ON THE

LITERATURE AND HISTORY OF THE VEDA.

BY

RUDOLPH ROTH, PH. D.,

TRANSLATED FROM THE FIRST GERMAN EDITION

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JOHN MUIR, C.I.E., PH.D., LL.D., D.C.L.

Published under the patronage of Government.

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Delivered at the meeting of Orientalists at Darmstadt, at the sitting of 2nd October, 1845.

You have permitted me, gentlemen, to speak on a branch of Indian literature which, if any can, asserts a claim to general interest, and the cultivation of which demands the union of various powers, but which will at the same time yield the richest spoils,—the literature of the Veda. You will allow me, in order to make room in some measure for this extensive subject, to regard as known all which has hitherto been written or published on the Veda. Of this there is so little, and that little has been so much the subject of remark, that it is sufficiently known in all Oriental circles.

It has been the peculiar fate of the Veda that being at first veiled or magnified into the extravagant by Brahmanical mystification and ostentation,—the effects of which have not yet disappeared,—it presented a terrifying complication of writings, with which no one trusted himself to meddle. When H. T. Colebrooke had at length brought light into the darkness, still the importance of these books in part escaped him, and Frederick Rosen, who formed a right estimate of it, and was the man to render the discovery fruitful, was only permitted to rear himself a beautiful monument, to make a commencement, which makes us the more severely miss the continuation, in proportion to the certainty that the latter would, through the

writer's growing experience, have gained a perfect form. No other was willing to tread in his footsteps; and so Rosen's book, and Colebrooke's, in its way, excellent treatise, are still the only mines for our knowledge of the Veda. I can scarcely mention what has been done by the Missionary Stevenson for the Sâma-veda: for his edition of the text is less correct than any tolerable Ms. and his translation is utterly useless.

Let me be permitted here to supply to Colebrooke's treatise those complements, which I have had the opportunity of drawing from an inspection of the Ms. sources in Paris, London, and Oxford,—complements which will refer to the relation of the first Veda to the remaining collections of hymns, and to its Indian compilation, and which,—so far as our researches must be based upon indigenous preparatory labours also,—could be communicated in no more fitting quarter than in a learned circle which has set itself for its task the investigation of the East. For according to my conviction no more essential service could be rendered to the history of the ancient east, perhaps to the whole of ancient history, than to make known and exactly investigate the Vedic writings.

The well-known definition of the difference between Mantra and Brâhma*n*a,—which is found in all possible writings explanatory of the Veda, and is amply handled in the Mimânsa, and according to which the Mantra is commonly metrical and an invocation, while the Brâhma*n*a is mostly prose, and consists of practical religious precepts,—this definition denotes also the fundamental division of the Vedic books. They sever themselves into collections of hymns, and liturgical works. That the former, not only in their origin but also in their collection, are more ancient than the latter, so long as no proofs appear to the contrary (and I have been able to find none) we may, I believe, regard as settled.

But among the five Vedic books which are called Sa*m*hitâ, there are only four hymn-collections. The fifth, the Taittirîya-

samhitâ, which is regarded as a principal part of the Yajur-veda, is a liturgical book, which may occupy the same place in respect of this Veda, as the Aitareya-brâhmana fills for the Rig-veda. (It is also called Taittirîya-brâhmana.)

Among these four collections of hymns that of the Rik has the most considerable compass; and may amount in all to near eleven thousand verses. The Atharva hymns are nearly as numerous. The Vâjasaneyi-samhitâ (of the Yajur-veda) may amount to half the extent of the Atharva, and the Sâma-samhitâ to half the Vâjasaneyi. Hence would result for the four collections united the number of about 30,000 distichs.

Colebrooke has remarked here and there in his treatises that whole hymns, strophes, or single verses of one Veda are again found in another, or in all the rest, without however giving any more exact determination of the matter. But it appears to one important to be able to estimate the total extent of the old poems which have come down to us in the Vedas, and their distribution in the single collections, for from this point the first step must be taken towards a determination of the reciprocal relation of the different Vedas. The information I can supply on this point is as follows.—

The Samhitâ of the Sâma-veda is, according to the testimony of the Indian commentators, (e. g. of Sâyana, in the introduction to his explanation of the Rik,) completely contained in the first Veda (the Rik), i.e. the single verses of the Sâma, are repeated in the connexion of the hymns of the Rik. Some very rare exceptions of verses, however, occur, which the Rik does not contain. The references to particulars will be fully given in Dr. Benfey's edition of this Samhitâ, for which we are now looking.

The Vâjasaneyi-samhitâ of the Yajus, on the contrary, embraces a number of sections which are peculiar to it. From an inspection of several parts of this book, for which however I had but slender assistance from commentaries or similar works,

it appears to me that perhaps the half of the whole recurs in the *Rik*. The other half consists in great part of sacrificial formulas, e. g. the Svâhâ repeated hundreds of times, and perhaps only a fourth of the whole consists of fragments of songs or invocations in prose, peculiar to this collection.

It is more difficult for me to give similar specifications in regard to the Atharva, for as we generally see it treated in a step-mother-like fashion so has it also found no commentator,and the only assistance which I have been able to obtain is a carelessly-made copy of the Anukramanî of this Veda, which pays much more attention to the metres of the single verses, than to other points of information. Excepting the names of gods, I find only Atharva, and Bhrigu Angiras named as *Rishis*, or composers of hymns, though not only strophes but whole hymns of from 30 to 40 verses, which in the *Rik* have their author specified, are received into the Atharva. It is however easy to perceive that this Veda contains far more pieces peculiar to itself, than the Vâjasaneyi, and that what is common to it, with the *Rik*-samhitâ is limited to perhaps a third part of its extent.

The important question which must connect itself with this determination of the external relation of the four collections of hymns, is this: has each of the Samhitâs an independent origin of its own ? are they in part borrowed from each other ? or finally, is one of them,—and it could be no other than the *Rik*,—to be regarded as the source of the rest ? A sufficient answer to these questions will of course be only *then* possible, when we shall have in detail before us not only the contents of each Veda, but also the variations in the several texts, which in many cases, are very material. A general representation may however even now be derived from the difference in the arrangement which is followed in these collections, and I may therefore be permitted to enter further into this point.

In reference to the use of the *Rig*-veda, we must now allow ourselves to be deceived by the arrangement of the Mss. as

they now lie before us without exception. The division which they present is notoriously a mere external, uniform separation into eight parts (Ashtaka), next of these into eight sub-divisions (Adhyâya) and lastly into sections (Varga) of five verses each. We might from this believe that we had before us an unarranged aggregate of songs, distributed in this manner only on account of an external point of coherence. But along with this division there exists an entirely different one, as we now know it principally from Sâyana's commentary. This arrangement has for its largest section the Mandala (circle) within that the Anuvâka, (chapter) with a number of hymns, (Sûkta) which again are parted into their distichs (rich).

This division into ten Mandalas is beyond all doubt the original one, fixed by the collector of these hymns as it has come down to us. Hymns which were ascribed by tradition to the same author or the same family, or hymns which belong to the like sacrificial ceremony, as the Soma-hymns of the 9th Mandala, are here united in one section, without regard to their outward extent.

The first mentioned division (into Ashtaka) on the contrary appears to have its ground in the need of sections of uniform size for the use of the Veda in the schools. In the 15th section of the Prâtisâkhya-sûtras ascribed to Saunaka, there is found a collection of rules for the reading of the Veda in teaching, which appear to have reference to this point. The teacher recited two or three distichs, according to the length or shortness of the aggregates of verses (hymns), which were repeated by the scholars in order. One such portion is called prasna (question) and sixty or more of these, says the Sûtra, i.e. about one hundred and fifty verses, compose an Adhyâya, a lesson of the Veda, which is at the same time the quantity actually read in the school.

Besides that it would be absurd, where a real division of the matter exists, to regard one which is merely formal as the original one, we have the proof for the greater antiquity of the

Mandala-division in the modes of speech employed by the oldest interpreter of the Veda. Nirukta names the *R*ig-veda in several places, and always with the designation Dasatayya, the ten parts. The same mode of designation is found in the Prâtisâkhya-sûtras, which are older than the Nirukta, in the commentary on the latter, and in a number of other books. The Anukramanikâ of the *R*ik also has this division, although in the Mss. it is externally separated into Ashtakas. Hence it results that it would be unnatural to make any other division than that into ten Mandalas the basis of a future edition of this Samhitâ. For in whatever way criticism may decide in detail on the historical value of the tradition touching the authors of the Vedic hymns, still this tradition has been held authoritative by the collector and by the oldest interpreters of the Veda, and it may moreover be proved from the affinity of the representations and of the language that, in the present recension of the Veda, those sets of hymns are mostly arranged together, which must have had a common origin, and possibly may have been previously united in particular collections.

In the Mandala itself again there exists an arrangement. It may in most cases be shown why the hymns are given in this determined sequence. That a regard to their ritual import had its effect, is evident, but it was allied with the main principle of each division, viz., to place together what was homogeneous. Hymns addressed to Agni follow each other, and generally occupy the first place in the several books, then the hymns to Indra, and so on. This however is not carried so far, as that we can assume the collection to have been made for liturgical ends. The *R*ik even contains hymns and parts of hymns, which the commentator, though very scrupulous in this matter, cannot assign to any religious observance. I rather believe than one can with full reason call the *R*ik the historical Veda. And its collection is a wonderful work, which attests the scientific perception of this people in an age which,—as I

shall be able to show further on, reaches far above the age of the collection of the Homeric songs. There are united here more than a thousand of those sacred songs, with which the forefathers dwelling on the banks of the five streams supplicated prosperity for themselves and their flocks, greeted the rising dawn, sang the fight of the lightning-weilding god with the gloomy power, and celebrated the help of the celestials who had delivered them in their battles. And these songs are collected, not, perhaps, because the religious worship had occasion for them in this manner, but the whole treasure of this ancient poetry was to be here preserved uncurtailed and well arranged. We should moreover deceive ourselves were we to believe that the Veda contains exclusively religious songs; a number of pieces have found their way into it, which have no reference to the worship of gods.

In the tenth Ma*n*dala, e. g. in which a dice-player laments deeply his ruinous propensity, which against his best resolutions, seduces him again continually into new sin. Another piece in the seventh Ma*n*dala, ascribed to Vasish*th*a (of which Colebrooke has already given a passing notice) describes in a sportive way the revival of the frogs at the beginning of the rainy season, and compares their quacking with the singing of Brahma at a sacrifice. A very frequent form of hymn (of which examples are wanting in the part of the *R*ik already made public) is the dialogistic,—conversations of the gods among themselves, or of a god with a *R*ishi. In the 4th Ma*n*dala, e. g. Vâmadeva speaks with Indra, and mocks him, "What can Indra forbid me? no one regards him either of the living, or of those who shall be born." As to these and similar pieces the interpreters are at a loss how to assign the *R*ishi and the Devatâ, (i. e. the inspired author and the god invoked;) but in the song of the gamester (abovementioned) they have preferred making the dice the deity (Devatâ) rather than give up these unbending terms. But the less these remnants of ancient poetry

are suited to the established frames of liturgical forms,—the more worthy they undoubtedly are of our observation; and a representation of the most ancient circumstances of the people, and the character of this literature may in many respects be more easily acquired from these hymns, than from those constructed in more regular form. Yet I will not assert that these pieces belong to the oldest of all; on the contrary, the most of them bear plain traces of a later origin.

The Sa*m*hitâ of the *R*ig-veda thus claims to give the hymns complete, just as the *R*ishi has spoken,—or according to the expression of the interpreter,—has *seen* them. Not so the collections of the Sâma, and the Vâjasaneyi Yajus. Both give single verses or single strophes, which do not at all necessarily stand in any internal connexion with each other, but only receive such connexion through the ritual which they accompany. In the Sâma I believe I have remarked besides, that not only the metre, which in virtue of its connexion with melody began very early to play an important part in sacrificial rites, but even the accidental occurence of the same or like-sounding words has frequently had an influence on the sequence of single verses. That the first principle of arrangement in both these Vedas in a liturgical one, needs no confirmation, and the most important thing which can be performed for either consists in the indication of this more or less loose connexion of the text with the ceremonial. An explanation of this principle, however, such as we demand, must necessarily go back to the connexion of the passages, i. e. to the *R*ik. Thus both (the Sâma and the Yajus) properly call for illustration in those points only where they depart from the first Veda.

For even were we to take up again the enquiry abovementioned into the relation between these three collections in respect of their origin,—for even were we to assume that the Sâma and Yajus, or one of them, had been compiled earlier than the *R*ik-sa*m*hitâ, still we shall not be able to deny that the hymns

contained in the latter (the *Rik*) are the same from which those pieces (i. e. those contained in the Sâma and Yajus) were taken; we shall not be able to invert the relation so far as to hold the hymns of the *Rik* for mere deckings-out, amplifications of the ritual fragments. For the latter, as we find them in both of those collections, have no independent significance, they are taken away from a connexion, and in the former the shell would be of more importance than the kernel.

The assumption of a priority in the collection of the liturgical Vedas would however have in it nothing at all improbable. It is rather the natural course that the immediate want is first satisfied, before one arrives at the derivative one. These fragments were collected, as they were in use in religious worship,—remnants of complete songs, which had acquired importance for religious services before other portions of those hymns,—these, (I say) were collected because they were wanted for the regulation of the ritual, which in the sequel was to grow up into so huge a system. It was only in the second place that the collection of the complete hymns on which the ritual was based, was arrived at; and since those parts of hymns which the Sâma and Yajus contain were already guarded from alterations by writing and by their liturgical importance; whilst the undivided song existing as yet perhaps only in recollection, or scattered here and there, and as not immediately pertaining to sacred offices, was also less scrupulously preserved,—it would be easily applicable if both those Sa*m*hitâs contained variations of the text, which as regards the passages concerned are older than the text of the *Rik*. We may even go further and grant that as the compilation of the *Rik* already in a certain sense rests upon a scientific want, so science also after the manner of ancient and modern times wished to do too much, that men had allowed themselves improvements and sought to restore uniformity, and that thus we had before us in the *Rik* a conscious retouching. Certain traces testify at least to external fusions; and although I cannot

believe that the compiler of the *Rik* would have allowed himself to make essential and extensive alterations, yet I could not venture to pronounce against the assumption of a retouching, before we have before us the bulk of the textual variations of the Sâma, at least, which are far more important than those of the Vâjasaneyi (Yajus). The abovementioned edition of that Veda will give the amplest information on this point.

As regards the Atharvan, the question above proposed appears to be more easily decided. This collection contains, not single unconnected verses, but complete hymns, and has a real arrangement, (i. e. one depending on things, not merely formal.) In this respect it is like the *Rik*, and can really be called a complement of the first Veda, a complement meant to embrace the hymnologic productions of its time, when the Mantra was already no longer an expression of immediate religious feeling, but had become a formula of incantation. This Veda therefore contains especially sentences intended to guard against destructive operations of the divine powers, against sickness and noxious animals, imprecations on enemies, invocations of healing herbs, and for all manner of occurences in ordinary life, for protection in travelling, luck in play, and such like things. In the pieces which are common to it (the Atharva) with the *Rik*, it allows itself a great number of transpositions and alterations, which besides in most cases appear to be arbitrary. The language in those sections which are peculiar to it, approaches the flowing expression of later times, but has without the grammatical forms of the older songs. Between it and the *Rik* there exists, further the peculiar relation, that the latter also towards the conclusion (in the last Anuvâka of the tenth Mandala) contains a considerable number of sections which bear completely the character of the Atharva-hymns, and are also actually found repeated in the Veda.

Besides these general tokens of a later origin of this Veda, we find yet further a number of particular marks among which

I here adduce one. The hymns of the *Rik* variously celebrate the deliverances, which Indra, the Asvins, and other gods had vouchsafed to the forefathers. All the names of the persons so delivered, however, lie beyond the time of the author himself, and one seldom meets with the name of a Vedic *Rishi*. But in the fourth book of the Atharva there is found i. g. a hymn which invokes Mitra and Varu*n*a to preserve the suppliant, as they had preserved—not Dadhyach, Rebha, Pedu, and others, but Jamadagni, Vasish*th*a, Medhâtithi, Purumilha, &c., all names of men whom tradition makes to be authors of the hymns of the *Rig*-veda.

It thus appears, from all that has been said, to admit of no doubt that the Atharva has not only been later collected than the *Rik*, but has also a later origin, and in both together we have before us the mass of the hymns of two periods. To understand these in their whole compass, must clearly be the first thing which we can do in this province; and a recension of both these Vedas should therefore precede the investigation of the liturgical system, from which only, again, the Sâma and Vâjasaneyi can receive light. It is impossible to master perfectly the practical religious writings, the Brâhma*n*as, and what is connected with them without a knowledge of the text of the hymns, round which the whole ritual ranges itself; which, on the other hand, we cannot hope to be essentially advanced in the historical understanding of the ancient poems by means of a literature which has for that text only a stiffened sense, determined by the ritual. What we shall take from this literature is the explanation of single liturgical representations which are found already in the hymns. The whole system of worship is however in itself a very important object of investigation, and well worth the labor which its explanation will cost. The number of writings pertaining to this subject is extraordinary. All the Brâhma*n*as, a great number of Upanishads, and the numerous *Srauta* and *Grihya* Sûtras lie within the circle of these investigations.

In order now to give an account of how the Veda has come down to us, and of what has been done for the *Ri*g-veda in particular by indigenous grammar and interpretation, I must speak of a class of writings, which to my knowledge have not yet formed the subject of discourse in Indian literature, but which deserve in a high degree to be introduced into view,—the Prâtiśâkhya Sûtras.

I have found out three writings under this title. That of greatest extent and importance is ascribed to *S*aunaka, and consists of eighteen *patalas*. A second book bears the name of Kâtyâyana (the name without doubt who is named as the author of the Anukrama*n*î to the *R*ik and to the Vâjasaneyi-sa*m*hitâ,) and numbers eight adhyâyas. Finally, a third Prâtiśâkhya is as yet without a (discoverable) author. The beginning of the text, as well as the commentary, which without doubt would have given some notice of the author, or the school, is wanting in the only Mss. of this work which I have found at Oxford. I have but lately learnt that there are several writings of this name in the Berlin collection, and have as yet been able to procure no information respecting them. I conclude however from the statement of the extent of the Berlin Ms. that none of them can be the Prâtiśâkhya ascribed to *S*aunaka, the most important among the three. If the remark made on two Nos. *viz.* that they consist of three chapters, be correct, we shall find here yet a fourth Prâtiśâkhya.

I must thus in my account confine myself to what I have been able to learn from the explanatory works as yet as my command, which, for the second and third of these books, are very imperfect. These writings contain rules on the elementary part of general, but particularly Vedic grammar, on the accent, on Sandhi, on the permutation of sounds, (e. g. the nati, change of dentals into cerebrals,) on the lengthening of the vowels in the Veda, (pluti) on pronunciation, on the various pâthas of the Veda, &c. The first Prâtiśâkhya contains besides

a section on metre, which is far more valuable for the Veda, than the utterly unimportant book Chhandas, included in the Vedânga.

That the common denomination of these writings, Prâtisâkhya Sûtrâni, cannot be the original one, results from the signification of the word; "grammatical aphorisms, current in single Sâkhâs or schools." In a commentary on Gobhila's Srauta-Sûtras, one of them is designated as Mâdhyamdina-sâkhiya Prâtisâkhya, i.e. as a collection of those aphorisms which the well-known Vedic school of Mâdhyamdina followed. But I conclude from a passage in the first book of the Nirukta, as well as from the introduction and the subscriptions to the chapters of the first Prâtisâkhya, that these books were at an earlier period called Pârshada, i. e. "What is received from, or belongs to, the assembly," and to this appellation would be joined the particular designation of the school, thus Mâdhyamdina Pârshada, &c. The same passage of the Nirukta also shows that these books are older than Yâska, and that they were known by him as manuals of the different schools of grammarians (karana). In order to arrive at an approximate determination of time, let us now assume,—according to the current and tolerably well established view,—the year 350 B. C. as the date of Pânini, let us further set Yâska only 50 years earlier, and we then have the end of the fifth century B. C. as the age of the latter. Since now Yâska is acquainted with the Prâtisâkhyas, these must have been already composed and recognized as an authority in the fifth century B. C. These books, themselves, again, recognize a great number of still older grammarians (in all about 30 names) and even schools. These must therefore be assigned to the beginning of the 5th or end of the 6th century B. C.

In order to extend my demonstrations from this point, I must mention the various modes of writing the Vedas, the Pâthas. Of these, according to the representation of the Prâ-

tiśâkhya, there are three, the Saṁhitâpâṭha, the Padapâṭha, and the Kramapâṭha. Saṁhitâpâṭha means the natural mode of writing, with observation of the rules of Sandhi. The Padapâṭha which separates single words, and comparatively speaking parts of words (elements of a compound word,) is sufficiently known by means of Rosen's edition. The Kramapâṭha, of which we have as yet no printed specimen, is twofold, the *letter* krama and the *word* krama (varṇa-krama and pada-krama); the former always doubles the first consonant of a group of consonants (most Mss. of the Vâjasaneyi are written in this way): the *word* krama takes two words of the sentence together, and always repeats the second of them with a following one. In this Pâṭha itself again a number of changes may take place, which I here pass over.

We know further the inventors of these modes of writing. Śâkalya is named by Yâska as the author of the Padapâṭha, (at least for the Ṛig-veda) and other accounts which we have of him in the Prâtiśâkhya and even in Pâṇini, do not contradict this statement. This grammarian and his school appear to have had a great influence generally in the conformation of the Veda, at least of the Ṛik. The orthography of the Mss. as it has come down to us, and as it is fixed in the Prâtiśâkhya, even to the minutest particulars, is principally that of that teacher, and the Anukramaṇî of the Ṛik ascribed to Kâtyâyana, calls the Saṁhitâ, of which it is the index, i. e. the Ṛik-saṁhitâ such as we now have it, Śâkalaka Ṛig Vedâmnâya, i. e. the redaction of the Ṛig-veda which has come down to us from Śâkalya's school. Further researches may without doubt add more materials on this subject, and place yet more fully in the light the remarkable circumstance of the various redactions of the Veda in remote antiquity. Only we must, in this matter, beware of giving too much credence to the statements of the Purâṇas, which give us accounts of all possible Śâkhâs (schools or divisions) of this and that Veda. The numerous citations in older

writings, even in the books which pertain to the liturgy of the Veda, well instruct us far more surely on these points.

In regard to the third mode of writing the Veda, the Kramapâṭha, we know at least by a statement in the first Prâtisâkhya, that the word krama, in its simplest form, derives its origin from Panchâla, the son of Babhru, (whom I have found named in no other place).

It is easily seen that these different ways of writing the Veda, can have no other foundation than the securest possible preservation of the text, in a certain degree they also already aim at its explanation. The last named Krama is nothing else than the introduction of the Padapâṭha into the Saṁhitâpâṭha itself; each word appears first in its pada form, and then in its connexion with the whole sentence.

But it will now be conceded that measures, thus carefully sought out, for the fixation of a text could not have been hit upon by its author, or even by a compiler, but must belong to a period for which this text was already something completely fixed, to which it was an object of study, and indeed the most careful, yea, minute study, and had even become a subject of controversy in the schools, (all of which can be established from the Prâtisâkhya,)—in a word, to a period which was no longer certain of the sense of the Veda, and had to guard it, at least externally, by exact regulation of reading and writing, against the alterations of misunderstanding.

Supposing that we have found above that the teachers who are named in the Prâtisâkhya as compilers of the Veda, Śâkalya and others, must at least fall at the beginning of the 5th or the close of the 6th century before our era, then we may conclude from the nature of that which they have done for the Veda, that several generations must have elapsed between the collection of those texts and them, and that consequently this collection can not fall later than the 7th century. By what probable interval, again, the origin of these songs may have been separated

from their collection, is a question which we shall never be able to answer with certainly, but to the solution of which we may approach tolerably near by means of the share which the compiler has had in producing the present form of the Veda, which this share itself will be on the one hand disclosed to us by the internal marks of the text itself, and on the other by a comparison of the Sâma and the Vâjasaneyi.

How closely all these questions touching the Veda are connected with the history of the grammar so remarkable for its high antiquity, appears from what has been said above. The Veda was the first object on which it exercised itself; and thus there lie in it united in their germ those sciences which at a later period diverged from each other, viz., the explanation of the Veda, and general grammar, of which for us the oldest representatives (who stand equally high in Indian literature) are Yâska and Pâ*n*ini.

To the former the Naigha*nt*uka, and Nirukta, the sources of all later exegesis are ascribed. That both these are immediately connected admits of no doubt, but I believe that the Naigha*nt*uka is older than the Nirukta: the proofs of which I must reserve for another place. Thus Yâska, if the Nirukta belongs to him, could not be also the author of the Naigha*nt*uka. The last named little writing is in its first part a Vaidik vocabulary, in the second, a collection of the more difficult or unusual words, taken from the text of the Veda, and ranged together without any alteration or explanation. The third part is a collection of the whole of the names of the gods according to their domains (sthâna) earth, air and heaven. The Nirukta itself is nothing else than an explanation of the Naigha*nt*uka (hence, too, its name) to the citations of which it adds the passages of the texts, and comments on them.

Yâska ascribes the compilation of the small collections of words and names which forms the basis of his explanation, in an undefined way to an ancient tradition, not indeed dating

from the earliest period, when faith and doctrine flourished without artificial aids, but from the generations next to that era, which strove by arrangement and writing to preserve the treasures which they had inherited. He further puts the Naigha*ntu*ka in one class with the Vedas and Vedângas. By the composition of the Vedas, which Yâska places in the second period of Indian history, he cannot mean the production of the hymns transmitted by the *r*ishis, which were always esteemed in India as the essential part of the Vedas, and were regarded in the same light by Yâska. All, therefore, that could be done by later generations was to arrange these hymns, and commit them to writing. We find here a recollection of a comparatively late reduction into writing of the mental productions of early ages, an event which has not yet attracted sufficient notice in its bearing upon the history of Indian literature. At that period no need was felt of continuous commentaries; and in fact learning had not then become separated into so many branches. A memorandum of the terms denoting the ideas of most frequent occurrence in the Veda, and of the principal passages which required elucidation; a simple list of the gods and the objects of worship, such as we find in the Naigha*ntu*ka, sufficed as a manual for oral instruction. At a later era this manual became the subject of formal and written explanation. To this period belongs the Nirukta.

Then the different grammatical Prâtisâkhya aphorisms, the *S*rauta and G*r*ihya ritual Sûtras, the Nigha*ntu*s and Nirukta were composed. These works, as we have already seen, were the growth of several successive ages subsequent to the date of the oldest Brâhma*n*as. In Greece a similar state of things prevailed. There, with the exception of Hesiod (who never rose to the same degree of consideration), Homer was the only source of the highest knowledge, and pre-eminently the book of the schools; the book which gave the first occasion to grammatical, and almost every other sort of science to develope

itself. In India the Veda occupies the place of Homer. It was to the Veda that the Brahmanical people looked as the sole repository of intellectual culture. As a sacred book it was the more naturally a subject of research to the learned man, as he was at the same time a priest, and it became the first problem to be solved by grammar,—a science which was far more commonly studied, and at an earlier period attained a far higher stage, in India than in Greece. At the same time, the Veda, both as regards its language and its subject-matter, stood far further removed from the Indian of the two centuries immediately preceding Buddha (700 and 600 B. C.)—in which the sacerdotal system reached its climax—than Homer did from the Greek of the Periclean era. At that period, or even earlier, were formed the collection of Homeric words which had become obsolete,—while in India, the 'nighaṇṭavas' had been compiled to illustrate the Veda. In both cases the collections had the same origin; but in the short interval from Pericles to the end of the Alexandrian era, the Greeks had done more for the explanation of Homer than the Indians could accomplish for the comprehension of the Veda, in the long series of ages down to the times of Sâyaṇa and Mahîdhara, in the sixteenth century A. D. The task of the Indians was, in truth, by far the more difficult; and besides, Indian scholarship lay under an incapacity of unfettered movement. It was necessary for orthodoxy to deny the facts of history, and to discover only the circumstances of the present in the monuments of antiquity; for the present was both unable and unwilling to rest on any other foundation than the traditions of an earlier age, surrounded as these were with a halo of glory, and only half understood. The priesthood supplied the required authentic explanation, without which the reader of those ancient books would never have found in them that which he so easily discovered with that assistance.

Older expounders of the Vedas in general are called by

Yâska simply Nairuktas; and when he notices any difference in the conception of the Vedic gods, those interpreters who take the euhemeristic view are called Aitihâsikas. In addition to the exposition of the Veda in the stricter sense, there existed also liturgical interpretations of numerous passages, such as we find in the Brâhmaṇas and other kindred treatises, in which it was attempted to bring the letter of the received text into harmony with the existing ceremonial. Such liturgical interpretations are called by Yâska those of the Yâjnikas, or 'persons skilled in sacrificial rites.' Akin to theirs appears to have been the mode of interpretation adopted by the Naidânas. Under this head we must probably understand that method of explanation which, differing from the grammatical etymologies, referred the origin of the words and conceptions to occasions which were in a certain sense historical. The Brâhmaṇas and Upanishads abound in such historical or mythological etymologies, which are to be found in all ages and among all nations; etymologies which their own inventors do not regard as serious, but which, from their connexion with other ideas, obtain a certain importance in the religious system.

People have been hitherto inclined to attribute a very high antiquity to the Nirukta. That it belongs to the oldest part of Indian literature that we possess excepting the Vedic writings, is not to be doubted; it shows however, by its contents that it belongs to an already far advanced period of grammar and interpretation. That however it is older than Pâṇini, we may conclude from the less developed state, particularly of the technical part of grammatical science in the Nirukta. For along with a certain richness of grammatical expressions, it still wants the greater part of those peculiar technical terms, of which it is not credible that they were wholly Pâṇini's own, creation. Yâska is entirely ignorant of algebraic symbols such as Pâṇini has. That the latter makes no mention of Yâska, though he had in many places an opportunity of doing so

can no longer strike us now that we know so large a number of decidedly older grammarians of whom he makes no mention; and would at most show that in Pâṇini's time this book did not yet enjoy that general circulation and esteem, to which it latterly attained. The introduction to the Nirukta, very remarkable in many respects, which contains the sketch of a grammatical and exegetical system, makes us acquainted with the views of Yâska and his predecessors, and it is this way possible for us to institute a complete comparison between these older grammarians and Pâṇini. For this I believe I may be permitted to refer to the edition and explanation of the Nirukta, which I think of sending to the press without delay. Let me only be allowed to examine somewhat more closely one section of that introduction, which is calculated to throw light on the age of the Veda, and of its interpretation. Yâska mentions the opinion of the Grammarian Kautsa that the songs of the Veda are inaccessible to grammatical and logical interpretations; for their sense, says Kautsa, is fixed by the Brâhmaṇas and by the use of the hymns in the ritual, and thus forbid a free explanation. The hymns, says he further, even contain what is absurd and impossible; they contradict themselves, when, e.g., they say, "There is but one Rudra and no second;" and again "numberless are the thousands of Rudras on the earth;" finally they contain, Kautsa thinks, passages completely unintelligible. To the last reproach Yâska replies, it is not the fault of the beam, if the blind man does not see it, but of the man; and tries to refute or explain the rest in detail. That the sense of the hymns is determined by their ritual signification, as the latter is taught in the Brâhmaṇas is (he thinks) by no means a fault, since these books give the correct meaning. Yâska (as is further clear from a number of other passages of the Nirukta) and before him Kautsa, had thus already before them the whole system of the ritual, and the exactly regulated application of the Vedic texts in religious

services; they were acquainted with a number of the fundamental works of the Kalpa, of the Brâhmaṇas; and the rationalistic Kautsa could count the Veda senseless and the Brâhmaṇas as false representations. A conclusion may hence be drawn as to the length of time which must lie between this grammarian and the Brâhmaṇas; and as to what further period again must intervene between these liturgical writings and the Veda, which they explain allegorically and mystically, and recognize as already collected and arranged in the way in which it has come down to us; of which, e.g., the Aitareya-brâhmaṇa gives the most numerous proofs.

By means of Buddhism we have, from quite a different side, a proof, which chimes in with the above, for the antiquity of the scientific treatment of the Veda, and the extended development of the ritual; and I mention this only to show how that which we discover through the serial sequence of the Vedic writings, is confirmed through what is as yet the most certain historical channel. Sâkyamuni comes as the proclaimer of a new religious truth, by which the limits of the way of salvation, the mass of the Brahmanical institutions are torn down. His doctrine is a refuge even for Brahmans, who were unable to encounter the difficulties of their own complicated system. If Buddhism could have such an importance in the 6th or 5th century B. C., then must that entire edifice of worship and ceremonies, which is based on the poetical part of the Veda, the Brâhmaṇas, have been long before erected. These books themselves are the oldest commentaries of the Veda, and bear witness to the existence of a grammatical science, which therefore must have preceded Buddhism also.

Near and immediately after the Brâhmaṇas, they may, yet further, have existed a proper and independent interpretation of the Veda, but this has been without doubt confined to the more difficult and important passages; and the Naighaṇṭuka may have been a collection of such sections, as used especially to be

explained in the schools, continuous commentaries probably did not then exist; and that of Mâdhava and Sâya*n*a, composed in the middle of the 14th century of our era, is indeed the first and only complete gloss of the *R*ig-veda. From the long series of centuries which lie between Yâska and Sâya*n*a but few remnants of an interpretative literature connected with the first Veda have remained to us, or at least have as yet been discovered. *Sa*m*k*ara and the Vedântic school had turned chiefly to the Upanishads. Nevertheless a scholar of *Sa*m*k*ara, A´nandatîrtha has composed a gloss on one part of the *R*ig-veda, at least an explanation of which by Jayatîrtha, embracing the 2nd and 3rd Adhyâyas of the 1st Ash*t*aka is to be found in the library of the East India House in London. The mode of explanation is essentially the same as we have in Sâya*n*a, only we can frequently reproach it with a still more violent treatment of the text. Sâya*n*a himself, who is not always scrupulous in stating his sources, besides the Niruktatîkâ of Durgâ, a fundamental book which has been preserved to us, cites also Bhâ*tt*abkâshara Misra, and Bharatasvâmî as interpreters of the Veda. Of the former I have seen at least a commentary on a section of the Yayur-veda, on which he appears to have given a complete comment. Sâya*n*a's citations do not by any means necessarily show that he has given any explanation of the *R*ik.

Finally, Sâya*n*a's commentary itself, which is already in some measure known by Rosen's extracts will always remain our principal source for the interpretation of the Veda, as well as a mine for the history of the literature generally. It belongs, it is true, to a period in which Vedic studies were but artificially revived, and to the range of whose view that ancient literature lay so far off that we cannot conceive it to have been distinctly understood;—it is entirely dependent on what is more ancient, and especially makes the most extensive use of the Nirukta and Naigha*n*tuka, but still it gives without doubt all which the in-

digenous literature of its time could furnish. As its completeness has had for us the unfortunate consequence of throwing into oblivion older writings of a similar purport, so have we also in it the most essential results of this earlier literature, and we could certainly desire nothing more important for the furtherance of Vedic studies that a complete knowledge of the Saṃhitâ of the *Rig*-veda and its copious commentator.

It affords me peculiar pleasure to be able to conclude with the announcement that such a work is being prepared in England. For it science will be indebted to Professor Wilson, the man whose industry has already opened the way in so many provinces of this literature, and who is daily rendering to these studies, the most essential services by the unsurpassable liberality with which he first has afforded access to the richest Indian library. Under his guidance it will become possible for younger powers, among whom, along with Dr. Trithen in London and Dr. Rieu of Geneva, I may reckon myself, to make accessible to study these extensive materials for the explanation of the Veda.

The Rev. Dr. Mitchell, of Bombay, has made a work of mine the subject of a special notice, wherein he commends the little volume to the attention of the Asiatic Society in Bombay. This notice is published in the Journal of the Bombay Branch Royal Asiatic Society, No. xi. July, 1847, but has not until recently come to my knowledge.

The author is grateful to Dr. Mitchell for the favorable judgment pronounced upon his work, and feels himself peculiarly rewarded for his labors in this department by the circumstance that their results have met with attention and recognition in India itself. Investigations with respect to Indian antiquity, which reach back to the very limit of the history of the human race, possess nevertheless, even for the present, a direct value. For the development of the Indian people has gone on undisturbed from those early ages until now: it has never been

forced from its natural course by foreign influences; the bands have never been wholly severed which connect the latest generations with their remote ancestors; even now, those literary monuments which, originating among this people, conduct us farther back into the past than any other existing works whatever (with the exception, perhaps, of a very small portion of the Hebrew Scriptures, are still regarded as the inspired foundation of the national belief, and are in the hands of those whose business it is to uphold and direct that belief, the priests. Whatever contributes to the understanding of these beginnings, must also aid the comprehension of the present. And when men who combine with the culture of the West an intimate acquaintance with the present condition of India, deem worthy of their particular attention results which we have won from those ancient documents through the means only of general historical and philological research, the practical value of these results is thereby acknowledged.

But the more highly I value the testimony to the inner truth of purely historical investigations, derived from the fact that they aid in the comprehension of now existing forms of spiritual life in India, so much the more unwillingly would I allow to attach itself to them the reproach of "one-sidedness" which Dr. Mitchell suffers to appear in his remarks.

It is this point which the following exposition is intended to illustrate.

The passages in Dr. Mitchell's notice which I particularly have in mind are the following:

"It will be seen that he [Dr. Roth] contemplates these ancient hymns in a purely literary point of view. It is however interesting and useful to examine them in another light; and when we do so, we are compelled to form a far less favourable estimate of their character. It is true, that the general absence of anthropomorphism from the Vedic notion of divine beings, necessarily excludes many of the worst outrages against morality

that shock us in the Purâ*n*as, in which the worship of deified heroes and gods assimilated to men, plays so important a part. Still, even in this respect the Vedas are faulty; and in the character of the sacred *R*ishis—particularly as these are represented in the commentaries on the Vedas—there is much that is morally repulsive. A dialogue is given in which Yama endeavors to seduce his twin sister Yamunâ. The *R*ishi Vasish*th*a is assailed by the house-dog when about to steal grain. See Colebrooke, As. Res., vol. viii, pp. 401, 402. The warlike and revengeful character of the *R*ishis will be afterwards noticed. Gross indelicacy (such as in Rosen's *R*ig-veda, pp. 214, 215) is too common to attract much notice. More portentous is the passage from the *V*rihad A´ra*n*yaka, quoted by Colebrooke ut-supra, p. 440.

Enthusiastic antiquarians like our author sometimes dislike such remarks as these. But, even were we permitted to waive the claims of religion and morality, a purely literary estimate of the Vedic hymns would be chargeable with that one-sidedness which the Germans generally pride themselves on shunning, p. 406.

In a similar strain is the conclusion of the notice:

"Along with thorough-going German research, our author seems to possess an almost *Jonesian* ardour and imaginativeness. He is thus able to impart no small degree of fascination to his views. In his hands the old Vedic hymns, which lie withered and sapless in our collections, like the constituents of a *hortus siccus*, seem to burst afresh into life, and resume whatever of grace or fragrance they originally possessed; so that, when we consider them in a merely literary point of view, we are free to confess that among these faded leaves there lie, potentially, charms we could little have suspected. Many, however, will, we trust, approach the Vedas with yet other feelings; and recognizing in them the most authentic and complete memorial of the human mind's early aberrations from primeval

truth, will contemplate them in a far higher than merely esthetical point of view, and be enabled to deduce from those monuments, 'covered with the hoar of innumerable ages,' lessons which the human race in all succeeding times, and throughout all lands, will do well to ponder and lay seriously to heart," p. 410.

It is not difficult for me to transfer myself to the point of view from which Dr. Mitchell has been led to such considerations as these. They are suggested to him by my general estimate of the Indian antiquity, which shows itself plainly enough every where in the work in question, as of a period of freshness and vigor. The discovery of such a nobler period, whose existence not long since was not even suspected (in Colebrooke appears no hint of it), must be an occasion of rejoicing to every one who has recognized even in their errors the high spiritual endowments of the Indian people. The lively exhibition of such an estimate might readily strike disagreeably one who, living among the late posterity of such an ancestry, has to struggle against their weaknesses and vices. He is naturally and unavoidably led to connect the past with the present, to seek in the former the seeds of the errors which flourish luxuriantly in the latter, and to regard him as partial and prejudiced who makes no mention of those errors, or at any rate leaves them in the background. Meanwhile, the author of the notice will readily concede that, in accordance with the purpose had in view in my work, a complete representation of the life of that primitive time was not at all called for: that only brief traits could be given, and that in these it was the difference of that period from the middle and the modern ages that had claim to be made most prominent. If then the brighter side of the picture was exhibited, it lay in the nature of the undertaking that it should be so.

I will not, however, refuse to respond to the challenge which seems to lie in Dr. Mitchell's words. Not that I mean thereby

to acknowledge that a purely historical consideration of antiquity is a partial one, and a waiving of the claims of religion and morality. History has rather under all circumstances an indestructible right of its own, which may be set aside in deferrence to none other whatever. Just as no astronomer thinks of questioning the mathematical laws which regulate the motions of the heavenly bodies, because to many a biblical commentator, and even to the Catholic Church itself, they may seem irreconcilable with the passage in the tenth chapter of Joshua; so will historically established facts maintain their truth and value, even though they seem to be at variance with a narrowed Christian apprehension of history. As in the former case the apparent contradiction is removed by a better comprehension of the words of Scripture, so here too a correctly understood Christianity will be abundantly strong enough to allow historical truth to maintain itself without and within its limits, and even to make it subservient to its own purposes.

But before I proceed to an exposition of my own view of the moral value of the Indian antiquity, I must briefly reduce to their proper value the instances of moral error which Dr. Mitchell adduces.

The authority upon which they rest is Colebrooke's Essay on the Vedas, or Sacred Writings of the Hindûs. There we read: "A very singular passage occurs in another place [of the *R*ig-veda] containing a dialogue between Yama and his twin-sister Yamunâ, whom he endeavors to seduce; but his offers are rejected by her with virtuous expostulation." If it be considered that, according to the present conception of the Hindûs, Yama is ruler and judge of departed souls in the other world, from whose hands, they receive the reward of their actions upon earth, it will be found highly offensive, that the tradition should make him guilty of an attempt at so gross a crime, and particularly one of so sensual a character. And when once this view is taken, it will seem doubly scandalous that the presentation

of such an occurrence should have been allowed place in a collection of hymns regarded as sacred and inspired.

This judgment, however, will undergo very essential modification when the true state of the case is understood. Colebrooke has here (a thing of race occurrence in his thorough and careful researches committed a serious error, and misapprehended not only the text of the hymn itself, but also the commentary upon it. It is not Yama who makes the attempt at seduction, but Yamî (not Yamunâ, as Colebrooke writes it); and her attempt is not to seduce him, but to persuade him to a marriage with her. And the offence which morality takes at the proceeding, assumes almost a comical appearance, when it becomes known who Yama and Yamî properly are. They are, as their names denote, twin brother and sister, and are the first human pair, the originators of the race! As the Hebrew conception closely connected the parents of mankind by making the woman formed from a portion of the body of the man, so by the Indian tradition they are placed in the relationship of twins: this thought is laid by the hymn in question in the mouth of Yamî herself, when she is made to say: "even in the womb the Creator made us for man and wife." A later time, to which these already fading myths were no longer objects of simple direct belief, took offence at the idea of such a union between brother and sister, even though it were only in the tradition of the origin of the human race. And from this moral scruple sprang this hymn, wherein the poet makes Yamî spend all her eloquence upon her brother to induce him to become her husband, but he firmly refuses to commit such a breach of propriety. She pleads with him that the Immortals themselves desire to see posterity from the solitary mortal whom they have created; that their union was ordained by the Creator; that it is not brotherly kindness in him to reject her. But he retorts that men call him guilty who approaches his sister; that the spies of the gods, never resting, go about to take note of all

that is done upon earth; that a time may indeed come when brother and sister shall do what their relationship forbids, but that he will not fulfill her wish.

The poet himself, far from giving his sanction to an act of sensuality, has not suffered even the ancient tradition of the parents of our race to escape his criticising morality. To satisfy the latter he has even rendered himself guilty of tastelessness and absurdity, since he will not allow that union to take place from which the whole human family is to spring. He has not troubled himself as to how the propagation of mankind was to be brought about, so as only the established law of marriage be sacredly maintained.

If a parallel be sought for this case in the province to which Dr. Mitchell would refer the student of antiquity, it may readily be found in the Mosaic history. The account in Genesis passes over in silence the circumstance that the children of Adam and Eve must have lived together in connections which we should now term incestuous. It bestows not a thought thereupon, but simply holds fast to the fact that the race is descended from a single pair. The Indian poet, author of our hymn, scrupled and speculated over the difficulty, and found an awkward solution of it, or, rather, hacked through the knot. It were as little reasonable to reckon this to his credit as to find fault with the Genesis for disregarding the point entirely. From this example, however, may be seen whither we should be led, were we to take the substance of ancient traditions for moral doctrine, and judge of them accordingly.

The case is not far otherwise with the second example quoted, yet here Colebrooke's own words might furnish means for arriving at a better understanding of it. He says: "The legend belonging to the second of these hymns [of the seventh book] is singular: Vasish*th*a, coming at night to the house of Varu*n*a (with the intention of sleeping there, say some, but as others affirm, with the design of stealing grain to appease his hunger

after a fast of three days), was assailed by the house-dog. He uttered this prayer, or incantation, to lay asleep the dog, who was barking at and attempting to bite him." Here then Vasish*t*ha, famed as a model of priestly wisdom and ability, is caught thieving; not indeed by the subject of the theft himself: his dog the saint knew how to bann; but at least by us of an after generation. And who was the sufferer? None other than Varu*n*a himself, the highest divinity of the ancient Indian faith, who dwells in everlasting light, surrounded by exalted spirits and the hosts of the blest. What can have been the grain that was to be found in his house? The answer to that question we leave to the commentators who have invented the awkward story. It is a part of the business of the learned expositors of these ancient hymns, to specify for such of them as contain any thing beside the customary prayers and praises, some particular occasion to which each shall have owed its origin, to produce some story which shall serve as introduction to the hymn itself. Such stories have been manufactured in great numbers (as also the biblical literature of the Old and New Testaments has called out an abundance of such productions), and so many of them as bear relation to the *R*ig-veda have been gathered into a separate book, the B*r*ihaddevatâ. From this work is quoted the story of Vasish*t*ha's irruption by night into Varu*n*a's house, whether for the purpose of seeking a lodging, or of satisfying his hunger: after a fast, as the story adds by way of palliation. In the mass of hymns ascribed by tradition to Vasish*t*ha, were found sundry verses for warding off the attack of a dog, and others (which, however, hardly had any original connexion with the former), for calling down sleep upon all the members of a household. An attempt must be made to account for the occurrence of these verses in a collection of sacred hymns, and accordingly a story was trumped together, whose effect has been, it appears, to fasten a spot upon the reputation of a sage who lived more than three thousand years ago, among the streams of the Panjâb.

After these instances, it will probably be deemed unnecessary that farther time be spent upon particulars.

If I exert myself to defend the productions of Indian antiquity against attacks of this character, which are manifestly unjust, I nevertheless shall not at all allow myself to be drawn into becoming their panegyrist. And least of all should I promote an insight into the condition of those early times, were I to assemble after the same fashion an array of instances which should show them to have been possessed of all manner of excellencies and virtues. Such single selected traits may here and there be of service, as striking illustrations of general observations, but can furnish no sure criterion of the moral value of a period or of a literature; even though, as in the cases cited, they relate to prominent individuals. For as a period of noble qualities and a literature of solid worth may exhibit many blemishes, and yet maintain their fundamental character uuobscured, so also the most unworthy age may be prolific of individual instances of moral excellence, which show off only the more brightly against the dark background.

If then we endeavor to gain, from the general impression made upon the reader by the productions of the earliest Indian period, a view of their moral and religious value, it will not indeed be without shadows, yet the light will prevail.

The shadows are the same as rest over all antiquity, and especially over periods so primitive as the one in question. Selfishness and, as its consequence, violence, are characteristics of the life both of individuals and of the community. Nations that are making the first advances in civilization win their position by struggles, by strife with their neighbors, by conflict with Nature. Whoever stands in their way is their enemy, their enemy for the simple reason that he is not of them, and lays claim to possessions, such as houses, cultivated land, pasturage, which it would be agreeable to them to call their own. The hymns of the Veda are full of prayers to the gods for the wealth of

others, of imprecations of misfortune upon those of other race; and later we find them trying to rid themselves of their adversaries by incantations. They covet earthly riches, and for its sake they serve the gods, paying them homage and offerings, in order to obtain from them in return still richer gifts, whether in the way of the blessings of fertility, or of booty to be won in battle. "If I, O Indra," says one of the bards, were master of such wealth as thou, I would be generous to him who praised me, but would bestow nothing upon the wicked: day by day would I give in abundance to him who paid me honor, be he who he might. We have no dearer relative than thou, were it a father even." (vii. 32, 18, 19.) But this selfish disregard of the rights of others, when the means of comfortable subsistence and animal enjoyments are in question, knows how to cover itself with a mantle of religion. For these strangers are despisers of the true faith; they on their part wish selfishly to keep all to themselves, and give the gods nothing: they are enemies of religion and of the gods, and ought to be as hateful to the latter as to their worshippers.

If the Greek styled all foreigners barbarians, and by this appellation expressed a certain degree of contempt for them, looking upon himself as alone in possession of true dignity and culture, it was his own manifold excellence, his own desert, upon which his pride was based. Not so with the Indian; although he too, as well as the Iranian, had from the earliest times made the same distinction between Arian and non-Arian as the Greek between Hellene and Barbarian. The Arian prided himself, not upon his superiority in respect to social culture, language, and the like—or this at least was not the main element in his self-complacency, for these were advantages which had by no means as yet arrived at full development and appreciation—but rather upon his religion: he boasted that he belonged to a nation who worshipped the true gods, and was by them guided and protected. The national pride of the

Greeks was but distantly connected with their religion; with the Arian the two were inseparably united.

He, then, who undertakes to estimate comparatively the morality and religion of antiquity, will be compelled to concede, that the spirit of selfish aggrandizement common to all cultivated nations of the olden time, rests with the Arians at least upon a religious basis; and farther, that they present no other form of an appreciation, an over-appreciation, of themselves than is to be found also among the people of the Old Testament.

If we turn our attention to domestic life, the government of the household, and relations between the sexes, we find occasion neither for special praise nor for special blame. The house is held sacred. The paternal authority is regarded as absolute. Polygamy is not unknown, but evidently of rare occurrence. The wife accompanies her husband to the altar, and so joins him in representing the household there; a later period excludes woman from all participation in sacred things. In sexual matters the ancient Indians do not indeed deserve the praise of continency which the great Roman historian bestows with admiration upon the Germans, but neither do they exhibit that enervating sensuality to which later, in a more southern clime, the nation became enslaved, and which still rests as a curse upon India. The conceptions and the language of antiquity on subjects which later generations have learned to cover up, are blunt and unceremonious; but there is no lustfulness in them: what is natural is simply looked at in a natural way, and the domain of modesty is not so far extended as at present. One vice, however, which the Indians share with their brethren who emigrated westward, the Germans, calls here for special mention: the passion, namely, for play, for dicing. References to it are numerous, as well as in the oldest hymns as in the later Epic poetry. Recognition of the viciousness of the practice is not however wanting, and the name of gamester is a term

of reproach. And, as if by way of warning example, a hymn has been admitted into the most important of the collections, the *R*ig-Veda, containing the complaint of a gambler, who bewails his unhappy passion, depicts its consequences, and confesses that in spite of the best resolutions he has not been able to resist the fatal temptation.

But we shall be best enabled to assign to the ancient Indians that place in the scale of moral culture to which they are entitled, by considering what were their fundamental ideas touching the laws of moral obligation, and the relation of man to the gods. In matters of social life it is not easy to pass sentence upon so remote an antiquity, since we know not the precise rule by which they are to be judged. When, however, the recognition of eternal truths is in point, differences of time and place, if civilization and culture, disappear, and the same laws are in force for the past as for the present.

And here the diverse conceptions of individual divinities are a matter of only secondary importance: under what external forces they are imagined, and how the powers and domains of Nature are shared among them—all this does not affect the grand central point of the relations between the human and the divine. Accordingly, it is seen in all polytheistic religions, that, so soon as thought reaches these innermost provinces of belief, most of the gods, who have hitherto maintained a rank nearly equal, are shaken, and are supplanted, either by a single highest god whose subordinates they become, or by an imperfect conception of a unity of the divine principle. The ancient Indian religion exhibits here a remarkable simplicity and depth. The laws of the moral are as eternal and unchangeable as those of the natural world. The same divine power has established the one and the other. This power is represented by a circle of divinities who may be most pertinently entitled the Gods of Heavenly Light. Human imagination was able to find no visible thing with which they could

be compared, saving the light. They are and are named the Spiritual. One of the old poets strives to give words to his conception of them by saying: "in them is to be discerned neither right nor left, neither before nor behind; they neither wink nor sleep; they penetrate all things: they see through both evil and good; every thing, even the most distant, is near to them; they abhor and punish guilt; sustain and support all that has life."

Of this circle of seven, the sacred number, one, Varuna, is highest in rank, representing them all, as it were, comprehending them all in his nature; and accordingly standing unquestionably at the head of all the gods: his name in Greek, in the form *Ouranos*, denotes the heaven itself. He therefore, in particular, is described as having fixed the laws by which the universe exists and moves, laws as immoveable as if founded on a rock. As he marked out the paths of the heavenly bodies, and gave to every creature its characteristic powers, so he bestowed upon man reason and will, and settled the bounds of the moral world, which may not be transgressed without detection and punishment.

In all religions it may be looked upon as a sign of a moral tendency, if stress be laid upon the omniscience of the divine power. If the will and intention of man are to be made account of, and actions estimated not merely according to their results, the divinity must necessarily possess the attribute of omniscience, in order that he may direct the moral world, and judge according to desert. And this attribute is given to Varuna in full measure, and in all distinctness. He is cognizant of all that takes place, between heaven and earth, and beyond their boundaries: the winks of men's eyes are all numbered by him; when two converse in secret together, he is the third who knows all they say (Atharva, iv. 16); he marks the path of the wind, the flight of the bird; past and future are present to his knowledge. In order to picture this omniscience

to the conception, the ancient poets surround him with a train of spirits, who at his command, never resting, never erring, watch the deeds of mortals.

A religion which thus makes its chief divinity look into the secret recesses of the human heart—how could it fail to recognize the nature and the guilt of sin? Sin is a consequence of human weakness as well as of human wickedness, yet, as sin, it is no less punishable in the one case than in the other; and forgiveness is likewise besought of Varuna for sins that have been committed in unconsciousness. And more than once we find in these ancient prayers repentant confessions of fault, combined with supplications for its pardon, expressed in the language of simple faith. The guilt of sin is felt as a galling chain, and release from its captivity besought; here as elsewhere, human power can accomplish nothing without divine aid: for of himself man is not master even of the opening and closing of his eyes.

The punishments which await the transgressor are—beside the loss of earthly fortune—sickness and death, and, finally, exclusion from eternal happiness: these are the fetters with which the wicked are bound; powers against which all struggles are vain, which they cannot escape, though they fly to the outermost limits of creation. It is indeed no clearly stated tenet of this religion, that death is the wages of sin in the sense that mortals die simply in consequence of their guilt, and, were it not for the latter, would live forever; yet the idea is often very nearly approached. Immortality is the free gift of divine grace to man.

And here, in order to complete our view of the ancient Indian ideas of a moral government, we must take into account their belief respecting a future state.

According to the most ancient custom, the lifeless body is either given to the fire to consume, or committed to the motherly keeping of Earth, who is invoked to receive him graciously,

to wrap him up as a mother wraps her child in her garment, to lie lightly upon him. Her bosom, however, is not the last resting place of the departed: he is himself addressed: "Go forth, go forth, on the ancient paths which our fathers in old times have trod; the two rulers in blissful content, Yama, and god Varuṇa, shalt thou behold." The latter of these two heavenly ones whose sight is promised to the deceased, we already know; the other, Yama, is the proper chief of departed spirits. In him we find the fine combination of ideas, that the first man, the originator of the race here on earth, is also the beginner and head of humanity renewed in another world. He is therefore termed the Assembler of men. The first born of them that slept is become the prince of all the new awakened; as is expressly said in a certain hymn: Yama hath first found us a place, a home which is not to be taken from us: whither our fathers of old departed, thither goeth also the way of their posterity."

The body which the deceased is to wear in his other existence, cannot be the same one which the flames have consumed, or the earth covered up: it may not even be one like it, for he is to dwell henceforth in the company of divine spirits, and must be clothed like these to be able to claim a right among them. And the ancient Indian religion, in entire harmony with its conception of the highest gods, and in the feeling of an affinity between the human and the divine spirit, here plainly declares that the deceased, laying off all imperfections, is endowed by the divine hand with a shining spiritual body. Its nature is denoted by the same word used to express the essence of the highest divinities above spoken of; a word that unites in itself the ideas of lifeful and spiritual.

The place where these glorified ones are to live, is heaven. In order to show that not merely an outer court of the divine dwellings is set apart for them, the highest heaven, the midst or innermost part of heaven, is expressly spoken of as their

seat. This is their place of rest; and its divine splendor is not disfigured by any specification of particular beauties or enjoyments, such as those with which other religions have been wont to adorn the mansions of the blest. There they live immortal, with Yama their chief, and the Fathers who have preceded them thither. There they are happy: the language used to describe their condition is the same with which is denoted the most exalted felicity. A hymn paints this condition in the following words:—

Where glory never-fading is—where is the world of heavenly light,
The world of immortality—the everlasting—set me there!
Where Yama reigns, Vivasvat's son—where is the inmost sphere of heaven,
Where those abounding waters flow—O make me but immortal there!
Where there is freedom unrestrained—there in the triple vault of heaven,
Where worlds of brightest glory are—O make me but immortal there!
Where pleasures and enjoyments are—where raptures and abiding bliss,
Where all desires are satisfied—O make me but immortal there!

To the question which the theologian, or rather the mystic, ever longs to solve, and longs in vain, since it lies beyond the reach of his conceptions; the question respecting which our own sacred writings maintain silence: what, namely, shall be the employment of the blest, in what sphere their activity shall expend itself—to this question ancient Hindû wisdom sought no answer. The certainty of happiness was enough for it.

An employment, indeed, it has found for them, but it is one which, so to speak, lies this side of their felicity. As the gods come to men's sacrifices to receive their prayers, praise, and offerings, so also come with them the departed—the Fathers, as they are customarily called—in the form of invisible spirits, who float about those who still remain behind on earth, and bless and protect them; for in their glorified condition they have received divine powers.

One important defect seems to exhibit itself here: that distinct conceptions are wanting as to the relation in which

the morally depraved stand to this condition of happiness, and to the other world in general. Not that I regard it as a fault that no state of eternal misery is set off against this felicity, or deem a series of gradations of happiness a valuable addition to a system of doctrine: such attempts at individualization are rather, wherever they occur, pious fancies; still, it remains a defect, that no definite information is given as to what future awaits those who die in their iniquity, who have not believed in the gods, but rather arrayed themselves in hostility against them and their worshippers.

A doctrine which on other points is so clear, could not possibly make the despisers of the gods partakers of their happiness. They would either have to be, by some miraculous agency, changed from bad to good, or that happiness would cease to be such. And the heavenly world is constantly entitled the world of the well-doing, of the pious. The reprobate, then, are assumed to be excluded from it. But what future is assigned to them?

Two possibilities here present themselves: the one, that after the death of the body the evil still live on for an indefinite time their evil life, in contrast to that of the blest in heaven; the other, that their individuality is extinguished by death.

I did for a time regard the former of these two suppositions as the only admissible one, believing that the departed souls of the wicked were converted into spirits of darkness, after the same manner as in the conceptions of the Shamans. This would assume that they joined the hosts of demons, who under the name of Rakshas and the like terrify men in the dark, and seek to disturb the service of the gods and the performance of good works, and against whose attacks the pious invoke the aid of the gods of light. Thus they would in another form still continue their former mode of action. I was led to regard this solution of the question as the only possible one, chiefly

by the consideration that the supposition of a continued existence of the good, and total extinction of the evil, would imply a difference in the principle of life which animated each, while yet both possess the same human nature.

Yet, at present, this reason seems to me rather correct in point of philosophy that accordant with the spirit of remote antiquity. In ancient times, the identity of human nature in all individuals of the race was not thought of: so much as that appears even in the distinction already mentioned as drawn by every cultivated nation between itself and the barbarians. The recognition of this identity makes its earliest appearance in Hebrew prophecy, shows itself later in Buddhism, and becomes complete in Christianity. We ought not therefore to be surprised, if we do not find this exalted thought among the ancient Indians, twelve or fifteen centuries before Christ.

Passages in the sacred writings, moreover, speak in favor of the second supposition, of the annihilation of the wicked at death. We read there that Varu*n*a, the supreme judge of the actions of men here and of their fate hereafter, thrusts those who displease him down into the depth. As their body into the grave, so they themselves sink into a dark abyss; and with that, doubtless, their being is at an end. Herewith accords, too, the already mentioned doctrine that immortality is a free gift from heaven. Whoever fails to receive it, ends his existence when his body dies. Of a hell this religion knows nothing, although the later Indians have imagined for themselves hell and its horrors, after the same manner as other nations.

These conceptions from the basis of the ancient Indian religion. The whole varied world of traditions and nyths which has come down to us, is, in comparison with these, something merely superficial, an animation of Nature and her powers, images from the ceremonies of worship, and the like, the work of a lively fancy. It was not in this picture-

world that the religious feeling found its full satisfaction. It is a serious error to believe that the mythology of a Nature-religion exhausts its whole religious contents. The images and traditions are indeed what strike the mind most strongly, form the theme of poets and historians, are pictured by art, and symbolized in the ceremonies of the altar and the temple; yet along with them, and behind them, still deeper thoughts stir the heart of the individual and of the nation. To discern and represent these is seldom attempted, and is no easy task. But it is one that repays the effort, for here, at all periods and among all nations, is brought to light what is purely human, and what we are better able to estimate than the pictorial language of myths, which is conditioned by such various circumstances of time and place.

Such a centre of general religious thought and feeling is presented in the ancient Indian doctrine of the relation of the pious to the gods, of which the chief features are above presented. the same conception forms also the ground-work of the Iranian religion, the record of which has come down to us in the Zendavesta, and may—in a less developed form, indeed—have been common to all the tribes of the great Indo-European family, until partially obliterated by distant emigration, intercourse with other nations, and changes in manners and habits of life.

No one will hesitate to all to these conceptions a positive moral value, and to esteem a literature in which such ideas are expressed. But the Indian nation has not abode by them. It has, indeed, carefully treasured up, and at all times regarded as sacred, the productions of its earliest period; but it has attached the main importance to worthless supplement, and lost from sight and from knowledge the truly valuable portion. Only once in the whole long course of its later history has it enjoyed a period worthy of being compared with that primitive one: during the first ages, namely, of Buddhism. Those, then,

who are called to labor in the wide field of Indian missions may confidently hold up before the people its own antiquity as a model: not in order that it progress no farther than that; but that it may see how its ancestors, in their simplicity, were nearer the purity of truth than their descendants, in their self-satisfied arrogance; and how the former cherished none of those follies and errors in which they themselves are apparently hoping to find their salvation for now and hereafter.

The student of antiquity, farther, experiences a peculiar satisfaction in the investigation of this era, for the very reason that the moral value of the subject of his studies is not a matter of indifference to him. The charm of primitiveness which surrounds these ancient hymns in a yet higher degree than the immortal poems of Homer, is united with a nobility of diction, a pure and fresh earnestness of thought, which are no longer to be met with in the later literary productions of India. He finds the high spiritual endowments which belong of right to the Indo-European family of nations, and which have placed it foremost in the world's history, still fresh and vigorous in the most eastern branch of that family, and not yet disfigured by the manifold excrescences of peculiar views and customs, which have so deformed the later Indian people, that, were it not for their language, the European would scarcely recognize them for his own kindred.

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