extend it to 500 or 1,000 years.

The views of other western scholars tally more or less with that of Professor Max-Muller. We can very well understand the difficulties under which they labour in ascer-

taining the date of the composition of the Vedic hymns.

Attempts have also been made to ascertain the date of Vedic hymns from astronomical calculations. Professor Tilak, of Bombay, has written a learned treatise on the antiquity of the Vedas in which he has made use of these astronomical observations for ascertaining the Vedic age. According to him the marking of the changes in the positions of heavenly bodies "is the best measurement of time for determining the periods of antiquity only if we have reliable records about the position of heavenly bodies in early days; fortunately, such records of the time, when the Hellenic, the Iranian, and the Indian Aryains lived together, have been preserved for us in the Rig-Veda, and with the help of Greek and Parsi traditions we now decipher these records."

By various internal evidences and other researches he has proved that "the oldest Vedic calendar, like the oldest hymn, was sacrificial; and that the sacrifice or the year commenced with Aditi at the vernal equinox.



in or near Punarvasu. The phases of the moon, the seasons and the *Ayanas* further guided the ancient Aryyas in measuring time for sacrificial purposes. The asterism of Abhijit marked the approach of Vishuvān or the central day, while Punarvasu, which soon after came to be called Jamakau, indicated the beginning of the year. Some time after this and before the vernal equinox had receded to Orion the lunar months and *tithis* or days appear to have come in use; and, in fact, the whole calendar seems to have been re-arranged, the year, being made to commence from the winter solistice in the Chitra full-moon. But this did not alter the sacrificial system, which, so far as the procedure is concerned, still continues to be what it was in the oldest day."

The oldest period therefore according to him, in the Aryan civilization "may be called the Aditi or the pre-Orion period, and we may roughly assign 6,000—4,000 B. C., as its limits. It was a period when the finished hymns do not seem to have been known and half-prose and half poetical Nivids or

sacrificial formulæ were probably in use".

The next is the Orion period "which roughly speaking extended from 4,000 to 5,000 B. C. from the time when the vernal equinox was in the asterism of Adra to the time when it receded to the asterism of Krittikas. This is the most important period in the history the Aryan civilization. A good many Suktas in the Rig-Veda were sung at the time and several legends were either formed anew or developed from the older ones. This was pre-eminently the period of hymns."

"The third or the Krittikā period commences with the vernal equinox in the asterism of the Krittikas and extends up to the period recorded in the Vedānga Jyotisha, that is from 2500 B. C. to 1400 B. C. It was the period of Taittiriya Sanhitā and several of the Brāhmanas. The hymns of the Rig-Veda had already become antique and unintelligible by this time and the Brahmvādins indulged in speculations, often too free, about the real meaning of those hymns and legends. It was at this time that the Sanhitās were



probably compiled into systematic books and attempts made to ascertain the meanings of the oldest hymns and formulæ."

"The fourth and the last period of the old Sanskrit literature extends from 1400 B. C. to 500 B. C. or to the birth and rise of Buddhism. It was the period of Sutras and philosophical systems."

Thus we see that the terminus of the Vedic age is placed about 500 B. C. the birth and rise of Buddhism. From the above results it is evident that the Vedic hymns were composed in the period extending from 4000 to 2500 B. C. From internal evidence in the Rig-Veda it is seen that the ancient Hindu civilization reached its zenith during this period. It must have taken a considerable time, not less than one thousand or two thousand years for a civilization to attain to such a maturity as is seen in the Rig-Veda. Besides a literature cannot grow so very antique as to require attempts of the learned writers to explain them within a short period of two hundred years. The Brāhmanas and the Upanishadas are undoubtedly attempts to

decipher the rituals and the theosophy of the Vedas.

Although therefore the Vedic age is more a matter of speculation yet the birth of the hymns of the Rig-Veda must have been very early, decidedly earlier than 1000 B. C. And it is not improbable as proved by Professor Tilak that they must have been composed about 4000 B. C. Two hundred years is too short a period for a literature to pass through such stages.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### ANALYSIS OF THE RIG-VEDA,

The *Sanhitā* of the first Veda contains *Mantras* or prayers which for the most part are encomiastic, as the name of the *Rig-Veda* implies. This collection is divided into eight parts (*Ashtaka*) each of which is subdivided into as many lectures (*Adhyāya*). Another mode of division also runs through the volume



distinguishing ten books (*Maddala*) which are subdivided into more than a hundred chapters (*Anuvāka*) and comprise a thousand hymns or invocations (*Sukta*). A further subdivision of more than two thousand sections (*Sarga*) is common to both methods: and the whole contains above ten thousand verses or rather stanzas, of various measures.

On examining this voluminous compilation, a systematical arrangement is readily perceived. Successive chapters, even entire books, comprise hymns of a single author; invocations too, addressed to the same deities, hymns relating to like subjects, and prayers intended for similar occasions, are frequently classed together.

The Rishi or saint of a *Mantra* is defined in the index of the Rig-Veda and by commentators as "he by whom it is spoken," as the *Devatā* or deity is "that which is therein mentioned." In the index to the *Vājasaneyi Yajur-Veda*, the Rishi is interpreted as "the seer or the rememberer" of the text; and the *Devatā* is said to be "contained in the prayer."

The names of the respective authors of each passage are preserved in the *Anukramani* or explanatory table of contents, which has been handed down with the *Veda* itself and of which the authority is unquestioned. According to this index Viswāmitra is, author of all the hymns contained in the third book of the Rig-Veda; as Bharadwāja is with rare exceptions; the composer of those collected in the sixth book; Vasistha in the seventh; Gritsamada in the second; Vāmadeva in the fourth; and Buddha and other descendants of Atri, in the fifth. But in the remaining books of this Veda, the authors are more various; among these, besides Agastya, Kāshyapa, son of Marichi, Angiras, Jamadagni son of Bhrigu, Parāsara, father of Vyasa, Gotama and his son Nodhas, Vrihaspati, Nārada and other celebrated Indian saints, the most conspicuous are Kanwa, and his numerous descendants Medhātithi, etc.; Madhuchhandas and others among the posterity of Viswāmitra; Sunahsepha son of Ajigarta; Kutsa, Hiranyastupa, Savya and other descendants of Angiras besides many other



saints, among the posterity of personages above-mentioned.

Several persons of royal birth are mentioned among the authors of the hymns which constitute this *Veda*.

The deities invoked appear, on a cursory inspection of the *Veda*, to be as various as the authors of the prayers addressed to them; but according to most ancient annotations on the Indian Scripture, those numerous names of persons and things are all resolvable into different titles of three deities and ultimately of one god.

The places of these three deities are the earth, the intermediate region and heaven—they are the fire, air and the sun. They are pronounced to be the deities of the mysterious names severally; and Prajāpati the lord of creatures is (the deity) of them collectively. The syllable *Om* intends every deity; it belongs to (*Parameshthi*) him who dwells in the supreme abode; it appertains to (*Brahma*) the vast one; to (*Deva*) God; to (*Adhyatma*) the superintending soul. Other deities, belonging to those several re-

gions, are portions of the three gods; for they are variously named and described, on account of their different operations: but in fact there is only one deity, the great soul. He is called the sun, for he is the soul of all beings; (and) that is declared by the sage "the sun is the soul of (*jagat*) what moves and of that which is fixed." Other deities are portions of him: and that is expressly declared by the text "the wise call fire, Indra, Mitra, and Varuna."

The subject and uses of the prayers contained in the *Veda* differ more than the deities by which they are addressed. Every line is replete with allusions to mythology and to the Indian notion of the divine nature and of celestial spirits. For the innumerable ceremonies to be performed by a householder, and still more for those endless rites enjoined to hermits and ascetics, a choice of prayer is offered in every stage of the celebration. It may be here sufficient to observe that Indra or the firmament, fire, the sun, the moon, water, air, the spirits, the atmosphere and the earth are the objects



most frequently addressed, and the various and repeated sacrifices with fire and the drinking of the milky-juice of the moon-plant furnish abundant occasion for numerous prayers adapted to the many stages of those religious rites.

The truth of this remark will be found out from the following prayers as recorded in this Veda.

In the fifteenth chapter of the first book there are two hymns ascribed to Kutsa and also to Trita, son of water. Three ascetics, brothers, it should seem, since they are named in another portion of the the *Veda* as (*Aptya*) sons of water (*Ap*) were oppressed with thirst while travelling in a sandy desert. At length they found a well, and one of them descended into it and thence lifted water for his companions; but the ungrateful brothers stole his effects and left him in the well covering it with a heavy cart wheel. In his distress, he pronounced the hymns in question. It appears from the text that Kutsa also was once in similar distress and pronounced the same or a similar invocation

and, for this reason, the hymns have been placed by the compiler of the *Veda* among those of which Kutsa is the author.

The twenty third chapter of the same book commences with a dialogue between Agastya, Indra and the Maruts: and the remainder of that with the whole of the twenty-fourth chapter comprises twenty six hymns addressed by Agastya to those divinities, and to the Aswins, fire, the sun and some other deities. The last of those hymns was uttered by Agastya, under the apprehension of poison, and is directed by ritual to be used as an incantation against the effects of poison. The third book, distributed into five chapters, contains invocation by Viswāmित्रा son of Gādhi and grandson of Kusika. The last hymn or *Sukta* in this book consists of six prayers one of which includes the celebrated *Gayatri*. This remarkable text is more than once repeated in other *Vedas*; but since Viswāmित्रा is acknowledged to be the *Rishi* to whom it was first revealed, it appears that its proper and original place is in this hymn. The following is a translation of the hymn :—



"This new and excellent praise of thee, O playful, splendid sun, is afforded by us to thee. Be gratified by this my speech: approach this craving mind as a fond man seeks a woman. May that sun, who contemplates and looks into all worlds, be our protector."

"Let us meditate on the adorable light of the divine ruler (Savitri): may it guide our intellects. Desirous of food, we solicit the gifts of the splendid sun (Savitri), who should be studiously worshipped. Venerable men, guided by the understanding salute the divine sun (Savitri) with oblations and praise."

The last two hymns in the third chapter of the seventh book are remarkable, as being addressed to the guardian spirit of a dwelling house, and used as prayers to be recited with oblations on building a house.

The following is a literal version of the first hymn:—

"Guardian of this abode be acquainted with us, be to us a healthy dwelling; afford us what we seek of thee and grant happiness to our bipeds and quadrupeds. Guardian of this house, increase both us and our wealth. Moon, while thou art friendly, may we, with our kine and our horses be exempted from decrepitude: guard us as a father protects his offspring. Guardian of this dwelling, may we be united with a happy, delightful and melodious abode afforded by

thee: guard our wealth now under thy protection, or yet in expectancy, and do thou defend us."

The fourth hymn in the fourth chapter concludes with a prayer to Rudra, which, being used with oblations after a fast of three days, is supposed to insure a happy life of a hundred years. In the sixth chapter three hymns occur, which being recited with worship to the sun, are believed to occasion a fall of rain after the lapse of five days. The two first are aptly addressed to a cloud: and the third is so to frogs, because these had croaked while Vasishtha recited the preceding prayers which circumstance he accepted as a good omen.

The sixth chapter of the tenth book closes with two hymns the purpose of which is the destruction of enemies, and which are used at sacrifices for that purpose.

The seventh chapter opens with a hymn, in which Surya, surnamed Savitri, the wife of the Moon, is made the speaker, Dakshinā, daughter of Prajāpati and Juhu, daughter of Brahmā in subsequent chapters.

Near the close of the tenth chapter, a



hymn in a very different style of composition is spoken by Vāch, daughter of Amburina, in praise of herself as the supreme and universal soul. *Vach*, it should be observed, signifies speech; and she is the active power of Brahmā, proceeding from him. The following is a literal version of this hymn, which is expounded by the commentator consistently with the theological doctrines of the *Vedas*.

"I range with the Rudras, with the *Vasus*, with the *Adityas* and with the *Viśwadevas*. I uphold both the sun and the ocean (Mitra and Varuna) the firmament (Indra) and fire and both the Aswins. I support the moon (Soma) destroyer of foes; and the sun (entitled) Twashtri, Pushan, or Bhaga. I grant wealth to the honest votary who performs sacrifices, offers oblations and satisfies (the deities). Me, who am the queen, the conferrer of wealth, the possessor of wealth, and first of such as merit worship the gods render, universally, present everywhere and pervador of all beings. He who eats food through me, yet knows me not, is lost; hear then the faith which I pronounce. Even I declare this self who is worshipped by gods and men: I make strong whom I choose; I make him *Brahma*, holy and wise. For Rudra I bend the bow, to slay the demon, foe of Brahma; for

the people, I make war (on their foes); and I pervade heaven and earth. I bore the father on the head of this (universal mind) and my origin is in the midst of the ocean; and therefore do I pervade all beings and touch this heaven with my form originating all beings, I pass like the breeze; I am above this heaven beyond this earth; what is the great one, that am I."

The tenth chapter closes with a hymn to night; and the eleventh begins with two hymns relative to the creation of the world. The following is the literal translation of the hymns:—

I. "Then was there no entity, nor non-entity; no world, nor sky, nor aught above it, nothing anywhere in the happiness of any one, involving or involved: nor water, deep and dangerous. Death was not; nor then was immortality; nor distinction of day and night. But that breathed without afflation single with *Swadha* her who is sustained within him. Other than him, nothing existed (which) since (has been). Darkness there was; (for) this universe was enveloped with darkness and was undistinguishable (like fluids mixed in) waters but that mass, which was covered by the husk, was at length produced by the power of contemplation. First desire was formed in his mind, and that became the original productive seed; which the wise recognising it by the intellect in their hearts, distinguish in non-entity, as the bond of entity.



'Did the luminous ray of these (creative acts) expand in the middle? or above? or below? That productive seed at once became providence (or sentient souls), and matter (or the elements). She, who is sustained within himself, was inferior; and he, who heeds, was superior.

Who knows exactly, and who shall in this world declare, whence and why this creation took place? The gods are subsequent to the production of this world: then who can know whence it proceeded? or whence this varied world arose? or whether it uphold itself or not? He who in the highest heaven, is the ruler of this universe, does indeed know but not another can possess that knowledge."

II. "That victim who was wove with threads on every side, and stretched by the labours of a hundred and one gods, the fathers, who wove and framed and placed the wrap and woof, do worship. The (first) male spreads and encompasses this (web) and displays it in this world and in heaven: these rays (of the creator) assembled at the altar and prepared the holy strains and the treads of the wrap.

"What was the size of the divine victim whom all the gods sacrificed? What was the form? What the motive? the fence? the metre? the oblation? and the prayer? First was produced the Gayatri joined with fire; next the sun (*Savitri*) attended by *Ushnih*; then the splendid moon with *Anushtubh* and with prayers; while *Vrihati* accompanied elocution of

*Vrihaspati* (or the planet Jupiter). *Viraj* was supported by the sun and by water (*Mitra* and *Varuna*); but the middle portion of the day and *Trishtubha* were here the attendants of *Indra*; *Jagati* followed all the gods: and by that (universal) sacrifice sages and men were formed. When that ancient sacrifice was completed, sages, and men and our progenitors, were by formed. Viewing with an observant mind this oblation, which primeval saints offered, I venerate them. The seven inspired sages, with prayers and with thanks-givings, follow the path of these primeval saints and wisely practise (the performance of sacrifice) as charioteers use reins (to guide their steeds)."

The preceding quotations may be sufficient to show the style of the *Mantra* portion of the Veda.

Another part, belonging, as it appears, to the same Veda, is entitled *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*. It is divided into eight books (*Panchika*) each containing five chapters or lectures (*Adhyāya*) and subdivided unto an unequal number of sections (*Khanda*), amounting in the whole to two hundred and eighty-five. Being partly in prose, the number of distinct passages contained in these multiplied sections need not be indicated. Various forms



of sacrifices have been described in this work. For example the seventh book had treated of sacrifices performed by kings: the subject is continued in the first four chapters, of the eighth book; and three of these relate to a ceremony for the consecration of kings, by pouring on their heads, while seated on a throne prepared for the purpose, water mixed with honey, clarified butter and spirituous liquor as well as two sorts of grass and the sprouts of corn. This ceremony called *Abhisekha* is celebrated on the accession of a king. Similarly various other ceremonies have been described in this Brāhmaṇa. As a specimen of the subject we give the translation of a passage of the third chapter of the eighth book. This portion throws a considerable light on the geography of the period:—

“After his inauguration by Prajapati the divine *Vasus* consecrated him in the eastern region, with the same prayers in verse and in prose and with the same holy words (as before mentioned) in thirty-one days to ensure his just domination. Therefore even now the several kings of the *Prachyas* in the east are consecrated, after the practice of the gods, to equitable rule (*Samvṛṣṭya*) and people call those consecrated princes *Samvṛṣṭya*.”

Next the divine *Rudras* consecrated him in the southern region, with the same prayers in verse and in prose, and with the same holy words, in thirty-one days, to ensure increase of happiness. Therefore the several kings of *Satwatas*, in the south, are consecrated, after the practice of the gods to the increase of enjoyment (*Bhojya*) and (people) name these consecrated princes *Bhoja*.

The divine *Adityas* consecrated him in the western region with etc., to ensure sole dominion. Therefore the several kings of the *Nichyas* and *Apachayas* in the west are consecrated etc., to sole dominion and people denominate them *Swaraj*.

Afterwards all the gods (*Viswadeva*) consecrated him in the northern region with etc., to ensure separate domination. Therefore the several deities who govern the countries of *Uttarakuru* and *Uttaramadra*, beyond *Himavat*, in the north, are consecrated etc., to distinct rule (*Vairajya*) and people term them *Viraj*.

Next the divine *Sadhyas* and *Aptyas* consecrated him in this, middle, central and present region with etc for local dominion. Therefore the several kings of *Kuru* and *Panchala* as well as *Vasu* and *Usinara* in the middle, central and present region, are consecrated etc., to sovereignty (*rajya*) and people entitle them *Raja*.

Lastly the *Maruts* and the gods named *Angiras* consecrated him in the upper region with etc., to



promote his attainment of the supreme abode and to ensure his mighty domination, superior rule, independent power and long reign : and therefore he became a supreme deity (*Parameshhti*) and ruler over creatures."

The translation of the above passage is enough to give our readers an idea of the subject-matter.

The *Aitareya Aranyaka* is another portion of the *Rigveda*. It comprise eighteen chapters or lectures, unequally distributed in five books (*Aranyaka*). The second, which is the longest, for it contains seven lectures, constitutes with the third an *Upanishad* of this Veda entitled the *Bahvrîch Brahmana Upanishad*, or more commonly *Aitareya*. The four last lectures of that second *Aranyaka* are particularly consonant to the theological doctrines of the *Vedânta* and are accordingly selected by the theologians of the Vedanta school as the proper *Aitareya Upanishad*.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### WHITE YAJURVEDA.

THE *Vâjasaneyi* or white *Yajus* is the shortest of the Vedas ; so far as respects the first and principal part which comprehends the *Mantras*. The *Sanhitâ*, or collection of prayers and invocations belonging to this Veda, is comprised in forty lectures (*Adhyâya*) unequally subdivided into numerous short sections (*Kandikâ*), each of which in general constitutes a prayer or *Mantra*. It is also divided, like the *Rigveda*, into *Anuvakas* ; as they are stated at the close of the index to this Veda, they appear to be two hundred and eighty-six : the number of sections or verses is nearly two thousand. But this includes many repetitions of the same text in diverse places. The lectures are very unequal containing from thirteen to a hundred and seventeen sections.

Though called the *Yajur-Veda* it consists of passages, some of which are denominated



*Rich* while only the rest are strictly *Yajus*. The first are, like the prayers of the *Rig-Veda*, in metre: the others are either in measured prose containing from one to a hundred and six syllables; or such of them as exceed that length are considered to be prose reducible to no measure.

The *Yajur-Veda* relates chiefly to oblations and sacrifices as the name itself implies. The first chapter and the greatest part of the second contain prayers adapted for sacrifices at the full and change of the moon; but the six last sections regard oblation to the manes. The subject of the third chapter is the consecration of a perpetual fire and the sacrifice of victims; the five next relate chiefly to a ceremony called *Agnishtoma* which includes that of drinking the Soma juice. The two following relate to the *Vájapeya* and *Râjasuya*; the last of which ceremonies involves the consecration of a king. Eight chapters, from the eleventh to the eighteenth, regard the sanctifying of sacrificial fire; and the ceremony called *Sautramani*, which was the subject of the last section of the

tenth chapter occupies three other chapters from the nineteenth to the twenty-first; the prayers, to be used at an *Aswamedha* or ceremony emblematic of the immolation of a horse and other animals by a king ambitious of universal empire, are placed in four chapters from the twenty-second to the twenty-fifth. The two next are miscellaneous chapters; the *Sautramani* and *Aswamedha* are completed in two others; and the *Purushamedha* or ceremony performed as a type of the allegorical immolation of *Nārâyana* fills the thirtieth and thirty-first chapters. The three next belong to *Sarvamedha* or prayers and oblations for universal success. A chapter follows on the *Pitrimodha* or obsequies in commemoration of deceased ancestors; and the last five chapters contain such passages of the *Veda* as are ascribed to Dadhyach, son or descendant of Atharva. Four of them consist of prayers applicable to various religious rites, as sacraments, lustrations, penance, etc., and the last is restricted to theology.

Excepting these five chapters most of



the passages, contained in the preceeding part of this collection of prayers, are attributed to divine personages; many are ascribed to the first manifested being named Prajāpati Parameshti or Narayana Purusha; some are attributed to Swayambhuva Brahmā or the self-existent himself; the reputed authors of the rest are Vrihaspati, Indra, Varuna and the Aswins, except a few scattered passages which are ascribed to Vasistha, Visvāmitra, Vāmedeva, Madhuchandas, Medhāthiti, and other human authors; and some texts, for which no Rishi is specified in the index, are therefore assigned either to the sun as the deity supposed to have revealed Veda or Yajñavalka as the person who received the revelation in the same manner as the unappropriated passages of the *Rig-Veda* are assigned to Prajāpati or Brahmā.

To give an idea of the style of the composition we append a translation of the beginning of the prayers of *Sarvamedha*. It constitutes the twenty-second lecture, comprising two chapters (*Anuvaka*) and sixteen verses.

" Fire is that original cause; the sun is that; so is air; so is the moon, such too is that pure Brahma; and these waters, and that lord of creatures, moments (and other measures of time) proceeded from the effulgent, person, whome none can apprehend (as an object of perception) above, around, or in the midst. Of him, whose glory is so great, there is no image. He it is, who is celebrated in various holy strains even he is the God who pervades all regions: he is first born; it is he who is in the womb; he who is born, and he, who will be produce, he, severally and universally remains with all persons.

He, prior to whom nothing was born, and who became all being; himself the lord of creatures, with (a body composed of) sixteen members, being delighted by creation, produced the three luminaries (the sun, the moon, and fire). To what God should we offer oblations but to him who made the fluid sky and solid earth, who fixed the solar orb and celestial abode and who framed drops of rain in the atmosphere? To what god should we offer oblations, but to him whom heaven and earth mentally contemplate while they are strengthened and embellished by offering and illuminated by the sun risen above them?

The wise man views that mysterious being in whom the universe perpetually exists resting on that sole support. In him this world is absorbed; from him it issues; in creatures he is twined and wove with



various forms of existence. Let the wise man, who is conversant with the import of revelation, promptly celebrate that immortal being, the mysteriously existing and various abode ; he, who knows its three states (its creation, continuance, and destruction) which are involved in mystery, is father of the father. That Brahma, in whom the gods attain immortality while they abide in the third or celestial region, is our venerable parent and the providence which governs all worlds.

Knowing the elements, discovering the worlds and recognizing all regions and quarters (to be him) and worshiping speech or revelation who is the first born the votary pervades the animating spirit of solemn sacrifice by means of his own soul. Recognizing heaven, earth, and sky (to be him), knowing the worlds, discovering space and the solar orb (to be the same) he views that being, he becomes that being and is identified with him on completing the broad web of the solemn sacrifice.

For opulence and wisdom, I solicit this wonderful lord of the altar, the friend of Indra, most desirable (fire) : may this oblation be effectual. Fire, make me, this day, wise by means of that wisdom which the gods and the fathers worship, be this oblation efficacious. May Varuna grant me wisdom ; may fire and Prajapati confer on me sapience : may Indra and air vouch-safe me knowledge : may providence give me understanding : be this oblation happily offered. May

priest and the soldier both share my prosperity : may the gods grant me supreme happiness : to thee who art that felicity be this oblation effectually presented."—

The second part of this *Veda*, appertaining to the *Madhyaandina Sâkhâ*, is entitled the *Satpatha Brâhmana*, and is much more copious than the collection of prayers. It consists of fourteen books (*Kânda*) unequally distributed into two parts (*bhâga*) : the first of which contains ten books : and the second only four.

The number of 60 lectures (*adhyâya*) contained in each book varies ; and so does that of the *Brâhmanas* or separate precepts in each lecture. Another mode of division, by chapters (*prapathaka*), also prevails throughout the volume : and the distinction of *Brâhmanas* which are again subdivided into short sections (*Kandika*) is subordinate to both modes of division.

The fourteen books, which constitute this part of *Veda*, comprise a hundred lectures corresponding to sixty-eight chapters. The whole number of distinct articles entitled



*Bráhmaṇa* is four hundred and forty ; the sections (*Kandika*) are also counted and are stated at 7624.

The same order is observed in this collection of precepts concerning religious rules, which had been followed in the arrangement of the prayers belonging to them. The first and second books treat of ceremonies on the full and change of the moon, the consecration of the sacrificial fire, etc. The third and fourth relate to the mode of preparing the Soma juice and other ceremonies connected with it as the *Jyotistoma*, etc. The fifth is confined to the *Vājapeya* and *Rājasuya*. The four next teach the consecration of sacrificial fire : and the tenth called *Anṅirahasya* shows the benefit of these ceremonies. The three first books of the second part are stated by the commentator as relating to the *Sautramani* and *Ashwamedha* ; and the fourth, which is the last, belongs to theology. In original, the thirteenth book is especially denominated *Ashwamedha* and the fourth is entitled *Vrihadaranyaka*.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE BLACK YAJURVEDA.

The *Taittiriya* or black *Yajus* is more copious with regard to *mantras* than the white *Yajus* but less so than the *Rig-Veda*. Its *Sanhitā*, or collection of prayers, is arranged in seven books (*astaka*) containing from five to eight lectures or chapters (*adhyāya*). Each chapter or lecture is subdivided into sections (*anuvaka*) which are equally distributed in the third and sixth books, but unequally in the rest. The whole number exceeds six hundred and fifty.

Another mode of division, by *Kāndas*, is stated in the index. In this arrangement, each book (*Kānda*) relates to a separate subject ; and the chapters (*prasna*) comprehended in it are enumerated and described. Besides this, in the *Sanhitā* itself, the texts, contained in every section, are numbered and so are the syllables in each text.

The first section (*anuvaka*), in the collec-



tion of prayers, corresponds with the first section (*Kāndika*) in the white *Yajus*, but all the rest differ and so does the arrangement of the subjects. Many of the topics are indeed alike in both the Vedas but differently placed and differently treated. Thus the ceremony called *Rājasuya* occupies one *Kānda* corresponding with eighth *prasna* of the first book (*ashtaka*) and is preceded by two *Kāndas* relative to the *Vājapeya* and to the mode of its celebration, which occupy fourteen sections in the preceding *prasna*. Consecrated fire is the subject of four *Kāndas* which fill the fourth and fifth books. Sacrifice is noticed in the second and the third lectures of the first book and in several lectures of the sixth. The subject is continued in the seventh and last book, which treats largely on the *Jyotishtoma*, including the forms of preparing and drinking Soma juice. *Aswamedha*, *Nrimedha*, and *Pitrimedha* are severally treated of in their places, that is in the collection of prayers, and in the second part of this *Veda*.

Among the Rishis of the texts there are

no human authors. Nine entire *Kāndas*, according to the second arrangement, indicated by the index, appear to be ascribed to Prajāpati, or the lord of the creatures, as many to Soma or the moon; seven to Agni or fire; and sixteen to all the gods. Possibly some passages may be allotted by the commentators to their real authors, though not pointed out by the index for the *Atreyi Sākhās*. The following, from the seventh and last book, is chosen as a specimen of the *Taittiriya Yajur-Veda*.

"Waters alone there were; this world originally was water. In it the lord of creation moved having become air: he saw this (earth) and upheld assuming the form of a boar (*Varaha*) and then moulded that (earth) becoming *Viswakarma*, the artificer of the universe. It became celebrated and conspicuous (*Prithivi*) and therefore is that name (*Prithivi*) assigned to the earth.

The lord of creation meditated profoundly on the earth; and created the gods, the *Vasus*, *Rudras*, and *Adityas*. Those gods addressed the lord of creation saying "How can we form creature?" He replied "As I created you by profound contemplation (*tapas*) so do you seek in duration the means of multiplying creatures. He gave them consecrated fire, saying



"with this sacrificial fire, perform devotions." With it they did perform austerities; and in one year framed a single cow. He gave her to the *Vasus* to the *Rudras* and the *Adityas* (successively) bidding them "Guard her." The *Vasus*, *Rudras* and the *Adityas* (severally) guarded her, and she calved for the *Vasus* three hundred and thirty-three (calves); and (as many) for *Rudras*; and (the same number for the *Adityas*; thus was she the thousandth."

To the second part of this Veda belongs the *Aranya* divided, like the *Sanhitā*, into lectures and again subdivided into chapters containing texts or sections, which are numbered and in which the syllables have been counted. Here also a division, by *Kāndas*, according to the different subjects prevails. The six first lectures and their corresponding *Kāndas* relate to religious observances.

There are some *Upanishadas* attached to this Veda. They are *Taittiriyaka*, *Narayana*, *Katha*, *Varṇni* and others.

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## CHAPTER X.

### SAMA VEDA.

A PECULIAR degree of holiness is attached to the *Sāma Veda*. The prayers belonging to it are, as before observed, composed in metre and intended to be chanted and their supposed efficacy is apparently ascribed to the mode of uttering them.

The principal if not the first part of the *Sāma Veda* is that entitled *Archika*. It comprises prayers which are sung by *Samāgās*.

They are arranged in six chapters (*Prathaka*), sub-divided into half chapters and into sections (*dasak*); ten in each chapter and usually containing the exact number of ten verses each. The same collection of prayers in the same order, but prepared for chanting, is distributed in seventeen chapters under the title of *Grāmageyagāna*.

Another portion of *Sāma Veda*, arranged for chanting, bears the title of *Aranya-gāna*. Like the *Archika* they are distributed into



three chapters which are sub-divided into half chapters and decades or sections.

*Arsheya Brâhmana* seems to be an index of these two portions of the *Sâma Veda*. This index does not, like the explanatory tables of the other *Vedas*, specify the metre of each prayer, the deity addressed in it and the occasion on which it should be used, but only the *Rishi* or the author.

The modes, of chanting the same prayers, are various and bear different appellations. Thus, the rituals frequently direct certain texts of this *Veda* to be first recited simply in a low voice according to the usual mode of inaudible utterance of the *Vedas* and then to be similarly chanted in a particular manner, under the designation of *Archikagana*, showing however diverse variations and exceptions from that mode under the distinct appellation of *Aniruktagâna*. So likewise, the same or nearly the same passages which are contained in the *Archika* and *Grâmageya* are arranged in a different order with further variations as to the mode

of chanting them in another collection named the *Uhâgana*.

Under the denomination of *Brâhmana*, which is appropriated to the second part or supplement of the *Veda*, various works have been received by different schools of the *Sâma Veda*. Of them four appear to be extant namely *Shadavinsa*, *Adhutat Panchavinsa* and *Tandya*.

The principal *Upanishada* attached to this *Veda* is *Chhandogya Upanishada*.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### ATHARVA VEDA.

THE *Sanhita*, or collection of prayers and invocations belonging to the Atharva, is comprised in twenty books (*Kanda*) sub-divided into sections (*anuvâka*), hymns (*Sukta*) and verses (*Rich*). Another mode of division by chapters (*prapathaka*) is also indicated. The number of verses is stated at 6015, the



sections exceed a hundred and the hymns amount to more than seven hundred and sixty. The number of chapters is forty nearly.

The *Atharva Veda*, as is well known, contains many forms of imprecation for the destruction of enemies. But it must not be inferred that such is the chief subject of that Veda; since it also contains a great number of prayers for safety and for the averting of calamities, and like the other Vedas, numerous hymns to the gods, with prayers to be used at solemn rites and religious exercises, excepting such as are named *Yajna*.

In the forty-ninth hymn of the nineteenth book there is a remarkable passage which throws a considerable light on the date of its composition. It names the twenty-eight asterisms in their order, beginning with *Krittikā* and seems to refer the solistice to the end of *Asleshā* or beginning of *Maghā*. It is an important passage because it shows, that the introduction of the twenty eighth asterism is as ancient as the *Atharva-Veda*; and secondly, because it authorizes a presumption, the

whole of that *Veda*, like this particular hymn, may have been composed when the solistice was reckoned in the middle or at the end of *Asleshā* and the origin of the Zodiac was placed at the beginning of *Krittikā*.

The *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* appears to belong to the second part of this Veda. The *Mundukā*, divided into six sections unequally distributed into two parts, is the first *Upanishada* of the *Atharva*. Various other *Upanishadas* also belong to this *Veda* of which the most important is *Kena*.

To this *Veda*, as to others, is annexed a treatise under the title of *Jyotish* which explains the adjusment of calender, for the performance of religious rites. [It is adapted to the comparison of solar and lunar time with the vulgar or civil year.

पञ्चमः  
अध्यायः

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## CHAPTER XII.

## THE THEOLOGY OF THE VEDAS.

We now come to the most important chapter of this little treatise? What is the characteristic of the Vedic religion? What conception of God the Vedic Rishis formed? Is it monotheism, henotheism or polytheism? This is the most difficult problem that a student of the Veda has got to face?

We will first define these terms before we proceed with the development of Vedic religion. Monotheism is the belief in and worship of one God only whereas henotheism is the worship of one God. There might be people who worship one God but believe in other gods. Polytheism, on the other hand, is the worship of many gods.

To a superficial student of the Vedas it appears that the Vedic Rishis used to offer their worship and homage to many gods. The various hymns of the Rig-Veda contain an account of their invocation of the diverse

natural phenomena around them. This worship of the powers of nature is defined by Professor Max-Muller as physical religion. This worship of the various powers of nature has led many to think that the Vedic Rishis used to worship many gods. But a careful analysis, of the development of the Vedic religion, as found in the hymns of the Rig-Veda, will show that they worshipped these powers of nature not as different gods but as portions of one Supreme God.

The earliest conception of god-head cannot possibly be that of one Supreme Deity devoid of human attributes. They cannot form the philosophical conception of one God when they first come to think of a supernatural Power above all the phenomena of nature. When a race or nation first comes into existence they find around them natural phenomena and powers that play a most important part in their every day life, without whose aid and support they cannot move an inch, whose existence and being they cannot see with their naked eyes, and whose movements they cannot decipher with their human



conception ; they are constrained to attribute to them supernatural powers and invoke their aid in their difficulty. It is thus the various powers of nature came first to be worshipped by the Vedic Rishis. They saw the powerful sun above them distributing its rays impartially all over, coursing on regularly from day to day in its luminous path, and nothing on earth could stop it from its work for a moment. They, in their primitive state, could not make out the nature of the luminous body and where it did exist. In their life, in carrying on the many avocations of life and in finding out the necessities of life they regarded it as one of the most important factors and consequently they offered him prayer.

The earliest calling of a race cannot be anything but agriculture. The Aryans were undoubtedly an agricultural race. Rain was absolutely necessary for their cultivation but they found that with no amount of ingenuity of their own they could get it. But showers unexpectedly came from the sky when necessary. Thus they came to worship the god of

rain. Fire or Agni is similarly the most useful thing for a man. But none can say when it was first discovered. The Vedic Aryans were perfectly alive to the manifold uses of fire in their houses but were not cognizant of its origin. Hence they began to regard it as something supernatural. And who else but god could be of so much help to them ?

In this way they worshipped the various powers of nature because without their help they could not proceed in their every day life. And through they worshipped those natural phenomena, it was not really the phenomena to which they did offer their adorations but to the inherent powers—the energy underlying those manifestations. It is not the rays of the sun, the showers of the sky, the fire of the hearth, the water of the river and the light of the moon that the Vedic Aryans worshipped but the energy underlying them—the power that moves them to action, the Supreme Power in whom they all move and have their being.

We will give here extracts from three hymns to show how far our statement is correct :—



"We meditate on that desirable light of the Divine Savitri, who influences our pious rites. His courses bear on high the divine all-knowing sun that he may be seen by all the worlds. At the approach of the all-illuminating sun, the constellations depart with the night like thieves. His illuminating rays behold men in succession like blazing fires. Thou, Surya, outstrippest all in speed : thou art visible to all ; thou art the source of light : thou shinest throughout the entire firmament."

Occasionally the sun is called Vishnu in the Rig-Veda ; as in the following few verses translated by Mr. Muir :—

"Vishnu strode over this universe : in three places he planted his step : the world or his step was enveloped in his dust."

And, again, Vishnu, as the sun, is said to create and uphold the worlds :—

"I declare, the valorous deeds of Vishnu, who measured the Mundane regions, who established the upper world, striding thrice, the wide—stepping..... who alone sustained the triple universe, the earth, and the sky (yea) all the worlds."

We give next the translation of a hymn addressed to Agni (fire) :—

"Dark is the path of thee who art bright : the light is before thee : thy moving radiance is the chief of all luminous bodies ; when the present worship-

pers take up the germ (in the sticks of attrition) thou art speedily generated.

This the apparatus of attrition is ready...take up the stick and churn the fire.....the radiant Agni bursts forth from the wood like a fleet courser.

We give another hymn addressed to Indra who is sometimes invoked as Parjanya "Sender of Rain."

"I address the mighty Parjanya.....him who is the thunderer, the showerer, the bountiful, who impregnates the plants with rain.

He strikes down the trees, he destroys the Rakshasas.....even the innocent man flies.....when Parjanya, thundering, slays the wicked.

As a charioteer, urging his horses with his whip, brings into view the messenger (of war) as Parjanya (driving the clouds before him) makes manifest the messengers of the rain ; the roaring of the lion-like cloud proclaims from afar that Parjanya overspreads the sky with rainy clouds.

The winds blow strong, the lightnings flash, the plants spring up, the firmament dissolves ; earth become fit for all creatures when Parjanya fertilises the soil with showers.

Do thou, Parjanya, through whose function the earth is bowed down ; through whose function hoofed cattle thrive ; through whose function plants assume all kinds of forms, grant us festivity.



Come down, Parjanya, sprinkling water by this thundering cloud."

The above extracts clearly prove that the Vedic Aryans, in invoking the different phenomena of nature, had evidently in view the Supreme Energy underlying them all. It is not the rain or lightning that is worshipped but the deity or the divine power that rules them—and this divine power is designated by the Vedic Rishis as Parjanya.

The fire, that we see before us and which is so useful to the people, is not the deity who is invoked by the Rishis—but the divine power which is designated by them as Agni "who bursts forth from the wood when the fire is churned with a stick." It is quite natural that the first appearance of fire, whether through lightning, through friction of pieces of wood, or through sparks of flints, produced a considerable impression upon the mind of the Aryans. They were quite taken aback when they first discovered its existence—very useful, at the same time dangerous. So they were anxious to find out what this element really was. And when impressed

with its importance they began to worship it as God.

We have thus shown that it is not the mere natural phenomena that the Vedic Aryans worshipped but the energy underlying them all which they denominated by various names such as, Surya, Agni, Indra etc. It is not these gods only which they severally or collectively worshipped. To them either Indra only or Agni or Surya or all of them together with other powers of nature did not complete the conception of God. Nor was any one of them regarded by them as the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, Omniscient and Omnipotent. They represented merely the various energies of the All-Powerful Providence manifested to the humanity through diverse natural phenomena. And when the Vedic Rishis offered homage or worship to those powers of nature they did not do so merely to the phenomena around them but to the Supreme God for giving them the necessities of life. When they required one particular thing they invoked the assistance of that particular energy of the Divine Power.



As when they wanted rain they invoked Parjanya representing this particular energy of the Almighty.

It is sometimes seen in the Vedic hymns that all these powers of nature have been severally identified with the Supreme God. It is not, as some erroneously hold, that Agni, Surya, Indra and others are all minor gods under the suzerainty of one Supreme God, but they are the energies or powers of one All-mighty God, through whose will they are manifested to humanity who seek their assistance severally as they are called upon to do so by necessity. They are rather like the agents of the God who vouchsafe blessings from Him to men and carry prayers from men to God. Agni is, therefore, often times mentioned as the messenger of gods and men. "Thee, Agni, have gods and men in every age retained as their messenger, immortal bearer of oblations. He, whose messenger thou art in the house—of him indeed people say that his offerings are good."

When the Aryans stood in distressing need of the help of one of the powers of

nature it is then only that a particular deity was invoked as the Supreme Ruler. Thus in some of the hymns Agni is mentioned as the Supreme Ruler and as identical with all other gods. Thus we read a hymn in the Rig-Veda as translated by Professor Max-Muller.

"Thou, O Agni, art Varuna, when thou art born; thou art Mitra, when thou art kindled; in thee, O son of strength, are all the gods; thou art Indra to the generous mortal" Rig V. 3, 1-2:

There is another hymn in Atharva Veda. We give the translation by Professor Max-Muller.

"In the evening Agni becomes Varuna; he becomes Mitra when rising in the morning; having become Savitri he passes through the sky; having become Indra he warms the heaven in the centre."

In the later hymns we find that Agni is not only identified with other gods but he is considered as the one supreme god, the creator of the world. He is called the progenitor of heaven and earth and from him all things emanate. He is the supreme lord of



all and his wisdom is infinite. He knows all worlds and his laws must be obeyed. In these hymns we find the conception of one All-powerful and All-merciful God highly and completely developed.

In the 81st and 82nd hymns of the 10th Book of the Rig-Veda we find the word *Viswakarman*, which "had formerly been used as an epithet of Indra" to have become the name of the deity. In the 82nd hymn *Viswakarman* is called "wise" pervading, the creator, the disposer, the one who dwells beyond the abode of the seven Rishis."

In the hymn known as *Purusha-Sukta* we find again the same idea of a supreme god who produced the world by offering himself in sacrifice.

*Purusha* himself is this whole universe, which has been and whatever shall be. He is also the lord of immortality.

Such is his greatness; and *Purusha* is superior to this. All existences are a quarter of him and three fourths of him (are) that which is immortal in the sky.

With three quarters *Purusha* mounted up-

wards. A quarter of him was again produced here. He was then diffused everywhere over things which eat and things which do not eat.

From him was born *Viraj*; and from *Viraj* *Purusha*: when born he extended beyond earth both behind and before."

The most important point in *Purusha-Sukta* is that *Purusha*, although recognized as the Lord of immortality, is offered up in sacrifice. On this point Dr. Muir observes that this hymn "was evidently produced at a period when the ceremonial of sacrifice had become largely developed, when great virtue was supposed to reside in its proper celebration, and when a mystical meaning had come to be attached to the various materials and instruments of the ritual as well as to the different members of the victim."

In some of the hymns of the *Atharvaveda* the supreme Deity appears to be celebrated under the appellation of *Skambha* (support). This *Skambha* seems to mean fulcrum of the whole world, in all its physical, religious and other aspects.



Thus our readers will see how the Aryan mind reached the highest conception of godhead starting from the commonest impressions produced upon their senses by the natural phenomena around them. In the Vedic hymns we find how our ancestors were let from nature to nature's God. The Vedic Rishis, from the very beginning, found the supernatural elements in all the natural phenomena—and this supernatural element was never completely lost sight of by them in their various invocations to the different powers of nature. They received impressions regarding these phenomena first through their senses—they perceived the importance of all those powers in their every day life and impelled by necessities they had to seek their help and propitiate them with sacrificial offerings. But all these natural powers, when by a careful analysis and sifting, are stripped of all that is purely phenomenal, natural and physical, they stand before us severally as being endued with all the qualities of the Supreme Being. Every one of them is adored as the creator and the preserver of the world,

as omnipotent, omniscient, just, kind and compassionate. When they are regarded collectively they constitute the diverse energies of one Supreme Being variously styled in the Vedic hymns as Viswakarma, Prajâpati, Purusha, or Skambha. Thus behind the seeming multiplicity of gods who are the allegorical representations of the various energies of God manifested through various natural powers, we find the unity of god—one all-powerful, all-pervading providence, endowed with all those qualities which we reserve for the Supreme Being.

The author of the index, seeking to establish the virtually monotheistic doctrine of the Veda, conducts us to his desired conclusion by two alternative paths. In the first place he admits three divisions of the universe (earth, atmosphere and sky), identifying their names with the *Vyahritis* or mystic names of those divisions; he then pronounces Prajapati to be their sum and essence. The *Om* is the sum and essence of the *Vyahritis* and of the regions they represent—its *a* indicating *Bhur* or earth, its *u* *Bhuva* or



atmosphere, its *m svar* or sky. That is to say, as in *Om* the *Vyahritis* are embraced and unified so are the deities of the three regions in Prajāpati. In the second place he makes the sun the great soul of the universe, in which all other deities are involved, founding himself on the following extract of the holy writ.

"Three deities only, having as their spheres respectively earth, atmosphere and sky and known by the names of Agni (fire) Vayu (wind) and Surya (sun), being the *Vyahritis* are proclaimed as separate; of them all, taken together Prajapati is the *Om*, having the nature of all the deities, of the Supreme Being, of the *Brahma*, or of the gods of the over-soul: the others underlie one and another sphere, are parts of this; for from a difference of action they come to have different appellations and praises, or there is only one Deity the Great Soul; it is called by the name Surya (sun) for he is the soul of all beings."

We will now present before our readers the views of the Vedic Rishis regarding many other theological ideas. The first and the most important of them is the prayer. Even in our age, with all the advancement that theology has attained to, prayer constitutes

the back-bone of a religious life. We pray to God because we want some thing. We thank Him when we get the thing prayed for. It may be that one may pray to the Almighty for the ordinary comforts of life and the other may pray to Him for being freed from wordly trammels. But viewed rationally both the things are same. The Vedic Aryans prayed to God for ordinary necessities of life because they stood awfully in need of them. In our age, with the development of science, many forces of nature have been converted into instruments of comfort and luxury at the hands of men. We can procure many things for our use without praying to God for them. We have now improved methods of agriculture, we have good dwelling houses, we can carry fire in our pockets and so we are not daily threatened with ruin nor do we stand always in need of help from any one else for all we want. But such was not the case with the Vedic Aryans and hence they prayed to God for every little thing they required in life and for averting every danger, insignificant or great, that awaited them. Or it may



be, that they, inured to the wiles of the world, believed, more than we, in the efficacy of prayer. And whenever they got the thing prayed for they used to perform the thanksgiving ceremony in the shape of sacrifices. We have many such hymns in the Rig Veda where we find expressions like "if you give me this I will give you that." They looked up to God, for their riches, for their children, and for every want of life. To ask every thing from the Heavenly Father, every thing that we require, constitutes the true devotional spirit and this spirit was in the Vedic Rishis. Their life was one of perpetual prayings and thanks-givings. This gives an idea of true devotion and how devotional the people were in their primitive state.

Next we come to the idea of sin and penance. In the hymns of the Rig-Veda there is an undoubted acknowledgment of sin. The most touching confessions of weakness, sin and sorrow are in hymns to Varuna. We give here a translation by Professor Max-Müller :—

"If I go along trembling, like a cloud

driven by the wind : have mercy, Almighty, have mercy.

Through want of strength, thou strong and bright God, have I gone to the wrong shore : have mercy, Almighty have mercy."

There is another hymn addressed to Agni :

"May our sin, Agni, be repented of. Thou, whose countenance is turned to all sides, art our defender, may our sin be repented of. Do thou convey us in a ship across the sea for our welfare : may our sin be repented of." The word occurs very often in other passages. The expiation, of all these sins, was, in their view, the Vedic sacrifice, which has thus an enduring symbolical value representing what the Vedic Aryans thought of for getting rid of their sins. Thus did they very often pray to God so that they might not be visited by any sin. They always regarded the Providence as just and merciful who only could absolve them from their sins. It was therefore to propitiate the gods that they performed various sacrifices considering them in the light of penances.

We will now deal with the views of the



ancient Aryans regarding the future life as recorded in the hymns of the Vedas. Yama, in the Rig-Veda, is the regent of the dead. He is not however connected with penal retribution though he and his messengers were always regarded with fear in the Vedic times, and frequently deliverance was prayed for from his bonds.

The most important proof, that the Vedic Hindus believed in the existence of a future life, is that they always sought for immortality. The *Sānhita* portion gives only occasional hints regarding this question but the *Bráhmaṇa* portion expresses a more decided belief in future life. However vague might have been their views regarding future life the Vedic Rishis firmly believed in the immortality of the soul. There are hymns in the Rig Veda which clearly prove this. But all these theological ideas however attained to their proper development in the Upanishadas, which, properly speaking, contain the theosophy of the Vedas.

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## CHAPTER XII.

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### THE SOCIETY IN THE VEDIC AGE.

We cannot form an idea of the Vedic Hindus from what we are ourselves now in the present age. There is a gulf of difference between their manners and customs, their social institutions and habits and those of ourselves. We will, in this chapter, first describe the locality of the Rig-Veda Hindus and then give an account of their mode of living. From evidences recorded in the hymns of the Rigveda, it is clear, that the Vedic Hindus lived in the land corresponding to the modern Province of the Punjab bounded by the river Saraswati. We find there also an account of various flourishing dynasties of kings and the subsequent literature contains their diverse adventures in extending their conquests. It has been unanimously accepted by oriental scholars that the two great Indian epics, namely the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata*, contain the accounts



of the conquest of the ancient Aryans. The state of society, as described in the Mahābhārata, corresponds greatly with what is found in the Vedas; and the Rāmāyana is evidently a historical record of their conquests in the far south.

In the Rigveda a number of rivers is mentioned among which two are very frequently referred to. But usually seven great rivers are mentioned which Indra is said to have sent forth. The passages like "the seven eternal, ever-youthful rivers sprung from the same source, received, Agni as their common embryo"—"Indra made the waters flow for men.....he has sent forth the seven rivers"—"Indra, thou hast let loose the seven rivers"—"All sacrificial viands concentrate in Agni as the seven great rivers flow into the ocean" clearly prove that the Vedic Hindus must have lived in the land of the seven rivers—a province which is described as Saptasindhu in Sanskrit literature. This geography of the hymns is of considerable value to researches into ancient Indian literature. If we carefully go through the hymns we will find how the

Aryans marched on from the Indus to the Ganges. There is a hymn in the Rig-Veda in which the grandeur of Sindhu (Indus) is described. "He is the lord of rivers to whom other tributary rivers pay their homage." This passage is of very great historical value in ascertaining that the Vedic Aryans must have lived in the Punjab. Gangā, Yamunā, Saraswati have also been mentioned, but the Ganges was not so well-known as the Yamunā which was near to the Indus. But the Saraswati is the most important of all as a boundary between the Hindus and their eastern enemies. The following passages, from Wilson's translation, will show how the river Saraswati was worshipped by the Aryans and how she is described as having seven sisters.

"The Saraswati is the most beautiful, the most amiable, the most honoured among the seven sisters.

The waves of the Saraswati flow for our protection, she is for us like a town of iron.

Saraswati, do thou protect us, associated



with the Maruts and firm of purpose, overcome our foes, when Indra slays the chief of the Sandhikas.

May Indra be most prompt to come nigh for our protection and Saraswati dwelling with tributary rivers."

Elsewhere we find a whole hymn addressed to the Saraswati by the Rishi Bharadvāja. We append here Wilson's translation.

"With impetuous and mighty waves she breaks down the precipices of the mountains like a digger for the lotus fibres; we adore for our protection, with praises and with sacred rites, Saraswati, the underminer of both her banks.

Destroy, Saraswati, the revilers of the gods, the offspring of the universal deluder Brisaya; giver of sustenance, thou hast acquired for men the lands sieged by the Asuras and hast showered water upon them.

May the fierce Saraswati riding in golden chariot, the destructress of enemies be pleased by our earnest laudation.

May Saraswati who has seven sisters, &c., &c."

The Saraswati gradually rose in importance and acquired a considerable reputation for sanctity. It is also mentioned in the code of Manu (ii—17) that the country lying between the Saraswati and Drishadyati was best fitted for the residence of the Brāhmanas.

We have, in the hymns, an account of the confluence of the Sutlej and the Beas near Ferozepore. The Vedic name of the Sutlej is Satadru and that of Beas, Vipāsā. This latter had another name Parushini which we find in the hymn addressed to rivers "O Ganga, Yumunā, Saraswati, Satadru with the Parushini listen to my hymn." The word Parushini literally means 'cloud' and this name was probably given to Vipāsā because this river was covered with mist and spray. There was another river in the Vedic time by the name of *Marudvridha* or "increased by the winds." This river is identified with the Ravi by M. St. Martin. There were two other rivers the tributaries of Ravi, by the names of Akesines and Vitastā. The former is now called Chenab and the latter is now identified with the Behat. It was known as Hyphasis when



Alexander came to India. Vitastā or Behat was the terminus of the land of five rivers beyond which began the country of Rishikas.

We read the names of some other rivers in the hymns of the Rīg Veda, such as Trishtama, Rasā, Sweti, Kubhā, Gomat, Krumu, etc, the Kubhā is probably the modern Kabul river. The others are some mountainous streams above Kabul.

This description of the land of Vedic Hindus applies to the modern Province of the Punjab. The Vedic Aryans migrated into such a land. From the evidence in the hymns, it is clear, that they first entered from the west, when they saw the Indus assuming a huge portion from its confluence with the Kabul river; they called it Sindhu (ocean) they then gradually crossed first the Jhelum (Vitasta); secondly the Chenab (Akesine); third the Ravi (Mārudvridhā) the river of Lahore; fourth the Beas (Vipasā); fifth they next came to the confluence of the Beas with the larger Sutlej. And last of all they came to Saraswati which is described in the Vedic hymns as constituting a boundary of their

territory and affording protection against their enemies.

Thus the country, extending from the Saraswati in the east, and the river Kabul in the west, was the territory occupied by the Vedic Aryans. The northern boundary was the mountain Himalaya and to the south was the sea which is often mentioned in the Vedic hymns as in the passages "the rivers rushed to the ocean," "the winds toss the clouds as the ocean tosses ships." M. St. Martin, whose name is an authority on the geography of the Vedas, does not think that the Vedic Hindus could have reached the sea so early. The *Samudra*, often mentioned in the hymns, was according to him, the River Sindhu which really looks like an ocean in Sindh. Lieutenant Pottinger thus gives an account of the progress and situation of the Vedic rivers. "The five rivers of the Punjab, passing from west to east are the Behat or Chelum anciently Hydaspes, the Chenab or Jenab anciently Akesines, the Ravee or ancient Hydrastes. These three unite about 70 miles north-east of Mooltan and take the name of



the centre one or Chenab. The fourth river is the Beas and the fifth the Sutlej. These, when united, form the Hyphasis of an ancient Geography. They are sometimes known by the name of Sutlej but most frequently now a days called the Gurru or Garrah; they run into the Chenub in latitude 29, 10' north, longitude 71 28' east and the whole receive the title of the Panjab or five rivers until they enter the Indus, as in the text."

We have thus given our readers an account of the locality of the Vedic Hindus. We will next give them a description of their government before we proceed with the details of their social condition.

We have, in the hymns, accounts of small towns and villages where people used to live governed by a head man or elder. In a hymn addressed to Agni by Bharadvāja we read "thou art to be praised amongst the people for thou art our well-beloved guest venerated like an elder in a city."

In another hymn addressed by the Rishi Aṅsatya to the god Indra we read :—" May we be, as it were, thy valued friends.....

Emulous in commendation like (those contending for the favor) of men, may Indra, the wielder of thunder-bolt, be equally (a friend to us); like those who, desirous of his friendship (conciliate) the lord of a city (ruling) with good government." We thus see that the Vedic Hindus had an idea of good government and these lords of cities were probably the representatives of a king or feudatories of a certain Paramount Power. The kings not only belonged to the military caste but oftentimes themselves led their army in battle. Rishis were the advisers of these kings. We often read, in the hymns, of flourishing cities and villages and prosperity of people under good and just kings. It is clear therefore that the kings were in constant touch with their own men and always ruled over them with justice tempered with mercy. The kings were heroic, pious and generous and always used to seek the Rishis for their advice so that they might not deviate from the paths of morality. They had always in view the extension of territories and the founding of cities. The Aryan kings expelled many



non-Aryan leaders of clans from their villages and founded their own cities there. They were far more powerful than their non-Aryan enemies. We have an account of a celebrated king by name Sudāsa, in Rig-Veda Sanhita; ten non-Aryan kings attempted unsuccessfully to subdue him. From this and similar accounts we clearly perceive that the Aryan kings, in the Vedic age, were great warriors. Their principal object was to extend their dominion and found cities and villages for their followers. They never lost sight of good government and the Rishis were their advisers. They had the feudal system on an extensive scale amongst them.

From the hymns of the Vedas we find that the Vedic Aryans attained to a very high state of civilization. Their system of agriculture, their idea of good government, the condition of women, the various arts known to them clearly prove this statement. When they first entered the land of seven rivers they had to burn down forests for making lands amenable to agriculture. There are hymns addressed to Agni "whose pure and spreading

flame blazes the forest" and who is oftentimes called "the feeder upon trees." In carrying on their agricultural operation, which was a very important factor in their early settlement, they made use of the plough, which, even now in the face of all modern inventions, forms the *Sine qua non* of agriculture. In some of the hymns we find that barley was sown with the plough, as, "O beautiful Aswins, sowing barley with the plough, drawing forth food for men and sweeping away the Dasyus with the thunderbolt ye have created great light for the Arya." We have also a hymn used at the commencement of the ploughing season, the following translation of which is from Wilson's pen.

"May the heavens, the waters, the firmament, be kind to us; may the lord of the field be gracious to us; let us undeterred (by foes) have recourse to him.

May the oxen (draw) happily, the men labour happily, may the traces find happily; weild the goad happily."

There are other hymns in which the measuring of fields with rods is mentioned



and as well as the carrying home produce in carts. These facts clearly prove that agriculture attained to a considerable progress during the Vedic period and this is undoubtedly one of the periods of a high state of civilization.

Carpenters or coach-builders were known to the Vedic Hindus; and a well-built car was of so vital necessity to them that they invoked it as a divine protection.

"Chariot made of the forest-lord, be strong of fabric; be our friend; be our protector and be manned by warriors: thou art girt with cow-hides.

"Worship with oblations the chariot constructed of the subsistence of heaven and earth, the extracted essence of the forest-lord."

These carts were their traveling companions. In some of the hymns we have reference to road-making and resting houses where refreshments were in readiness, as, proved by the following passage.

"Maruts, all good things are in your cars; on your shouldiers abides emulous strength;

at your resting-places on the roads refreshments are ready."

Metals and coins are often times mentioned in the Vedic hymns. The passages like a carpenter "bending pliant metal round the wheel" the Aswins "giving her an iron leg so that she might walk" testify this fact beyond all doubts. We have also descriptions of arms and ornaments of metal. Gold coins, called *Nikshas*, were in use as is proved by the extract "Kakshivat, unhesitatingly accepted a hundred *Nikshas*."

It is not to agriculture that the Vedic Hindus turned all their attention but they also knew the art of multiplying their money by trade and commerce. So very enterprising were they that the merchants, desirous of gain, used to send out their ships to the sea. This allusion solves one of the most burning questions of the day whether a man loses his caste by crossing the sea. Whatever may be the cause and evolution of this prohibition in the modern age we can very clearly find out from the Vedic hymns that the Hindus of that period used to cross the sea for making gain.



The social construction of the Vedic Hindus was of a very superior order. They had no caste system amongst them with all its rigidity and baneful vigour, with all its numerous ramifications which even prevent the Brāhmanas to intermarry and interdine amongst themselves. The only allegorical account of the origin of caste, that we find in the Vedas, is to be seen in a *Sukta* of the Rig-Veda which is called *Purusha Sukta*. This hymn is not considered by many as genuine but a later interpolation. Even from a careful perusal of this hymn and the observation of the practices of the Vedic people as recorded in the hymns we find that the people were divided into four classes after their respective callings. The promulgator of the system had evidently in view the organization of the various classes of people with reference to their trades and professions. But we have no such proof in the whole range of Vedic literature as prohibits one class from taking food with another. Besides we have no proof against intermarriages—but on the other hand we have overwhelming evidence

of Rishis marrying the daughters of the kings. The classification, of a people, however did not at all depend on their birth but upon the character and attainments. We have allusions of Kshatriyas attaining to the dignity of a Brāhmana on account of their spiritual attainments and many of them were authors of several Upanishadas. The system, as it appears, was evidently instituted to divide the functions of the respective classes so that the great work, of conquering the country and establishing a good and just government which the Aryans took up, might go on without any interruption.

The condition of women in India during the Vedic age was immensely superior to what we find now. They were not required to remain behind a curtain, a loathsome practice, which is evidently an out-come of the Mahomedan rule; for it finds only in Bengal, North-Western Provinces and the Punjab where the Mahomedan rule was most dominant, whereas their sisters of Madras and Bombay enjoy even now the sweet air of freedom. Vedic hymns clearly prove that the



women in that age used to come out before the public. The daughter and her mother were present at the public sacrifice made by the "Opulent Rathavati." The presence of women in public was recognised.

There was no early marriage in the Vedic age and maidens, when of proper age and education, used to take their husbands after their hearts. It is to the accomplishments and character of a husband that they always looked and the son of a Rishi was always considered the desirable match for the daughter of a Raja. Monogamy was practised in the Vedic times and women had a recognized position of their own. Husbands and wives, as a married pair, used to perform sacrifices conjointly. The wife was a necessary factor in a household, in carrying on sacrifices, preserving sacred fire and performing other duties of life. The women used to receive education and such was the extent of this education that some of them were the authors of hymns. One of them is Viswavara; she was the author of the second song of the 5th chapter of the Rig Veda which

contains twenty-eight most beautiful stanzas.

Another is Vak, the author of 125th song in the tenth chapter of the Rig Veda. The stanzas contain the highest ideal of the conception of God. The great commentators on these songs have said that they are the root of the Vedanta philosophy. She lived a life of an ascetic and passed her days in prayers and meditation.

Another is Lopamudrā; she was the author of the 79th song of the Rig Veda containing two most excellent stanzas. She was the daughter of a king and the wife of the great Rishi Agastya; though she was a princess, born and bred in luxury, she lived with her husband as an ascetic and followed him like a shadow.

We need not mention more—these three will give our readers an idea of some of the ideal Vedic women—and of the extent of their education.

Among the vices of the Vedic Aryans, gambling is very often mentioned and deplored. We give now a translation of a



hymn by Wilson which presents a graphic account of the vice of gambling.

1. "The tumbling air-born (products) of the great Vibhidaka tree (*i.e.*) that dice, delight me as they continue to roll on the dice-board. The exciting dice enchant me, like a draught of the Soma-plant growing on mount Mijavat.

2. She (the gamester's own wife) never wronged or despised me. She was kind to me and my friends. But I, for the sake of the partial dice, have spurned my devoted spouse.

3. My mother-in-law detests me, my wife rejects me. In his need the gamester finds no comforter. I cannot discover what is the enjoyment of the gambler, any more than I can presume what is the happiness of a worn-out hack horse.

4. Others pay court to the wife of a man whose wealth is coveted by the impetuous dice. His father, mother, brothers say of him. "We know nothing of him: take him away."

5. When I resolve not to be tormented by them, because I am abandond by his friends, who withdraw from me: yet, as soon as the brown dice, when they are thrown, make a rattling sound, I hasten to their rendezvous like a woman to her paramour.

6. The gamester comes to the assembly glowing in body and inquiring "shall I win?" The dice inflame his desire, making over his winnings to the opponent.

7. Hooking, piercing, deceitful, vexatious, delighting to torment—the dice dispense transient gifts and again run to winner: they are covered with honey, but destroy the gambler.

8. Their troop of fifty three disports itself (disposing men's destinies) like the god Savitri whose ordinances never fail. They bow not before the wrath even of the fiercest; the king himself makes obeisance to them.

9. They roll downward, they bound upward, Having no hands they overcome him who has these celestial coals, when thrown on the dice-board scorch the heart, though cold themselves.

10. The destitute wife of the gamester is distressed and so too is the mother of a son who goes she knows not whither. In debt and seeking after money the gambler approaches with trepidation the house of other people at night.

11. It vexes the gamester to see his own wife and then to observe the wives and happy home of others. In the morning he yokes the brown horses (the dice); by the time when the fire goes out he has sunk into a degraded wretch.

12. Never play with dice; practise husbandry; rejoice in thy property esteeming it sufficient."

Intoxicating drinks and beef-eating were in use in Vedic times. Dr. Rajendra Lala Mitter observes that "the earliest Brahmin



settlers were a spirit-drinking race and indulged largely in Soma beer and strong spirits. The Sautramani and Vājapeya rites, of which libations of strong arrack formed a prominent feature, were held in the highest esteem. None will venture to deny that the *Sura* of the Sautramani and Vājapeya was other than arrack manufactured from rice meal: that will suffice to show that the Vedic Hindus did countenance the use of spirits. In the hot plains of India over indulgence in spirituous drinks however gradually bore its evil consequence and among the thoughtful a revulsion of feeling was the result. The latter Vedas, accordingly, proposed a compromise and leaving the rites intact prohibited the use of spirits for the gratification of the senses, saying 'wine is unfit to be drunk, unfit to be given and unfit to be accepted.'

There are numerous passages in the Rig Veda which prove that the Hindus of that period were eater of bull, ram and buffaloes.

THE END.

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