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This slender volume contains two valuable papers of the great savant William Dwight Whitney (1827-1894). Apart from his important contributions in different branches of Sanskrit and allied studies, Whitney is renowned for his voluminous translation of the *Atharva-Veda Saṁhitā* (2 vols.) which was later edited by his equally celebrated pupil and successor, Charles Rockwell Lanman in 1905. These two papers, first published in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (Vols. IV and III respectively), are now offered to scholars in the field of Vedic researches.

We have advisedly retained the original text with some of its quaint spelling and transliteration of proper names and Sanskrit words save the sibilants in current use and a Greek word into Roman alphabet due to typographical difficulties.

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ON THE
HISTORY OF THE VEDIC TEXTS

IN the present condition of the Indian Vedas, as laid before us by the native manuscripts, or by the editions which Western erudition and industry are putting forth upon their authority, there is much to excite admiration and suggest inquiry. There is the general archæological interest attaching to records of the past of so remote an antiquity, of so primitive a type, and preserved to us in an extent so considerable. No other nation has placed in our hands so ample a literary representation of an equally distant epoch of its mental development. And this is the more remarkable, as the Indian mind is not one to which we can attribute an inclination to store up historical records. A people that, amid the abundance of its literary productions of every other class, has never originated anything which deserves the name of history, that has erected no national monuments, has yet, as if with a genuine scientific zeal, saved to its latest times a mass of material for the investigation of its earliest, compared with which the fragmentary recollections, traditions and myths, of most other ancient nations, appear but poor and scanty. And the wonder awakened by this circumstance is not lessened by a view of the external form and state in which they are presented to us. In spite of the immense period, more than two thousand years, which has elapsed since their commitment to writing, the antiquity of their dialect (partially obsolete even at the first, and growing ever more and more out of knowledge), and the usual unconscientious and uncritical carelessness of Indian transcribers and scholars, their text exists in a state of purity almost absolute, offering hardly a corruption or various reading to perplex their modern student. Here then are questions interesting both to the antiquarian and the philologist. What are the motives which have prompted to so remarkable a conservation, and what the means by which it has been rendered practicable, in the midst of so many opposing influences? Let us seek to find an answer to these and other kindred inquiries by tracing out in a general way the history of the Vedic texts, both before and after their compilation.

The materials from which such a history is to be constructed are for the most part only data derivable from the texts themselves, their form and arrangement as collections, and their mutual relations, and general considerations drawn from our knowledge of Indian antiquity. Native tradition, except so far as it has preserved, with the hymns, the names of their authors, has but little that is valuable to say respecting the subject. Some few notices are scattered through the mass of the theological literature, which may one day, when gathered and collated, cast some light upon it, but at present they are too obscure to be trusted. To us, however, in our present inquiry, names of individuals, or even names of places, are matters of but secondary importance. It concerns us rather to follow out the history in its more general features, and to recognize the spirit that has manifested itself in the succession of its events.

The general date and character of the Vedic records have been already explained in a previous communication to the Society,* and therefore need not be enlarged upon here. It was there made to appear that at the period more exclusively termed the Vedic, that represented by the earlier and larger portion of the hymns composing the Rig-Veda, the Indian race had as yet hardly made its way into India itself, was still struggling on the threshold of the country for its possession, a community of half-nomadic warriors, with deep religious feelings which found expressision in sacred song, but unlettered, and with little leisure or inclination for the peaceful pursuits of literature. A long interval must have elapsed, then, before these sacred lyrics were gathered and committed to writing. But they were by no means suffered meanwhile to fall into oblivion : the memory of the nation had seized them with a grasp which only grew firmer as they grew older. They sprang up as, in a sense, the free and natural expression of the devotional feelings cherished by the whole people toward the gods in whom it believed. Yet it was, of course, in certain individuals or families that the power of expression, the faculty of propitiating the divinities by acceptable address, chiefly

* See "On the main results of the later Vedic researches in Germany" by the present author.—S.P.B.

inhered. The hymns themselves contain evidences enough, direct and indirect, of the high value placed upon them, and of the estimation in which was held the power of their production, and those possessed of this power. And this reverential regard went on to increase rather than diminish, along with the gradual transition of the religion from a more spiritual to a more formal character. Instead of passing out of remembrance or becoming superseded, as their dialect fell into partial forgetfulness, and as both the popular and priestly creeds of after generations became ever farther removed from that which they represented, the respect which they commanded became a kind of superstitious reverence. Looked upon at first as the best accompaniment and recommendation of worship offered to the gods, they came to be held indispensable parts of worship, its only efficient medium : they identified themselves with the religion of the race as its expression, so that selections were made from them for the ordinary purposes of the ceremonial, and their phraseology became in a measure the natural language of discourse upon religious subjects : they were acknowledged as the groundwork of all theological and philosophical speculation : an inspired origin, and a supernatural virtue and efficacy were attributed to them, making their minutest details matters of essential importance, and to be preserved with jealous care. Meantime, also, the families in which they had originated, and who derived from them perhaps their first title to especial consideration, continuing still to retain by right of inheritance their peculiar custody and their employment in the services of religion, participated both in kind and degree in the augmented regard with which they were honored, and came by degrees to constitute a peculiar class, possessors of the inspired word, and privileged mediators between the divinities and their worshippers. And it could not but be their highest interest to preserve in unimpaired remembrance the sacred hymns which constituted so important a source of their influence and authority.

Such were the causes, of a religious or religio-superstitious, and not of a historic nature, which procured the careful and accurate conservation of the Vedic lyrics during the period of their oral transmission. But there arrived at last a time when

they were to be rescued from the charge of tradition alone, and given over into the more trusty keeping of written documents. At what precise point in the history of the Indian race this took place, it is not easy to determine. But it cannot have been earlier than at some time posterior to the transferral of Indian supremacy and culture from the plains of the Penjab to the great fertile valley of Hindustan. For it was not until after the new seats of the race had been fairly entered upon quiet possession of, external foes driven off, internal feuds pacificated, and the advantages of that rich country, which demanded so little labor to be expended in winning a sustenance from it, and left so much leisure for higher pursuits, had been enjoyed for a season, that an epoch of such literary activity as must be assumed to have preceded and accompanied the recording of the Vedic texts, can be supposed possible. During the interval had taken place the development of Brahmanism, at least in all its essential features ; the separation of the priestly caste, and the consolidation of its power. It was now the ruling class, foremost in authority, foremost also in culture and knowledge, representing the collected intellect of the nation. And it is not to be supposed that its members had been content to remain in inactive possession of their sacred hymns, recognizing them only as important sources of their power, to be retained and employed as its instruments. They regarded them likewise as their most valuable treasure, the inspired foundation of their faith, the germ of their religious and philosophic science ; and as such, the worthy objects of especial examination and study. The Brāhmaṇas, the second class of Vedic writings, are to us a sufficient evidence of the kind of systematic investigation to which the sacred texts, even before their compilation, had been subjected in the schools of the priesthood. When therefore the necessary time of preparation was past, and an era of active literary effort had been ushered in, the idea of placing upon record these precious relics of the past could not be long in suggesting itself to the minds of those who had them in custody. It was but a continuance in a new form of the same care which had already long handed them down from generation to generation : a next step forward in the series of labors which had been spent upon them from the beginning.

But at the time when the task of compilation was entered upon, the mass of material which it had to deal with was no longer precisely what it had been at the first. We have spoken as yet only of the hymns of a single period, the oldest. General analogies, and the great similarity of their style and language, justify us in assuming them to have been the production of a particular period, a time of special poetical inspiration; such an assumption, too, would materially aid in accounting for the extreme regard in which they so soon came to be held, as if by a generation that had itself lost the faculty of independent origination, and was reduced to cherish and to employ as its religious expression the legacy of a more highly-endowed age: and yet farther, it would explain why, although hymns are found included in the canon which exhibit a state of things comparatively very modern, most of the intermediate steps of development are but scantily, if at all, represented. The whole succeeding time, however, had not remained entirely unproductive. Partly, doubtless, the genuine spirit of poetry and religion which inspired the earliest singers, had maintained itself for a time in existence, and had not been dumb; partly the possession of the songs already composed had prompted to imitations of them, copying with more or less faithfulness their form and tone; and partly the new and less exalted spirit of the later time had found its own separate expression. Thus a considerable body of lyrics of another epoch had appended itself to those which the tradition had in the beginning undertaken to preserve. Their later and less sacred origin, however, would seem to have been in general distinctly recognized. They were not confounded with the well-attested productions of the ancient sages, but held apart by themselves, and variously regarded by different authorities as authentic and inspired, or the contrary.

It is moreover evident that so extensive a body of poetic matter as the Vedas taken together make up, could not remain long in the keeping of oral tradition without undergoing in some measure corruption and alteration. Especially considering that the language in which they were composed was gradually growing antiquated, its vocabulary passing out of use, its forms becoming

modified, it could not be that all the zealous care expended upon them would keep them quite free from verbal, or yet more extensive changes: their phraseology would become modernized; some passages especially removed from comprehension might become hopelessly distorted, or be consciously amended into greater intelligibility. The same matter would in different hands and under different circumstances be preserved with different degrees of fidelity: so, especial reverence for the sanctity of certain portions might keep them purer, or constant use in ceremonial service might stereotype more decidedly the passages thus employed. At the time of compilation, then, there would be in existence versions more or less at variance with one another of much of the material from which the compilation was to be made.

Examining now the different collections, with an eye to the relations in which they may appear to stand to the thus stated condition of the material which the tradition had handed down, we find in the first place that the main collection, the Ṛik, is plainly composed of heterogeneous matter. Its first seven books are of one character, arranged upon one plan, primarily according to their authors, secondarily according to the divinities to whom they are addressed: they may be deemed to comprise the oldest, most authentic and most sacred hymns; to have been held by the tradition as a complete and congruous whole; probably to have been first and separately assembled and arranged. The eighth and ninth books exhibit a different system of internal arrangement, or a want of any system; in many instances, too, the tradition is at fault respecting their authorship, and has to ascribe them to fictitious or mythical personages: some of them are given to authors whose collected hymns are contained in the previous books, and would hardly have been left out of their proper place there with the rest, if acknowledged as genuine by the same authority that compiled the latter. It might not be safe, however, to assert the existence of anything in their language or character which would prove them the product of another region or time. The tenth book resembles in respect to arrangement its two predecessors, and the ungenuine names are found

with still greater frequency among its alleged authors : but farther than that, it is full of the plainest evidences of a later origin, and doubtless includes many hymns of a time but little removed from that of the compilation itself. Even if, however, we are inclined to believe that the collection grew by degrees to its present bulk, we shall not be warranted in concluding that the whole body of hymns which it finally came to comprise were not in existence at the time when the first partial compilation was made. The intention was probably in every case to assemble all the hymns which the compilers were willing to accept as forming part of the sacred canon, and it was rather the canonical standard which was later, or by other hands altered so as to admit of including a wider range. Various circumstances, of place or person, may have operated to exclude from the collection hymns or passages which were fairly entitled to find place in it, and it is evident from the fragments found in the other Vedas of a character not unaccordant with that of the mass of the Rik, that the latter cannot lay claim to full completeness.

The Sāma and Yajus, in virtue of their character as liturgical collections, aim only at a secondary completeness ; at presenting all the passages used in a certain ceremony, or body of ceremonies. With respect to the mass of material from which they are extracted, they include and represent the whole body of hymns which the Rik in its present form contains. The Sāma, indeed, makes its selections in much the greater part from the material of the eighth and ninth books of the Rik, a fact which has yet to receive its full explanation. Both include a certain amount of matter which the great historical collection does not exhibit : the Sāma only a few verses ; the Yajus a much larger number, probably not far from half those of which it is composed : but many of these are of a class which would at any rate have been denied admission into the Rik. The Sāma shows no signs of having been increased from the extent in which it was originally compiled : the Yajus, however, has plainly received considerable augmentations : its connection with the religious ceremonials still in constant usage would naturally expose it to be altered in correspondence with any changes which the latter

might undergo. Both exhibit many readings varying more or less considerably from those of the Ṛik : the Sāma in particular, in which the versions are claimed to be in the main decidedly older and more original than those of the great historical collection : this would not prove it to be, as a collection, older than the latter, since its more antique character might be owing to the conserving influence of the ceremonial usage. To settle the question of priority between these two Vedas would be a difficult matter at present : both may safely be pronounced older than the Yajus. The deviations of the latter from the Ṛik text are neither so numerous nor so extensive as those of the Sāma, nor do they appear to possess any peculiar significancy.

The Atharva is, like the Ṛik, a historical and not a liturgical collection. Its first eighteen books, of which alone it was originally composed, are arranged upon a like system throughout : the length of the hymns, and not either their subject or their alleged authorship, being the guiding principle : those of about the same number of verses are combined together into books, and the books made up of the shorter hymns stand first in order. A sixth of the mass, however, is not metrical, but consists of longer or shorter prose pieces, nearly akin in point of language and style with passages of the Brāhmaṇas. Of the remainder, or metrical portion, about one-sixth is also found among the hymns of the Ṛik, and mostly in the tenth book of the latter ; the rest is peculiar to the Atharva. Respecting their authorship the tradition has no information of value to give : they are with few exceptions attributed to mythical personages. The greater portion of them are plainly shown, both by their language and internal character, to be of much later date than the general contents of the other historic Veda. and even than its tenth book, with which they yet stand nearly connected in import and in origin. The condition of the text also in those passages found likewise in the Ṛik, points as distinctly to a more recent period as that of their collection. This, however, would not necessarily imply that the main body of the Atharva hymns were not already in existence when the compilation of the Ṛik took place. Their character would be ground enough for their rejection and ex-

clusion from the canon, until other and less scrupulous hands were found to undertake their separate gathering into an independent collection. The nineteenth book is a kind of supplement to the preceding ones, and is made up of matter of a like nature which had either been left out when they were compiled, or had been since produced. The twentieth and last book is a liturgical selection of passages from the hymns of the Ṛik, and it is not easy to see how it should have become appended to the Atharva as a portion of its text.

But while the four collections, when compared with one another, thus exhibit differences of reading in the portions common to two or more of them, are none, it may be enquired, to be found within the spheres of the individual collections? At the compilation of each there must have been a choice made by the compilers from among the different readings presented by the tradition: was the task performed in each case by such paramount authority that the text as established by it found universal reception, no new versions being set up in opposition to it? We read much of Śākhās, "schools," of the different Vedas: how far had they the same original text, differing only in their treatment and interpretation of it, and how far had they independent texts also? These are questions which in the present state of our knowledge can be but partially answered. With reference to the Ṛik, Sāma and Atharva, although we have direct or indirect acquaintance with the texts of more than one school of each, we do not find that they differed from one another in respect to readings, but only as one accepted as a part of the canon some portion rejected by another. Nor among all the innumerable quotations from these texts to be found in the grammatical, exegetical and ceremonial works hitherto investigated have there been pointed out any deviations from the readings offered by the manuscripts of the present time. With the Yajus the case is very different: under that name are included two texts, the White Yajus and the Black, considerably varying from one another in contents, arrangement, and readings; and of each of these more than one version is preserved, with less striking, but still important, differences. Any explanation of this so

remarkable dissimilarity between the Yajus and the other Vedas we must leave at present unattempted.

Having thus taken a view of the general circumstances attending the compilation of the Vedic texts, we now come to consider the particular manner in which the act of their commitment to writing was performed. We know, indeed, but very little of the history of alphabets and the art of writing in India, but in the absence of any special evidence to the contrary we may assume that these texts were placed at the first in nearly the external condition in which they now lie before us : that the alphabet made use of was an ancient form of the Devanāgarī, essentially coincident with that of the present day, and that their orthographic form was the one which they still wear. At any rate, neither of the one nor the other will have been devised for their express benefit. For although the system of sounds of the spoken Vedic was not so different from that of the Sanskrit that they should not both have been written accurately with the same characters, it was otherwise with the orthographic form : that was peculiarly Sanskrit and did not in all respects suit the Vedic texts, which accordingly had to undergo some degree of violence to be forced into it. It is well known, namely, with what extreme care the Sanskrit avoids the hiatus, or juxtaposition of two vowels. Except in one or two cases, where a consonant has fallen out between them, such a concurrence is never permitted : either the one or the other of them is dropped, or the former is converted into a semivowel, or the two are coalesced into one. The Vedic language, however, as the metre of the hymns proves beyond question, had to the very last no such dread of the hiatus, but allowed it with the utmost frequency as well in the interior of words as between two words : all the rules by which the Sanskrit avoids it are incessantly disregarded : their observance may be said even to constitute the exception, to have been simply admissible as a metrical expedient. And it is a circumstance very characteristic of the period at which the hymns must have been written down, that in the process all the rules of the later Sanskrit in respect to the hiatus are strictly followed : they are accordingly not written as they were spoken

and are to be read : what is set down as one syllable is frequently to be taken apart into two, three, or possibly even four. Apart from this, which may be regarded as in some measure also required by the character of the alphabet made use of, it is probable that the phonetic peculiarities of the Vedic language are faithfully recorded in the written texts : they exhibit at any rate many special usages, or violations of the rules of the classic language. And the nature and degree of these variations, as appearing in different texts, or portions of texts, are not without value as indications of comparative age or mutual relationship of the portions in question.

The texts thus recorded were then farther provided with a designation of the accentuation. This, although it in fact does no more than complete to the eye the representation of the spoken language, yet merits being made mention of as a special contribution of Indian scholarship to the exactness and integrity of the Vedic texts, since it was not a usual practice; saving these collections and a single Vedic work of the second rank, the Śatapaṭha Brāhmaṇa, no Indian text has its accent noted. It is a matter of high congratulation to us that the notation of it was added, not only because we have thus preserved to us the whole system of Indian accent in a much more satisfactory and distinct manner than if it could only have been constructed from the rules of the native grammar, but also because the accent is an aid of no small importance to the understanding of the text. For many forms coincident in orthography are, as in Greek, to be distinguished from one another by their different accent; farther, the accentuation of sundry words in a sentence depends upon the character of the sentence and the relations of its parts, and is accordingly indicative of those relations; and again, what is perhaps of most consequence, the nature of many compound or derivative words may be deduced from the tone given them, since the latter is not confined in point of place, nor otherwise euphonically variable, but rests on the syllable to which the general laws of formation assign it.

But texts, even when thus carefully committed to writing,

and though defended by the extreme reverence with which their every word and letter was regarded by the Brahmans, as inspired by the highest divinity, were by no means insured against gradual corruption in the lapse of generations. Some farther expedient was needed to place their integrity out of danger. And this was found in the construction of a new text, or rather the re-writing of the text already fixed into a new form, which in all probability followed not long after. This was not a work undertaken for the sole and express purpose of guarding the sacred canon from corruption; its special end was rather exegetical; but, taken in conjunction with other means to be explained later, it at any rate effectually secured also the former object. As already remarked, we are not to suppose the commitment to paper of the hymns to have been the absolute commencement of anything like a scientific treatment of them. Theological and philosophical speculation had been busying itself with their interpretation, and doubtless in some degree also philological and grammatical study with their form. And this latter class of investigations in particular could not but receive a new impulse, and advance with rapidity, when a written text was placed before it as the basis of study. Partaking of the etymologizing and analytic character which has always distinguished the Indian grammatical science, it set itself to separate the continuous and in part self-obscuring flow of speech into its constituent parts, the individual words. And its results were embodied in the production of an analyzed text (the so-called *pada-pāṭha*, "word-text," in contradistinction to the ordinary *sanhitā-pāṭha*, "combination-text"). In this each part of speech, member of the sentence, is set apart and presented in its own proper form, uninfluenced euphonically by the other words with which it stands in connection. But farther yet than this was the process of dissection carried: the words themselves were divided into their component parts; an analysis clear up to the original root, indeed, was not attempted, but compounds were separated into their composing members, and the main secondary suffixes, and in some cases also the case-endings, were severed from the themes to which they were appended. Moreover, such Vedic peculiarities of orthography as were deemed to be mere irregularities

occasioned by metrical or other similar causes, were rejected, and the words affected by them reduced to their normal form. This word-text rests upon the ordinary text as its absolute authority, never attempting to alter or amend one of its readings. It is simply the best effort which Indian scholarship was at that period capable of to take apart and present in its elements the language of the sacred hymns. It has for us, then, only a secondary authority, and we are at liberty to reject its teachings when we deem them clearly erroneous : as for instance, to amend an etymology asserted by the division of a word regarded as compound, or even to separate a clause otherwise into its component words. Yet, in the case of the Rik especially, they who fixed the new text were still so near to the time of the hymns themselves, had received from tradition so correct an understanding of them, and performed their task with such skill and care, that it constitutes for us an authority of very considerable weight, from which it will be necessary only in rare instances decidedly to dissent.

It would evidently be possible from an examination of this analyzed text alone to derive a tolerably correct general view of the state of grammatical science at the time of its fixation. We are not left to this source alone, however, for information upon that point, for contemporaneously with, or not long after, the setting up of the word-texts, were got together little grammatical treatises having for their subject the Vedic texts. These are the so-called Prātiśākhyas ; four such works are already known, belonging to the Rik, the Atharva, and the two divisions of the Yajus respectively : for the Sāma none is yet found, but that it exists, or has existed, can scarcely be doubted. It is necessary to guard against a misconception of the true character of these little works, liable to be derived from their title of Vedic grammars, and their description as the earliest extant records of Indian grammatical science. They do not at all take the whole phenomena of the Vedic language for their subject, and profess to furnish such an exhausting account of them as Pāṇini of the classical Sanskrit ; neither do they assume the science of Sanskrit grammar, and undertake to display the peculiarities of the older

dialect of the hymns as compared with it; nor are they the first productions of a science that is in its infancy, working its way through the various departments of grammatical inquiry in connection with certain texts, and recording its imperfect results: they are rather the offspring of a system fully developed in all its parts (as is shown by the grammatical phraseology employed by them, which is essentially the same that has remained in use through all after time), but confining itself here to the solution of a particular question. They base themselves primarily upon the existence, side by side, of the two parallel texts, and aim to give such an account of the difference between them that the one shall be convertible into the other. Or to speak more accurately, each supposes the existence in its analyzed state of the matter of the collection to which it attaches itself, and gives the system of rules and exceptions by which this is to be reduced to the form of a combined and continuous text. Their department, then, is that of phonetics and euphony, of external form: and they adhere strictly to it: the whole subject of inflection, whether by declension or conjugation, and those of word-formation and syntax, are left quite out of sight in them. They do not indeed confine themselves to indispensable matter only, but enlarge somewhat upon the subjects which come under their survey: so more than one, perhaps all, of them, give an analysis and description of the sounds of the spoken alphabet, an account of the accents, definitions of grammatical terms, and the like; the one belonging to the Rik has also an interesting chapter on the general subject of the proper reading and pronunciation of the Vedic language, and devotes some attention to prosody, detailing and describing the metres made use of in its Veda: yet all this does not remove them from the department to which they belong, or change their true character and intent. They are still works which came into being in connection with the setting up of the word-texts of the Vedas, and which converted the latter, from instruments more especially of exegesis, into a complete and efficient apparatus for securing the preservation of textual purity. The two taken together, on the one hand the word-text, which by its nature was clearer, distincter, and less liable to corruption than the ordinary one, and which, maintain-

ing an independent existence by the side of the latter, was a constant check upon its correctness, itself also in turn checked by it; and on the other hand the Prātiśākhya grammar, which precisely established the relation between the two, both in its general rules and in its exceptional irregularities—these two together are the external aids by which the scrupulous care of the Brahmans has been enabled to maintain the sacred texts throughout their whole history so free from corruptions and discrepancies of manuscripts. They are not, however, the only ones which native ingenuity devised for the purpose. A third form of text was originated with the express design of putting the canon beyond the reach of variation: it was called "step-text" (*krama-pāṭha*), and combined in itself both the other form presenting each word now in its independent and now in its combined state: as its name denotes, it went through the text step by step, attaining its object by successive repetitions of small portions. There were several modifications of it; the simplest was that which proceeded by steps of one word, but appending to each in turn its successor in the sentence, thus showing alternately its end and its beginning in the uncombined state. Rules for the formation of such texts are to be found in some, if not in all, of the Prātiśākhyas, and they had likewise their own special treatises. But manuscripts so written are very rare, and it would not appear that this expedient had ever been made sufficient use of to render it a very important auxiliary in the work of conserving the texts.

One other subordinate aid in this work deserves to be at least alluded to: a class of writings termed Anukramaṇī, which gave in succession for every hymn of the collections to which they attached themselves, its author, the divinity to whom it was addressed, the number of its verses, and the metre of each: they were accordingly of service to preserve the division, detect interpolations, and prevent corruptions of such extent as would produce a change of metre.

This closes the account of the scientific labors of the Indians having as their direct object the preservation in purity of their

sacred canon. The same end was indirectly more or less contributed to by the whole remaining mass of Vedic literature, with its innumerable citations of passages and expositions of their form, meaning, or application, ending finally in the gigantic commentaries, which with their thorough and detailed treatment, grammatical and exegetical, of the whole texts, drawing into themselves the results of the labors of generations of investigators, worthily closed off the history of a philology which in many respects may fairly be pronounced without a parallel in the world.

ON THE MAIN RESULTS OF THE LATER VEDIC RESEARCHES IN GERMANY

It is a truth now well established, that the Vedas furnish the only sure foundation on which a knowledge of ancient and modern India can be built up. They are therefore at present engrossing the larger share of the attention of those who pursue this branch of Oriental study. Only recently, however, has their paramount importance been fully recognized: it was by slow degrees that they made their way up to the consideration in which they are now held. Once it was questioned whether any such books as the Vedas really existed, or whether, if they did exist, the jealous care of the Brahmans would ever allow them to be laid open to European eyes. This doubt dispelled, they were first introduced to the near acquaintance of scholars in the West by Colebrooke. His famous Essay on the Vedas appeared in the Asiatic Researches for 1805 (vol. viii.), and, owing to his very extensive library of manuscripts, and that rare command of the language which he possessed, and which enabled him to make a more or less thorough examination of nearly all of them, it presented such a general view of the whole body of Vedic literature as has not even yet been superseded. His comprehension of the subject, however, was in some respects essentially defective. He was unable to classify properly the great mass of writings which he had before him; to hold distinctly apart, and view in their true mutual relation, the four original texts and the liturgical and other works which had grouped themselves about them; and having looked at the contents of the former through the distorting medium of the native interpretation, he had failed to perceive what striking results, for every department of Indian antiquity, they were in a condition to furnish. Accordingly, his paper, instead of winding up with an exhortation to pursue diligently the path he had pointed out, and a promise of the abundant fruit to be gained by the conquest of the many difficulties that lay in the way, closed with the rather discouraging remark that the Vedas contained much that was interesting, and were well worthy the occasional attention of the Oriental student, but that their mass and the obscure dialect in which they were composed would probably long prevent the mastery of their

contents. This prophecy was doubtless in some measure the cause of its own fulfillment : at any rate, many years did elapse before the next step was taken ; and this time it was a German, Friedrich Rosen, Professor in the London University, who laid his hand anew to the work : his access to the great collections of Sanskrit manuscripts deposited in London had given him opportunity to learn the true value of the Vedas, and to perceive the high necessity of laying them open to the examination of European science. His Rig-Vedæ Specimen saw the light in 1830, and was followed, eight years later, by the publication of the first Ashṭaka, or eighth, of the same Veda : the Sanskrit text, accompanied by a Latin translation and notes ; the latter incomplete, for he who should have finished them was already in his grave ; a fatal interruption to the progress of this study, which had been recommenced so promisingly. For there was no one to take up again the thread where he had dropped it ; and so another intermission of some years followed, during which the material already made public was elaborated more by the linguists than by the students of Indian antiquity : for the latter, it was still too much a fragment to be able to afford any very satisfactory results. The next publication of importance was Prof. Roth's Contributions to the History and Literature of the Veda, and appeared in 1846. He had spent some time at the French and English libraries, in a thorough examination, particularly, of the principal Veda, the Ṛik ; and this little work of his, with other similar essays which accompanied or followed it, gave perhaps the most powerful impulse to that movement which has since carried all Sanskritists irresistibly to the study of the Vedas. About this time, too, a valuable collection of manuscripts had been purchased for the Royal Library in Berlin, and with the material thus placed within the easier reach of German science and industry, the work went on more rapidly. Dr. Weber's Vājasaneyi-Sanhitæ Specimen appeared in 1845, soon followed by the commencement of an edition of the text of that Veda (the White Yajus), which has just now reached its completion. In 1848, Benfey published the Sāma-Veda, entire, with translation and glossary. A new edition of the Ṛik, too, with accented text and the native commentary, is now in progress

at London ; but many years must elapse before the whole text of this most important of the Vedas can be laid before us. The Atharva-Veda, the most comprehensive and valuable of the four collections, next after the Rik, lies still buried in the manuscripts, nor is there any immediate prospect of its publication. The whole study, then, being still so new, its material in so small part, and that so recently, made public, it is only those who having long had access to libraries of manuscripts have devoted to the subject their special attention, who can speak with authority, and from the results of original investigations, upon matters connected with the Vedas. To this, of course, I can lay no claim ; the secondary advantage, however, of being placed under the personal instruction of persons thus qualified, I have enjoyed, having been fortunate enough to hear, during the past year and a half, the lectures of Prof, Roth in Tuebingen, and of Dr. Weber in Berlin ; scholars who, each in his own department of Vedic research, are, to say the least, not surpassed in Europe. To them will be due whatever the following paper may contain of interest or value ; and I desire to make, at the outset, this general expression of my indebtedness to them, in lieu of particular acknowledgments from time to time in the course of the essay ; without, however, at the same time rendering them accountable for what errors and imperfections may be found in the latter : these will be due to, and I trust partially excused by, the impossibility of gaining, in so short a period, full command of so great a subject. Completeness, indeed, in any respect, is not pretended to here : it is sought only to give such a general statement of the main results of the later Vedic researches in Germany, as shall serve to introduce the subject to those to whom it may be unknown, and awaken, if possible, in some measure, that interest for it to which it is so justly entitled.

It will be in order first to name and describe the writings which are to be understood by the appellation "Veda," in the course of this paper. The word is one of varied application. Its original signification is simply "knowledge, science." It is then made to denote the whole body of the Hindū sacred literature, as containing eminently *the* science : as teaching that

knowledge which, of all others, is best worth acquiring. This is not the sense in which it will be now employed. A discussion of this immense body of literary records, which extends itself over the whole religious and philosophical history of the Hindū people, is not what is here called for. We shall concern ourselves with but a single department of it. It is, namely, by the Indians themselves, divided into two grand portions, *mantra* and *brāhmaṇa* (which words we may render, though not literally, by the terms "worship" and "theology") ; and this division, as is not always the case with one of native origin, is in fact an essential one, separating two widely different classes of writings, which stand related to one another as canonized text on the one hand, and canonized explication, dogmatical, exegetical, historical, prescriptive, on the other ; which, in the main, are widely removed in time, and represent two distinct periods of religious development ; and of which the one is in verse, the other in prose. The second, *brāhmaṇa,* is made up of the various single works which also bear the name of *brāhmaṇa* (as the Aitareya and Kaushītaki Brāhmaṇas, which attach themselves to the Rig-Veda ; the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, belonging to the Yajus, etc.) ; and other kindred writings, such as the Āraṇyakas, works prepared for the edification of those who had withdrawn themselves into the forest for seclusion and meditation, and Upanishads, lesser theological treatises. The first portion, *mantra,* consists of the four works commonly known as Ṛig-Veda, Sāma-Veda, Yajur-Veda, Atharva-Veda, and to these alone, the Vedas, in contradistinction to the Veda, will our attention at present be directed. They form together a peculiar class of writings, standing at the head of the whole body of Indian literature, agreeing with one another in the grand external characteristics of form and language, and in the general nature of their contents, and even all of them composed, in part, of the same matter ; in other respects, such as internal arrangement, date and object of collection, and use in the ceremonial of the Indian religion, of a widely different character. Those features which are common to them all will naturally be the first to be illustrated.

The general form of the Vedas is that of lyrical poetry : they contain the songs in which the first ancestors of the Hindū

people, at the very dawn of their existence as a separate nation, while they were still only on the threshold of the great country which they were afterwards to fill with their civilization, praised the gods, extolled heroic deeds, and sang of other matters which kindled their poetical fervor. This of itself were enough to attach a high and universal interest to these books, that as, in point of time also, they are probably the most ancient existing literary records of our race, so, at any rate in the progression of literary development, they are beyond dispute the earliest we possess : the most complete representation which has been preserved to modern times of that primitive lyrical epoch which theory assumes as the earliest in the literary history of every people. The mass as it lies before us is almost exclusively of a religious character ; this may have its ground partly in the end for which the collections were afterward made, but is probably in far higher degree due to the character of the people itself, which thus shows itself to have been at the beginning what it continued to be throughout its whole history, an essentially religious one : for no great people, surely, ever presented the spectacle of a development more predominantly religious ; none ever grounded its whole fabric of social and political life more absolutely on a religious basis ; none ever meditated more deeply and exclusively on things supernatural; none ever rose, on the one hand, higher into the airy regions of a purely speculative creed, or sunk, on the other, deeper into degrading superstitions, the two extremes to which such a tendency naturally leads. Hymns of a very different character are not entirely wanting, and this might be taken as an indication that, had they been more numerous, more would have been preserved to us : such, however, form but rare exceptions in the great body of religious poetry. Even passages which afford historical or geographical data, are infrequent, and notwithstanding the great mass of the text, the harvest of such information to be gleaned from it is but a scanty one. The songs are for the most part simple invocations and extollings of the divinity to which each is addressed : the character of the Vedic religion is too little mythical to afford opportunity for extensive variations of the theme which each god suggests, and high flights of pure poetical fancy are of uncommon occurrence ;

the attributes of the divinity are recounted ; honorific epithets in profusion are heaped upon him ; the devotion and service of his worshipper are plead, and blessings of all kinds besought in return ; former kindnesses bestowed on ancestors, or friends, or the heroes of the olden time, are mentioned, and confidence expressed that favors not inferior will still be granted to the righteous. Something of monotony, of course, cannot well be avoided, and proper poetical interest of the highest order is not to be sought here. The metrical form of these lyrics is of the simplest character. Nearly all the numerous metres are variations of but a single movement, the iambic, differing from one another either in respect to the number of feet which go to make up a hemistich, and the number of the latter which compose a verse, or in the presence or absence of an added syllable which gives each hemistich a trochaic close. But farther than this, the laws regulating the succession of long and short syllables within the limits of the hemistich, are in general any thing but strict : all that is aimed at seems to be to give the whole a kind of rythmical flow, or general metrical movement, on which the four last syllables shall stamp the peculiar character : their quantity is much more definitely established, yet even among them exceptional irregularities are by no means rare.

The language of the Vedas is an older dialect, varying very considerably, both in its grammatical and lexical character, from the classical Sanskrit. Its grammatical peculiarities run through all departments : euphonic rules, word-formation and composition, declension, conjugation, syntax. Without entering into any specification of them, which would extended this paper beyond its proper limits, it will be enough to say here that they are partly such as characterize an older language, consisting in a greater originality of forms and the like, and partly such as characterize a language which is still in the bloom and vigor of life, its freedom untrammelled by other rules than those of common usage. and which has not, like the Sanskrit, passed into oblivion as a native spoken dialect, become merely a conventional medium of communication among the learned, been forced, as it were, into a mould of regularity by long and exhausting gram-

matical treatment, and received a development which is in some respects foreign and unnatural. The dissimilarity existing between the two, in respect to the stock of words of which each is made up, is, to say the least, not less marked. Not single words alone, but whole classes of derivations, and roots, with the families that are formed from them, which the Veda exhibits in frequent and familiar use, are wholly wanting, or have left but faint traces, in the classical dialect; and this to such an extent as seems to demand, if the two be actually related to one another directly as mother and daughter, a longer interval between them than we should be inclined to assume, from the character and degree of the grammatical, and more especially the phonetic, differences. The history of the Hindū dialects and their mutual relations, however, is as yet far from being satisfactorily traced out, and it is not worth while to risk here any hasty conclusions: at any rate, the value of the Vedic dialect, for clearing up this history and establishing the true character of the Sanskrit and its successors, is not less decided than that of the Vedas themselves, for elucidating the later Indian antiquity. In many of the points in which Vedic and Sanskrit disagree, the former strikingly approaches its next neighbors to the westward, the language of the Avesta, commonly called the Zend, and that of the Persian inscriptions; and this circumstance lends it a high importance as an aid in the restoration, now so happily in process of accomplishment, of those lost treasures of antiquity. Its farther pre-eminent value in a general linguistic point of view, as sustaining in a less degree to the Sanskrit the same relation as the latter to the other Indo-European languages, has been long fully recognized.

Other particular characteristics of the four Vedas, and the relations in which they stand to one another, will be most clearly exhibited by giving some account of the contents and arrangement of each, separately.

First among them, in extent and importance, is the Rig-Veda. Its text, *Sanhitā,* is composed of a little more than a thousand hymns, *sūktas;* these are of various length, from one to more than fifty verses, and comprise altogether about ten

thousand five hundred such verses, or *ṛic* (*ṛic* comes from the root *ṛic* or *arc*, "to praise," and signifies originally "a praising," but is then, by an easy and frequent transition, applied to denote the medium of praise, the stanza). From the latter it derives its name: it is the Veda of *ṛic*. Why it, as distinguished from the others, has a peculiar title to this appellation, will be made to appear hereafter. It is divided into ten books, called *Maṇḍalas*, "circles." Of these, the first seven are quite homogeneous in respect to their character and internal arrangement. The first book is considerably the longest, containing a hundred and ninetyone hymns, which are, with single scattered exceptions, ascribed to fifteen different authors or *ṛishis* (this is the technical name for the inspired author of any *ṛic*; the word means "sage, seer"), among them some of the best known names of the Vedic period, as Gotama, Kaṇva, Kutsa, Śunaḥśepa, Kakshīvan: the hymns of each *ṛishi* stand together in a body, and, with the exception of those of Agastya, the last in the book, are so arranged that those addressed to Agni come first, those to Indra succeed them, and then follow promiscuously those to other divinities. Of the next six books, each is ascribed entire to a single poet, or poetic family; the second, containing forty-three hymns, to Gritsamada; the third, sixty-two, to Viśvāmitra; the fourth, fifty-eight, to Vāmadeva; the fifth, eighty-seven, to Atri and ṛishis of his kindred; the sixth, seventy-five, to Bharadvāja; the seventh, one hundred and four, to Vasishṭha. In all of them, the hymns are arranged in strict accordance with the method above stated as observed in the subdivisions of the first book. Thus far, then, we seem to have a single collection, made and ordered by the same hand. With the succeeding books the case is otherwise. The eighth contains ninety-two hymns, assigned to a great number of different authors, some of whom are among those whose productions we have already found in the earlier books; a majority of them are of the race of Kaṇva; hymns of the same ṛishi do not always stand in connection together, and of any internal arrangement according to divinities there is no trace. This book has a special name: it is entitled *Pragāthās*; the word etymologically signifies a kind of song (from the root *gai*, "to sing," and prefix *pra*, "forth" or "before"); why the hymns

of this book in particular should be thus styled, does not at present appear : *pragātha* is also the name of certain metre of not infrequent occurrence among them, as well as of a ṛishi to whom a few of them are ascribed ; but neither of these circumstances gives any clue to the reason of the appellation. With the ninth book the case is clearer : its hymns, one hundred and fourteen in number, are, without exception, addressed to the Soma, and, being intended to be sung while that drink was expressed from the plant that afforded it, and was clarified, are called *pavamānyas,* "purificational." And here, for the sake of clearness, it may be well to turn aside for a moment to consider the origin and significance of that peculiar feature of the ancient Indian religion presented in the Soma-ritual. The word *soma* means simply "extract" (from the root *su,* "to express, extract"), and is the name of a beverage prepared from a certain herb, the asclepias acida, which grows abundantly upon the mountains of India and Persia. This plant, which by its name should be akin to our common milk-weed, furnishes like the latter an abundant milky juice, which, when fermented, possesses intoxicating qualities. In this circumstance, it is believed, lies the explanation of the whole matter. The simple-minded Arian people, whose whole religion was a worship of the wonderful powers and phenomena of nature, had no sooner perceived that this liquid had power to elevate the spirits, and produce a temporary frenzy, under the influence of which the individual was prompted to, and capable of, deeds beyond his natural powers, than they found in it something divine : it was, to their apprehension, a god, endowing those into whom it entered, with godlike powers ; the plant which afforded it became to them the king of plants ; the process of preparing it was a holy sacrifice ; the instruments used therefor were sacred. The high antiquity of this cultus is attested by the references to it found occurring in the Persian Avesta ; it seems, however, to have received a new impulse on Indian territory, as the *pāvamānya* hymns of the Veda exhibit it in a truly remarkable state of development. Soma is there addressed as a god in the highest strains of adulation and veneration ; all powers belong to him ; all blessings are besought of him, as

his to bestow. And not only do such hymns compose one whole book of the Ṛik, and occur scattered here and there through other portions of it, but the most numerous single passages, and references every where appearing, show how closely it had intertwined itself with the whole ritual of the Vedic religion. Soma is an acceptable offering to all the gods; it is, however, peculiarly the property of Indra: he sallies out to slay the demon, and free the imprisoned waters, when inspired by the draughts of this drink which are presented him by his worshippers. The transference of the name Soma to the moon, which appears in the later history of the Indian religion, is hitherto obscure: the Vedas do not know it, nor do they seem to prepare the way for it in any manner.

To return to the ninth book of the Ṛik: the names of its numerous authors are some of them those whose acquaintance we have already formed; a few of its hymns, as also of the pragāthas, are ascribed to mythical personages. Both the eighth and the ninth book, now, stand in a peculiar connection with the Sāma-Veda: nearly half the verses of the pāvamānyas occur again in that collection, and of the pragāthas, more than a fifth, or nearly two-thirds as many hymns as form all the other books of the Ṛik (excepting the ninth) taken together. This is a significant circumstance, from which may one day be drawn valuable results for the history of both collections: for the present we must be content with simply stating it. The tenth book, again, stands apart from the rest, wearing the appearance of being a later appendage to the collection. It is a very long one, comprising, like the first, a hundred and ninety-one hymns. Of these, the first half is arranged upon no apparent system; the second commences with the longer hymns, and diminishes their length regularly to the close. As to their authors, the tradition is in very many cases entirely at fault, and either assigns them to some god or mythical character, or awkwardly manufactures out of an expression occurring in one of the verses, a name to stand as that of ṛishi. Both these are distinctive circumstances; still more peculiar, however, is the character of a large portion of its contents. Many of its

hymns, indeed, do not remarkably differ from the mass of those found in the earlier books; but as a whole they are evidently of a much later date, and conceived in another spirit. They do not restrict themselves to the devotional strain that prevails elsewhere: they embrace a far wider range of subjects; they are mythical, like the humn of Purūravas and Urvaśī, the dialogue between Yama and Yamī, the discussion between Agni and the other gods, when he desires to resign his office as mediator, and they dissuade him from it; speculative, as the hymn on the origin of creation, translated in Colebrooke's Essay; simply practical, as the addresses to night and to forest-solitude; superstitious, as charms and exorcisms; of an anomalous character, as the hymn in which a ruined gambler deplores his fatal passion for play, recounts the misfortunes which it has caused him, and forswears the dice. They wear, in short, the peculiar character of the fourth Veda, the Atharva, and do in fact sustain to that collection such a relation as the eighth and ninth books to the Sāma-Veda: most of them occurring again amongst its contents.

After this general view, it will not seem doubtful what opinion is to be held of the character of the Rig-Veda as a collection. Such a mass of hymns could not have been brought together, and into such a form, merely for a liturgical purpose, for use in the ceremonial of the Indian worship. In the later distribution of the Vedas, indeed, to the various classes of priests who officiate at a sacrifice, the Rik is assigned to the *Hotar*, or "Invoker"; but this does not suppose of necessity any thing farther than that this Veda, as the chief of the sacred books, might not be wholly left out at an act of solemn worship; or imply that any other use was made of it than is made of our own Bible, for instance, when at any religious exercise an appropriate chapter or passage from it is read. The Rig-Veda is doubtless a historical collection, prompted by a desire to treasure up complete, and preserve from farther corruption, those ancient and inspired songs which the Indian nation had brought with them, as their most precious possession, from the earlier seats of the race.

With the Sāma-Veda the case is otherwise : this is a purely liturgical collection. Its Sanhitā, foundation-text, is divided into two portions. The first and smaller, the *Ārcika*, is composed of five hundred and eighty-five ṛic, whereof five hundred and thirty-nine are found likewise in the Ṛig-Veda ; here, however, they are rent from the connection in which they stood in the hymns of which they originally formed a part (so that only in one or two instances do two follow one another in the same order as in the Ṛik), and are arranged anew into fifty-nine decades, and these again are combined into chapters and books. The first twelve decades are addressed solely to Agni ; the thirty-six next following, for the most part, to Indra : single invocations of Agni and other divinities are scattered here and there among them, and a part of one of the last is addressed to Soma. Thus far the verses are taken indifferently from all the books of the Ṛik excepting the ninth (which, save in the decade last mentioned, is represented by only two verses) : the extracts from the eighth, however, as already before remarked, greatly preponderating in number. The remaining eleven decades are, without exception, from the Soma-hymns of the ninth book. The second portion, called the *Staubhika* (from the root *stubh*, which likewise means "to praise"), contains twelve hundred and twenty-three ṛic, eleven hundred and ninety-four of them occurring also in the Ṛig-Veda ; they are arranged primarily in divisions which, as a general rule (though with frequent exceptions), consist each of three verses, and are in nearly all cases connected extracts from the hymns of the Ṛik ; sometimes, indeed, a whole hymn, of from four to twelve verses, forms a single division. In numerous instances, the first or one of the following verses of a division is one which has already appeared in the Ārcika, and is here repeated, accompanied by those others which properly stand in connection with it : the number of such repetitions is so great as to reduce the actual contents of this Veda from one thousand eight hundred and eight ṛic to one thousand five hundred and forty-nine (not one thousand four hundred and secenty-two, as Benfey has erroneously stated it). In the second portion, the extracts from the eighth and ninth books of the Rik bear the same relative

proportion to the rest as in the first, but any such internal arrangement of its verses as the latter exhibits is not traceable : invocations of all the divinities occur promiscuously mingled together. The verses which are peculiar to the Sāma present no characteristics to distinguish them from the others : they would appear to belong to hymns which were passed over in making the other collection ; a large proportion of them, it may be remarked, are ascribed to Vāmadeva, the author of the fourth book of the Ṛik. The Sāma is provided with a peculiar and very complicated system of accents, consisting of no less than ten different signs : all of them together, however, express nothing different from what is denoted by the two signs of the other Vedas. Farther than this, it presents very numerous readings, differing considerably from those of the Ṛik ; and these are stated to be for the most part of a higher antiquity and originality. It thus becomes an important critical aid to the study of the Ṛik ; and in this circumstance, and in the light which its relations to the other collections may be made to shed upon the history of them all, seems to consist for us its chief value. In itself, it is the least interesting of the four Vedas.

The text thus described, however, does not strictly constitute the Sāma-Veda : this, by its name, is a Veda of *sāman*, and as yet we have only *ṛic*. *Sāman* is a word of not infrequent occurrence in the Vedic texts ; its etymology is obscure : that which the Indians themselves give is of no value ; its meaning is not a matter of doubt : as distinguished from *ṛic*, it signifies a musically modulated verse, a chant. These ṛic, then, have to undergo a modification to convert them into sāman. And to this end it is not enough that they be simply accompanied with a musical utterance : they are also variously transformed by the protraction of their vowels, the resolution of semi-vowels into vowels, the insertion of sundry sounds, syllables and words, the repetition of portions of the verse, and the like. The ṛic thus changed into their Sāma-form, are to be found in the *Gānas*, works which form a part of the very extensive literature attached to this Veda. By varying the method of its treatment,

each ṛic is of course transformable into an indefinite number of different sāman, and this circumstance seems to explain the notices in later Indian works, to the effect that the Sāma-Veda contains four thousand, or even eight thousand sāman.

The general object of this collection is understood to have been, that its chants should be sung during the Soma-ritual: nearer particulars respecting the nature of the connection, the reason of the selection of these verses, the ground of their present arrangement, the method of their application in the ceremonial, it is not at present possible to give: these are matters which it is reserved for future investigations to elucidate.

The Yajur-Veda, the third of the collections, is of a similar character to the last, being yet more clearly intended to subserve a purely liturgical purpose. It grew up at a period long posterior to that to which is to be assigned the composition of the Vedic hymns, in connection with, and in consequence of, the development which the cultus, the body of religious ceremonies, received. In the early Vedic times, the sacrifice was still in the main an unfettered act of devotion, not committed to the charge of a body of privileged priests, not regulated in its minor details, but left to the free impulses of him who offered it; accompanied with ric and sāman, hymns and chants, that the mouth of the offerer might not be silent while his hands were presenting to the divinity the gift which his heart prompted. Thus it is said in a verse of the Sāma (I. 4, 2, 3, 10), "ṛic and sāma we reverence, by whose aid the ceremonies are performed: they two bear rule at the altar: they carry the sacrifice to the gods:" no mention is here made of *Yajus*, nor does it seem that the word occurs in the earlier portions of the Vedic writings. As in process of time, however, the ritual assumed a more and more formal character, becoming finally a strictly and minutely regulated succession of single actions, not only were the verses fixed which were to be quoted during the ceremony, but there established themselves likewise a body of utterances, formulas of words, intended to accompany each individual action of the whole work, to explain, excuse,

bless, give it a symbolical significancy, or the like. To show the minuteness of detail to which this was often carried, it may be mentioned that the first sentences in the text of the White Yajur-Veda were to be uttered by the priest as he cut from a particular tree a switch with which to drive away the calves from the cows whose milk was to furnish the material of the offering. These sacrificial formulas received the name of *yajus* (from the root *yaj*, "to sacrifice, offer"). A book, then, which should contain the whole body of these expressions, or those of them which were attached to any specified number of ceremonies, would be a Yajur-Veda, Veda of *yajus*. It might contain also many ric, which, being connected with certain parts of the ritual as its necessary accompaniments, had themselves become yajus. Such is, in fact, the Yajur-Veda which we possesses : its text is made up of these formulas, partly in prose and partly in verse, arranged in the order in which they were to be made use of at the sacrifice. Any internal connection, of course, it does not possess ; it would be a complete enigma to us, if not explained by a specification of the several actions to which, one after another, the formulas are attached. This explanation is furnished partly by the commentaries on the text, and partly by the Brāhmaṇas and Sūtras belonging to it. It lies now in the nature of the case, that the ceremonial would by no means every where be the same in its details ; and there might be as many distinct Yajur-Vedas collected as there were in different regions various ways of conducting the sacrifice : and it is in accordance with this, that we find not one, but two principal texts of the Yajur-Veda, called respectively the White and the Black, or the Vājasaneya and Taittirīya Sanhitās. The origin of these appellations is not clear : the two latter may be patronymics from the families in which the texts first established themselves. Dr. Weber, however, is inclined to refer both the names Black and Taittirīya (deriving the latter from *tittiri*, the name of the parti-colored, speckled partridge) to the peculiar condition of turbidity, disorder, intermixture, in which the text they are applied to is found : mantra and brāhmaṇa being in it indiscriminately confounded together. Besides the existence of these two independent Sanhitās, the "schools," *śākhās*, of this

Veda, whose texts and their mode of application differ in less important particulars, have been exceedingly numerous. The Black Yajur-Veda or Taittirīya Saṅhitā is as yet little known, manuscripts of it being very rare in Europe ; the other, by the edition and other labors of Dr. Weber, promises to be sooner and more fully laid open to the knowledge of modern science than any of the other Vedas, not excepting the Sāma. It contains about two thousand yajus, divided into forty *Ādhyāyas*, "lectures :" nearly half of them are in verse, or ṛic, and of these, far the greater portion are to be found also in the Ṛig-Veda ; they present some various readings, yet not nearly so numerous as those of the Sāma-Veda, nor do they possess the same high value. A list of the sacrifices to which they belong may be found in Colebrooke's Essay : it is unnecessary to repeat it here.

Respecting the fourth Veda, the Atharva, few particulars have as yet been made known to the European public. Manuscripts of its text exist but sparingly, either in England or on the continent, perhaps hardly enough in all to found a really satisfactory edition upon : one or two attempts to prapare it for publication have been made, and afterwards relinquished for lack of means. It seems, too, to have experienced in Europe, in some measure, the same neglectful treatment which it has suffered in India : there it had to wait long before its claim to be regarded as a Veda was generally allowed ; and it is well known to all who are in any degree conversant with the Sanskrit literature, that Ṛik, Sāma and Yajus are often named as the three Vedas, to the entire exclusion of the Atharva : it never, indeed, attained to the high consideration enjoyed by the other collections, nor, so far as is known, found a native commentator. It would be highly unjust, however, that the Indian example should in this respect be followed by us : for to us the Atharva is, next after the Ṛik, the most valuable of the four Vedas, as being itself also a historical collection, and in much the greater part of independent contents. Having taken occasion during the past winter to make a transcript of this Veda from the manuscripts of the Berlin Library, I hope at a future opportunity to give the Society more particular information res-

pecting it : such a general notice, however, as the scope and extent of this paper call for, can already here be offered. First, as to its name : any such characteristic appellation as has been found for each of the other Vedas it seems to lack : its various titles have the air of having been manufactured, and arbitrarily applied to it, in order to challenge for the collection an antiquity and a dignity which do not properly belong to it. Atharvan and Angiras are the names of two of the most ancient and venerated Indian families, which even in the earlier hymns of the Rik are invested with a kind of mythical character : it is sought, then, to exalt this collection by asserting its special connection with them : entitling it the Veda of the Atharvan and Angiras, or that of the Atharvan alone : the latter is the appellation by which it is now generally distinguished. Another name by which it is sometimes known, is Brahmā-Veda. The word Brahmā, as here used, denotes the chief priest at a sacrificial ceremony, the one charged with the general supervision of the whole ; not that he has anything to do with this Veda, but as the other three had been assigned to three of the regularly officiating priests, the Rik to the *Hotar*, or "Invoker," the Sāma to the *Udgātar*, or "Chanter," the Yajus to the *Adhvaryu*, or "Offerer," it was found convenient, in order to assume for the Atharva a place in the structure of the Indian cultus analogous to that occupied by the others, to give it a name implying its connection with the Brahmā. In extent, it stands next to the Rik, comprising nearly six thousand verses, in about six hundred and seventy hymns : these are divided into twenty books, *Kāṇḍas*, precisely why is not known, as the Indian traditions respecting author and the like are still very imperfectly understood : it is at any rate a material, and not a mere formal, division ; some of the books have a peculiar character of their own : so the sixth, of which the ṛic are arranged in tristichs, whereof two in most instances form a hymn ; the seventh, of which the hymns are very short, a majority of them containing but a single verse ; the fifteenth, which is in prose, and in language and contents nearly akin with the Brāhmaṇas ;* the twentieth, which is by far the longest of

* This has been published, text and translation, by Dr. Aufrecht, in the first volume of Weber's *Indische Studien*.

them all, nearly one thousand ric, most of them addressed to Indra, and all extracted, without variation, from the hymns of the Rik. It has been estimated that about one-third of the whole number occur again in the other Veda : here, however, they almost uniformly (excepting in the twentieth book) present readings varying very greatly from those of the latter : they appear to be generally of a much later and less genuine character, and are sometimes, it may be, even conscious arbitrary transformations of the original text. As to the internal character of the Atharva hymns, it may be said of them, as of the tenth book of the Rik, that they are the productions of another and a later period, and the expressions of a different spirit, from that of the earlier hymns in the other Veda. In the latter, the gods are approached with reverential awe, indeed, but with love and confidence also : a worship is paid them that exalts the offerer of it ; the demons, embraced under the general name *Rakshas*, are objects of horror, whom the gods ward off and destroy ; the divinities of the Atharva are regarded rather with a kind of cringing fear, as powers whose wrath is to be deprecated, and whose favor curried for : it knows a whole host of imps and hobgoblins, in ranks and classes, and addresses itself to them directly, offering them homage to induce them to abstain from doing harm. The *mantra*, prayer, which in the older Veda is the instrument of devotion, is here rather the tool of superstition : it wrings from the unwilling hands of the gods the favors which of old their good will to men induced them to grant, or by simple magical power obtains the fulfillment of the utterer's wishes. The most prominent characteristic feature of the Atharva is the multitude of incantations which it contains ; these are pronounced either by the person who is himself to be benefitted, or, more often, by the sorcerer for him, and are directed to the procuring of the greatest variety of desirable ends : most frequently, perhaps, long life, or recovery from grievous sickness, is the object sought : then a talisman, such as a necklace, is sometimes given, or in very numerous cases some plant endowed with marvellous virtues is to be the immediate external means of the cure ; farther, the attainment of wealth or power is aimed at, the downfall of enemies, success in love or in play, the removal

of petty pests, and so on, even down to the growth of hair on a bald pate. There are hymns, too, in which a single rite or ceremony is taken up and exalted, somewhat in the same strain as the Soma in the pāvamānya hymns of the Rik. Others of a speculative mystical character are not wanting; yet their number is not so great as might naturally be expected, considering the development which the Hindū religion received in the periods following after that of the primitive Veda. It seems in the main, that the Atharva is of popular rather than of priestly origin; that, in making the transition from the Vedic to modern times, it forms an intermediate step rather to the gross idolatries and superstitions of the ignorant mass, than to the sublimated pantheism of the Brahmans.

After this summary view of the single Vedas, it would be quite in order here to consider the general questions of the period of their composition, and their history as collections. But these points are still for the most part too obscure to admit of even an approximate solution. That must depend on the one hand, on a thorough investigation of all the internal evidences to be derived from the texts themselves, which is not practicable until the latter shall have been placed within more general reach; and on the other hand, on a reduction to chronological order of the present chaos of Indian literature and Indian history, which is a task, the satisfactory accomplishment of which may be even yet far distant. It is, perhaps, not worth while to attempt fixing the Vedic period more nearly than by saying that general considerations seem to refer it, with much probability, to the earlier half of the second thousand years preceding the Christian era. The time which the hymns themselves cover will not be to be measured by tens of years alone; and how much later, where, and under whose direction, their collection may have taken place, it is not now possible to determine. It seems likely, from the nature, as stated above, of the readings presented by the Sāma-Veda, that its verses may have been first rescued from the careless custody of oral tradition, and committed to writing: the immediate wants of the ceremonial might easily make themselves first felt, and the desire to treasure up the whole body of

these venerated relics of the past have arisen later. At whatever time the texts became a chief object of the science and industry stituted a decided era in the Indian literary history : from this time the texts became a chief object of the science and industry of the nation, as their contents had always been of its highest reverence and admiration ; and so thorough and religious was the care bestowed upon their preservation that, notwithstanding their mass and the thousands of years which have elapsed since their collection, not a single various reading, so far as is yet known, has been suffered to make its way into them. The influence which they have exerted upon the whole literary development of after ages is not easily to be rated too high. Entire classes of writings, forming a very large portion of the Sanskrit literature now in our hands, concern themselves directly with, and were occasioned by them ; and they may even be said, in a sense, to be the direct efficient causes of that whole literature, since it was in the endeavor to restore the knowledge of their antiquated and half-understood dialect that the Indian people came to a consciousness of their own language : upon the Vedic grammar was founded the Sanskrit grammar, which snatched the language from the influence of farther corruption, and fixed it for all future ages as the instrument of learned and elegant composition. Anything like a full consideration here, however, of this highly interesting subject, the direct part which the Vedas have performed in shaping the later Indian history, would lead too far : farther discussion of it may be deferred to another opportunity.

It remains, then, to give a comprehensive statement of the main results which the Vedas have hitherto yielded to the history of Indian antiquity. And it may be worth while, here, to notice precisely in what way they render their assistance. It is, namely, by presenting, not a designed description, but an unconscious picture, of that primitive condition out of which the institutions of following times sprung. In such a picture, particularly as taken from a single point of view, the religious one, there are naturally some points left out which we miss with regret, and others thrown into shadow which we could have wished to see brought

out into clear light ; yet this is an evil which is lessened by the very considerable extent of the Vedic writings, and farther consolation may be found in the consideration that, owing to the lamentable lack of a historic sense, which has ever been one of the most remarkable characteristics of the Indian mind, rendering all direct native testimony to a fact next to utterly worthless, only such indirect and unconscious notices could be relied upon as evidence. We are sure that in these texts was deposited a faithful and undistorted, if an imperfect, representation of relations existing at the time of their composition. Nor, as was shown above, have they been falsified by succeeding generations : however far they may have become removed from the comprehension of the Hindū, beyond full recovery to such efforts as his philology was capable of, however far the development of his civilization may have led him from the condition which they picture, the texts themselves were sacred, not to be altered : it was only allowed to interpretation to distort their meaning into a conformity with the dogmas of later days. It is to be remarked also, that, as things are at present situated, the Vedic period itself is more clearly laid open to us than some of those which succeed it, and that many steps in the progress of transition to the condition of modern times still remain obscure. Such deficiencies we can only hope satisfactorily to make up when the whole Indian literature shall have been more thoroughly investigated : till then we must be content to theorize across the interval with a probably near approach to truth.

We commence with a view of the geographical and social relations exhibited by these books. It has long been looked upon as settled beyond dispute that the present possessors of India were not the earliest owners of the soil, but, at a time not far beyond the reach of history, had made their way into the peninsula from its north-western side, over the passes of the Hindu-Koh, through the valley of the Kabul, across the wastes of the Penjab. And the Vedas show them as still only upon the threshold of their promised land, on the Indus, namely, and the region on either side of it, covering the whole Penjab, extending across the little neck of territory which, watered by the holy

Sarasvatī, connects the latter with the great basin of Central Hindostan, and touching the borders of this basin on the courses of the Upper Yamuna and Ganges. The Ganges, however, is mentioned but once in the whole Rik, and then in a hymn of the tenth book in which it is called upon to join with all other streams in the exaltation of the Indus, the king of rivers. The latter, *Sindhu,* "river," par excellence, and the rivers of the Penjab are most frequently mentioned ; and the region which they embrace is the proper scene in which the action of the Vedas is laid. For this country in general, its inhabitants have no more definite name than *sapta sindhavas,* "the seven rivers ;" it may not be necessary to seek here just so many distinct streams ; seven, according to the use of it so common in early times, may represent an indefinite number ; if we choose, however, the required seven may be readily found in the Indus, its main western tributary, the Kabul, and the five chief streams of the Penjab. This territory is broken up into many petty districts, each shut out from near connection with the adjoining by mountains of wastes. And the political state of the people is such as this natural conformation of country must condition ; they are divided into clans or tribes, independent of one another, save as they are bound together by the consciousness of a common descent, language, and religion, and by their united hostility to the original possessors of the soil on which they now have foothold. As distinguished from these, they entitle themselves Arians, *Āryas,* "the honorable," and call the former *dasyus,* "enemies, disturbers" : among themselves, their simple appellation is generally *Viś,* "the dwellers, peoples." The exact form of their state is not a point which by positive notices is brought clearly to light in the hymns : the position of member of a political body, subject of a government, is one in which the individual is very rarely conceived of : it is as head of a family, master of wealth, that he makes his appearance ; this is the grand central relation in its bearing upon which every thing else is viewed. Such negative evidence alone, however, might be deemed sufficient to show that the Vedic peoples, like other races whom we know at similar primitive epochs in their history, were communities of freemen, whose kings were no more than their chief men and

leaders in war. They were not strictly agricultural, although not neglecting the cultivation of the earth, when tempting opportunity offered itself : for their chief possessions were their flocks and herds. Among these, the horned cattle, kine, occupy as prominent a place as throughout the whole after course of Indian history : they form the main source and sign of wealth : the word *gau,* "cow," exhibits in the Vedic language the same extensive ramifications of meaning and composition as in the later Sanskrit ; sheep and goats are not infrequently mentioned, yet make comparatively a very small figure ; the horse is common and highly valued : as the noblest animal which the Vedic people knew, he is made in the hymns a most frequent subject of comparison and eulogy ; he seems to have been used chiefly as an ally in war, to draw the battle-chariots (riding on horseback is unknown), and not to have been reduced to the servitude of the plough : he occupies, then, much the same position as in later times the elephant. The latter animal the Indians had hitherto hardly been introduced to : the assertion sometimes met with, that he was already at this period a domesticated animal, is founded on a misunderstanding of passages in which his name has been supposed to occur ; he is, in fact, mentioned but two or three times in the Ṛik, by the name *mṛigo hastī,* "the beast with a hand," and in such a way as to show that he was still an object of wonder and terror ; in the Atharva he occurs also very rarely, under the names *hastin* (the *mṛigas* now left off), and *dvāpin,* "double-drinker," and is exalted as the mightiest and most magnificient of animals : nothing appears there, however, to show that he had been reduced to the service of man. The commonest enemy of the herds is the wolf ; the lion is also frequently mentioned ; and, in the Atharva, the tiger ; the bear is of very rare occurrence. If not properly an agricultural, this was by no means a nomadic people : pasturage for their herds was too abundant to compel them often to change their location : they dwelt together in open villages, *grāmas,* or in fortified strong-holds, *pur.* They are a warlike race, engaged in constant hostilities not only with their aboriginal foes, but with their Arian brethren likewise : the object is that for which alone such a people strive, booty. It is with

no evil conscience that they wage this predatory warfare: they ask of their gods success in it with the utmost simplicity and good faith; their prayers are ever, not for the peaceable preservation and increase only of their present possessions, but that they may be enriched with the spoils of their enemies. Their names for the combat, the similes they derive from it, the whole strain in which it is mentioned in their hymns, witness to the thorough zest and spirit with which they fought. Their weapons are the usual ones: sword, bow, spear, mail, and the like. The peaceful arts are not so prominent among them, as indeed in this respect the Indians always remained far behind the Egyptians and Chinese: any thing like architecture is not alluded to; from the circumstance that the artful construction of a poetic verse is often compared to the fabrication of a chariot by a smith, it would seem that the latter was the most perfect work of handicraft which they knew. Poetry is, of course, in full bloom; the art of lyrical composition is highly prized, and its productions, as the poets themselves in their hymns not seldom boast, are dearly paid for by the rich and great.

In all this, as will have been already remarked, appears nothing of that system of castes which has come to form so essential a part of our conceptions of the Indian state. And it is evident that such a system would be highly incongruous with a condition of things like that here described: where the population generally is a grazing and agricultural one, there could be no separate caste of tillers of the earth; where all are warriors, no class of soldiers; where each individual has full access by offering to the gods, no privileged order of priests. In the early Vedic times, then, the castes had no existence; the process by which they afterwards developed themselves, if not yet clear in all its details, may nevertheless be traced out, in the main, with tolerable certainty. From the mass of the Arian population severed themselves in course of time two privileged classes, a priesthood and an aristocracy. The beginnings of the former appear very early, in the employment by the great of certain individuals or families distinguished

for wisdom, sanctity, poetic gift, as their representatives in worship, under the title of *purohita,* "one set in front." The change of the free Vedic religion into a regulated ceremonial would be accompanied by the growth of such families into a class who should possess a monopoly of communication with the gods ; the accumulative possession of hereditary learning, exemption from the struggles and commotions amid which the later order of things was founded, would rapidly increase their influence and power ; and among a people of such religious tendencies as the Hindūs, they might readily attain to the highest rank and consideration in the state. The name which they received marks them as those who busied themselves with, had the charge of, worship. The neuter noun *brāhman,* which has become the parent of a whole family of derivatives, is of frequent occurrence in the Veda : it comes from the root *bṛih,* "to exert, strain, extend," and denotes simply "worship," as the offering which the elevated affections and strained desires of the devout bring to the gods. From it, by a customary formative process, the gender being changed, and the accent thrown forward, is derived the masculine *brahmān,* signifying any presenter of such an offering, "a worshipper." These are the only significations of these two terms in the earlier parts of the Veda : their application to denote the impersonal devine principle, and the impersonation of that principle as highest divinity, is much later, and the work not so much of the religion, as of the religious philosophy, of the Hindū. The latter of the two has also become one of the names of the caste, but this is more frequently distinguished by the title *Brāhmaṇa,* which is an adjective formation from the neuter *brāhman* in its signification as given above. The second class would seem to have been founded by the families of those petty princes who had borne rule in the olden time, but had most of them lost their regal authority in the convulsions which attended the transference of the race from the narrower consolidation of the separate clans into extensive monarchies. limits of the Penjab to the great valley of Hindostan, and the Their name, *Kshatriya,* is an adjective from the ancient noun *kshatra,* which, as meaning "rule, dominion," occurs in all the three languages of the Veda, the Avesta, and the Persian inscrip-

tions : it denotes, originally, simply "possessed of authority," and is so sometimes applied in the Veda even to the gods. After the separation from it of these two classes, the great mass of the Arian population would remain to constitute the third caste, still retaining the appellation *Viś* (or its derivative *Vaiśya*), which had been once the name of the whole people. The fourth class was not of Arian extraction, but was composed of such of the ancient possessors of the soil as had preferred to submit to, rather than retire before, the superior power of the invader, and became incorporated into the state in the capacity of menial dependents upon their conquerors. Their name, *Śūdra,* is probably the native appellation of a people thus reduced : it is a word of very rare occurrence in the Vedas, as we have already seen that the Arians commonly styled their native foes *dasyus* ; in a single hymn of the Atharva, however, Śūdra is directly contrasted with Arian, and protection besought from an enemy of the one as of the other race. Farther than this it occurs only as name of the caste ; for it should be observed that the period of composition of some of the Vedic lyrics extends itself down to a time when the system had in its main features become distinctly established : hymns of the tenth book of the Rik and of the Atharva recognize the four principal classes, and one even presents the fable of their origin from different parts of the body of the Deity.

It lies in the nature of the case, that the Vedic writings present upon no other point in Indian antiquity so full and detailed information as upon the ancient Indian religion. Nor could we, though having regard to the elucidation of Indian history alone, well wish it otherwise. Considering how closely, as already remarked, the whole course of that history is intertwined with religion, considering too what vast influence the later religious institutions and creations of India have had upon so large a portion of the human race, and how difficult was the problem they offered to one who would understand them thoroughly in their origin and history, nothing was more to be desired than just that picture which the Vedas present of the original national creed out of which all the others, in obedience to the laws

imposed by the intellectual and moral growth of the people, sprung.

After what has been already seen of the difference between ancient and modern periods in the Indian history, no one will be surprised to find the Vedic religion as much unlike the creeds which have been wont, until very recently, to go exclusively by the name of Indian as the free Vedic state is unlike the artificially regulated institutions of Brahmanism. So wide and fundamental a difference, however, as actually exists, one might not be prepared for: saving a few names, they seem at first sight to have nothing in common; the chief figures in each are either entirely wanting in the other, or occupy so changed a position as to be scarcely recognizable for the same. To characterize the Vedic religion in general terms is not difficult: it is not one which has originated in the minds of single individuals, inspired or uninspired, and by them been taught to others; it is not one which has been nursed into its present form by the fostering care of a caste or priesthood; it is one which has arisen in the whole body of the people, and is a true expression of the collective view which a simple-minded, but highly gifted nation, inclined to religious veneration, took of the wonders of creation and the powers to which it conceived them ascribable. It is, what every original religion must be that is not communicated to man by direct inspiration from above, a nature-religion, a worship of the powers supposed to lie back of and produce the phenomena of the visible world. And in its character as such a religion it is the purest of those of which record has come down to us from antiquity, the least mixed with elements of reflection, of abstraction, of systematizing. It bears to the early religions of the other members of the Indo-European family such a relation as the Vedic dialect to their languages: being the most original, the least distorted, and the purest of them all; the one in which may be traced out most of the features of that creed which we may suppose to have been common to the whole family at the time of their dispersion; the one, too, which for its transparency and simplicity is best calculated to illustrate the rise and growth of such a religion in general. These properties lend

it a high value as a guide to the explanation of the obscure myths and observances of the other kindred nations ; and its importance for the investigation of the general history of religions among mankind is not less decided. These are not matters, however, which properly come under our particular notice here : it will be enough to have thus briefly referred to them before passing on to a summary presentation of the main features of the religion itself, and some of its more important relations to its Indian successors.

It is a very ancient classification of the Vedic divinities, being known to the hymns themselves, that allots them severally to one of the three domains : of earth, atmosphere, and heaven. This division may be conveniently retained here, and we may commence our view with the gods of the lower region, the earth.

The earth herself makes no remarkable figure here : she is indeed deified, at least partially ; is addressed as the mother and sustainer of all beings ; is, generally in company with the sky, invoked to grant blessings ; yet this never advanced farther than a lively personification might go. The same may be said of rivers, trees, and other objects upon the earth's surface : they are not of the class of appearances which the Indian seized upon as objects of his veneration ; they do not offer points enough capable of being grasped by the fancy, were too little mysterious. Only one phenomenon, namely fire, was calculated to give rise to so distinct a conception of something divine as to appear as a fully developed divinity. Again, the god of fire (the name is identical with the Latin *ignis*), is one of the most prominent in the whole Pantheon : his hymns are more numerous than those to any other god. Astonishment and admiration at the properties of this element, as the most wonderful and mysterious of all with which man comes into daily and familiar contact, and exultation over its reduction to the service and partial control of mankind, are abundantly expressed in the manner in which he is addressed. He is praised as an immortal among mortals, a divinity upon earth : his nobleness and condescension, that he, a god, deigns to sit here in the very dwellings of men, are

extolled. The other gods have established him here as high priest and mediator for the human race : he was the first who made sacrifice and taught men to have recourse above ; he is messenger between heaven and earth ; he on the one hand bears aloft the prayers and offerings, and secures their gaining in return the blessings demanded, and on the other brings the gods themselves to the altar of their worshipper, and puts them in possession there of the gifts presented to them. When the sun is down, and the daylight gone, Agni is the only divinity left on earth to protect mortals till the following dawn : his beams then shine abroad, and dispel the demons of darkness, the Rakshas, whose peculiar enemy and destroyer he is. These attributes and offices form the staple theme of his songs, amplified and varied without limit, and coupled with general ascriptions of praise, and prayers for blessings to be directly betowed by him, or granted through his intercession. Among his frequent appellations are *vaiśvānara,* "the to all men belonging," *havyavāha,* bearer of the offering," *jātavedas* and *viśvavedas,* "all-possessing", *pāvaka,* "purifier", *rakshohan,* "demon-slayer." He is styled son of the lightning or of the sun, as sometimes kindled by them ; but, as in all primitive nations, the ordinary mode of his production is by the friction of two dry billets of wood, and this birth of his, as a wonder and a mystery unparalleled, is painted in the hymns in dark and highly symbolical language : the ten fingers of the kindler are ten virgins who bring him to birth ; the two bits of wood are his mothers ; once born he grows up rapidly in their lap, as they lie there prostrate upon the earth ; he turns upon them, but not for milk : he devours them ; the arms of the kindler fear him, and lift themselves above him in wonder. Agni's proper offering is clarified butter, ghee, *ghṛita ;* when this is sprinkled into the flame, it mounts higher and glows more fiercely : he has devoured the gift, and thus testifies his satisfaction and pleasure.

To the second domain, the atmosphere, belong the various divinities of the wind and storm. God of the breeze, the gentler motion of the air, is Vāyu (from the root *vā,* "to blow"). He drives a thousand steeds ; his breath chases away the demons ;

he comes in the earliest morning, as the first breath of air that stirs itself at day-break, to drink the soma, and the Auroras weave for him shining garments. The storm-winds are a troop, the Marut or Rudras : the two names are indifferently used, but the former is much the more usual (the etymology of neither is fully established). They ride on spotted stags, wear shining armor, and carry spears in their hands ; no one knows whence they come nor whither they go ; their voice is heard aloud as they come rushing on ; the earth trembles and the mountains shake before them. They belong in Indra's train ; are his almost constant allies and companions. They are called the sons of Rudra, who is conceived of as peculiar god of the tempest. As their father, he is very often mentioned ; as a divinity with independent attributes, he is of much rarer occurrence ; hymns addressed to him alone are but few. He is, as might be expected, a terrible god : he carries a great bow from which he hurls a sharp missile at the earth ; he is called the "slayer of men," *kshayadvīra ;* his wrath is deprecated, and he is besought not to harm his worshipper ; if not in the Ṛik, at least in the Atharva and Brāhmaṇas, he is styled "lord of the animals," as the unhoused beasts of the field are especially at the mercy of the pitiless storm. At the same time he is, to propitiate him, addressed as master of a thousand remedies, best of physicians, protector from harm : this may have its ground, too, partly in the beneficial effects of the tempest in freshening the atmosphere of that sultry clime. Rudra's chief interest consists in the circumstance that he forms the point of connection between the Vedic relifion and the later Śiva-worship. Śiva is a god unknown to the Vedas : his name is a word of not infrequent occurrence in the hymns, indeed, but means simply "propitious ;" not even in the Atharva is it the epithet of a particular divinity, or distinguished by its usage from any other adjective. As given to him whose title it has since become, it seems one of those euphemisms so frequent in the Indian religion, applied as a soothing and flattering address to the most terrible god in the whole Pantheon. The precise relation between Śiva and Rudra is not yet satisfactorily traced out. The introduction of an entirely new divinity from the mountains of the north has been supposed,

who was grafted in upon the ancient religion by being identified with Rudra ; or again a blending of some of Agni's attributes with those of Rudra to originate a new development : perhaps neither of these may be necessary ; Śiva may be a local form of Rudra, arisen under the influence of peculiar climatic relations in the districts from which he made his way down into Hindostan proper ; introduced among and readily accepted by a people which, as the Atharva shows, was strongly tending toward a terrorism in its religion.

The chief god of this division, however, and indeed the most conspicuous in the whole list of Vedic divinities. is Indra. The etymology of his name is still disputed ; his natural significance is not a matter of doubt : he is the god of the clear blue sky. That his worship under this name is earlier than the separation of the Arians into their two branches, is proved by his occurrence among the Devs mentioned in the Avesta ; it is difficult, however, to believe that the great development and prominence of the myth of which he is the representative, and his consequent high rank, are not properly Indian. The kernel of the Indian myth, namely, is as follows. The clouds are conceived of as a covering in which a hostile demon, *Vṛitra,* "the enveloper," extends himself over the face of the sky, hiding the sun, threatening to blot out the light, and withholding from the earth the heavenly waters. Indra engages in fierce combat with him, and pierces him with his thunderbolt ; the waters are released, and fall in abundant showers upon the earth, and the sun and the clear sky are again restored to view. Or again, the demons have stolen the reservoirs of water, represented under the figure of herds of kine, and hidden them away in the hollows of the mountains ; Indra finds them, splits the caverns with his bolt, and they are set again at liberty. This is the centre about which the greatness of Indra has grown up. In it there may be something derived from the earliest antiquity of the Indo-European family, as the occurrence of strikingly similar traits in the earliest Greek and Roman myths gives reason to believe. But that it should ever have advanced to such a degree of importance, elevating the deity to whom it is attached to the very first rank, is hardly

conceivable save in a dry and arid country like the Penjab, where the rains are the conditions of all prosperity, and their interruption brings with it immediate and general suffering. In the more northern land of the Zoroastric people, as appears particularly from the earliest books of the Vendidad, cold, and not drought, is the enemy most feared : the winter is there the work of the demons that comes in to blast Ahura Mazdā's fair creation, and as a refuge against the evils of which Yima builds his abode of the blest. Had the original nature-religion there been left to follow its natural development, it could never have been an Indra that should lift himself to the first place in it. Be this as it may, Indra stands at the head of the Vedic divinities. By this is not meant, however, that he is king among them, endowed with any authority over the rest : no such reduction to system of this religion had taken place as should establish a relation of this kind among its gods : each is as independent in his own domain as the natural phenomena of which they are the personifications ; nor again, that the nature of his attributes and of his concerns with the affairs of human life is such as to surround him with the highest interest, to invest him with the most commanding dignity of character : in this regard, as will be seen, Varuṇa stands decidedly above him ; but only, that he is the most conspicuous of them all, the one who, as most nearly concerned in the procuring of the ordinary blessings of physical life, is the most frequent and favourite theme of praise and invocation. He drives a chariot drawn by two yellow horses ; the thunderbolt is his weapon ; the storm-winds, the Marut, are his usual companions. It is neddles to attempt an enumeration of the endlessly varied features which the hymns to his praise present : a few among his most frequent epithets are *maghavan,* "possessor of might," *marutvat,* "leader of the Marut," *śakra,* "powerful," *śatakratu,* "of hundred-fold strength," *vṛitrahan,* "Vṛitra-slayer," *somapā,* "soma-drinker." His own proper offering is the soma : he comes in his chariot to quaff the draughts of it presented to him by his worshippers, and then, in the fury it produces, drives off at once to transfix Vṛitra, and break open the fastnesses of the mountains.

The gods of the third domain, of heaven, are for the most

part those who represent the various phenomena of light. The very prominent part which this element has played in giving form to the earliest religions of all nations is well known ; that of the Indian forms no exception : he even manifests a peculiar sensitiveness to the blessings of the light, and a peculiar abhorrence of darkness. The former is to him life, motion, happiness, truth ; the latter death, helplessness, evil, the time and abode of demons. Accordingly, the phenomena of the night, moon and stars, he almost ignores : the one makes no figure at all in his religion, the others are but rarely even alluded to. The worship of the Indian commenced at day-break : Ushas, the dawn, is the earliest subject of his morning songs. The promise of the day is hailed with overflowing and inspiring joy ; the feeling of relief as the burden of darkness is lifted off the world, and the freedom and cheerfulness of the day commence again, prompts to truly poetic strains, and the songs to Ushas are among the finest in the Veda. She is addressed as a virgin in glittering robes, who chases away the darkness, or to whom her sister night willingly yields her domain ; who prepares a path for the sun ; is the signal of the sacrifice ; rouses all beings from slumber ; gives sight to the darkened, power of motion to the prostrate and helpless. In the midst of such gladsome greetings, however, the poet is reminded by the thought of the many dawns that have thus shone upon the earth, and the many that are to follow them, of those who having witnessed the former ones are now passed away, and of those again who shall welcome them when he is no more ; and so he is led to mournful reflections on the wasting away of life as one day after another is subtracted from the time allotted to each mortal.

Here will be best noticed two enigmatical divinities, the Aśvin, since they are brought into a special connection with the earliest morning, and if their explanation is to be found in natural phenomena it must be sought here. The oldest Indian theology is greatly at a loss how to explain their essence, nor have modern attempts met with such better success. They are never modern attempts met with much better success. They are never addressed separately, nor by distinct names : they are simply Aśvinau, "the

two horsemen." They are conspicuous figures in the Vedic Pantheon ; their hymns are numerous and often very long. The later mythology makes them the physicians of the gods ; here they are general benefactors of men, and helpers in circumstances of difficulty and disterss. They are peculiarly rich in myths : some of their hymns are little more than recitals of the many particular favors they have shown to individuals named : they have given a husband or a wife ; brought back a lost child ; restored the blind to sight ; relieved one of his worthless old body, furnishing him a new one instead of it ; supplied another with a servicable metal leg, to replace one lost in battle ; rescued one who was in danger of drowing ; drawn another out of a deep pit ; and the like. They ride together upon a golden chariot, all the parts of which are in threes. Their great antiquity is attested by the mention made of them in two passages of the Avesta ; and it seems far from impossible that they may be originally identical with the Dioscuri of the Greeks.

To the other gods of this division belongs more or less distinctly the common name of Āditya. Of the Ādityas, as is well known, the later mythology counts twelve, all sungods, and representing that luminary in phases of the twelve months : they are sons of Aditi, and over against them are made to stand the Daityas, sons of Diti. All this the Vedas show to be a fabrication of the modern mythologizing. In the ancient religion exist no such beings as the Daityas, the number of the Ādityas is no where fixed, and so many as twelve it would be impossible to bring together ; nor do they stand as a class in any connection with the sum : they are much rather founded upon conceptions of the beneficent influences of the element of light in general ; yet ideas of a different origin and significancy are here grouped together, and the names of many of them, and their characteristics, lift them more from the domain of a pure nature-religion into that of one based upon moral relations. It seems as if here were an attempt on the part of the Indian religion to take a new development in a moral direction, which a change in the character and circumstances of the people had caused to fail in the midst, and fall back again into forgetfulness, while yet half finished and

indistinct. Their name, *Āditya,* comes from the noun *aditi,* which signifies literally "unharmableness, indestructibility;" and it denotes them as "they of an eternal, unapproachable nature." The elevation of Aditi herself to the rank of a distinct personage may be a reflex from the derivative, which was capable of being interpreted as a patronymic, instead of as an appellative, and made to mean "sons of Aditi." Already in the early hymns, however, appears the germ of what she became in after times: she is not infrequently invoked in a general prayer to the gods, and is now and then addressed as a king's daughter, she of fair children, and the like; but this personification never went far enough to entitle her fairly to a place in the list of Vedic divinities. To the Ādityas is ascribed unapproachability by any thing that can harm or disturb; in them can be distinguished neither right hand nor left, form nor limit; they are elevated above all imperfections; do not sleep nor wink; their character is all truth; they hate and punish guilt; to preserve mortals from sin is their highest office; they have a peculiar title to the epithet *aṣura,* "immaterial, spiritual" (for this is the proper and original meaning of this term: it does not come from the root *svar,* "to shine," with *a* privitive, although on the strength of this etymology the later Indians have manufactured a word *sura* as correlative to it; it is a derivative adjective from the noun *asu,* "life, existence," which itself is from the root *as*: if it came to denote "demonic, demon" (and this, along with the other, is its frequent signification in the Veda also), it seems to be only such a transfer as *demon* itself exhibits, or as appears in our use of *spirits* chiefly to denote those of an evil and malign influence).

Three of the gods who may in the most liberal reckoning be counted among the Ādityas, namely, Savitar, Vishnu, Pūshan, cannot by virtue of their characters offer so clear a title to the rank. Though the name is often applied to them, it is more as a honorific epithet: in hymns addressed directly to the Ādityas, ascribing to them the attributes stated above, they do not occur. They stand in a nearer relation to the sun, as impersonations of that luminary in different characters. The sun

himself, indeed, as should be remarked before proceeding farther, assumes not infrequently, under his ordinary name of Sūrya, the character of a divinity, and is addressed as such ; is himself styled an Āditya, is said to drive a chariot drawn by seven golden steeds, to fright away the night, to make the constellations fly and hide themselves like thieves, and the like. This, however, is not carried so far as to give him any prominence or peculiar importance ; as already remarked, it is not in the character of the Vedic religion to attach its highest veneration to phenomena so distinct and comprehensible as such : the sun is considered rather as a single manifestation of the element of light ; is quite as often personified as the ornamented bird of heaven, or as a great steed, whom Mitra and Varuṇa made for the good of mortals ; who causes all men to rejoice, as like a hero he mounts up on the firmament. Savitar, the first of the three above mentioned, is the sun or the light considered as a producing, enlivening power (the word means simply "generator"). He is not the sun itself : that is said to be his constant companion, in whose rays he takes delight. He both gladdens the earth with light and envelops it again in darkness ; rouses and sends to rest all mortals ; gives to men their life, to the gods their immortality ; he stretches out his golden arms over all creation, as if to bless it ; his almost constant epithet is *deva,* "shining, heavenly." Vishnu is the only one of the great gods of the Hindū triad who makes his appearance under the same name in the Veda. Here, however, there is absolutely nothing which points to any such development as he was afterwards to receive. The history of the religion of Vishnu is not clearer than of that of Śiva. It seems however to have been, like the latter, of a popular local origin, and perhaps to have fused together many local divinities into one person. Both Śiva and Vishnu were supreme and independent gods, each to his own followers : it was only the priest-caste, as they saw their position endangered by the powerful uprising of the new religions, and were compelled, in order to maintain themselves, to take a stand at the head of the movement, and give it a direction, who forced them into a theoretical connection with one another, adding to complete the system a god Brahma, who was the mere creature of learned reflec-

tion, and never had any hold at all on the popular mind. Vishnu in the Veda is the sun in his three stations of rise, zenith, and setting; this the Vedic poets conceive of as a striding through heaven at three steps: this is Vishnu's great deed which in all his hymns is sung to his praise; it constitutes the only peculiar trait belonging to him. Of these steps it is said that two of them are near to the habitations of men; the third none can attain, not even the bird in its flight: he made them for the benefit of mortals, that all might live safe and happy under them; the middle station, the zenith, is called Vishnu's place. The third of these divinities, Pūshan (the name means "nourisher, prosperer"), is especially distinguished by the myths and attributes with which he is richly furnished: he is protector of the flocks, and bears the shepherd's crook as his weapon; his chariot is drawn by goats, and a goat is sacrificed to him; another common offering to him is soup, whence, as a kind of joke upon him, he is said to have bad teeth, as if able to eat nothing but broth; he exercises a special care over roads, and is the best guide to be invoked on a journey.

The gods who are in the fullest sense Ādityas are Daksha, Aṅśa, Bhaga, Aryaman, Mitra, Varuṇa. The words, all save the last, have a moral meaning. Daksha is "insight, skill, cleverness;" Aṅśa is "attainment, portion;" Bhaga has a very similar meaning, "share, fortune, enjoyment:" this is the word which in the language of the Persian inscriptions, and in that of the Slavic nations, has come to mean 'god" in general; Aryaman is less clear: by the etymology it should mean something like "honorable;" it seems to be used for "patron, protector;" Mitra is "friend." These five make but a faint and subordinate figure in the Veda: Daksha and Aṅśa are even very rarely mentioned; Bhaga appears more frequently, but only in general invocations of the Ādityas, or of all the gods, with no distinctive features; Aryaman's name stands very often connected with those of Mitra and Varuṇa; but he has no prominent independent subsistence, nor is he particularly characterized; and finally Mitra himself is, save in one single hymn, invoked only in the closest connection with Varuṇa. Varuṇa is the central figure in the group, the

one in whom the attributes of the whole class are united and exalted into higher majesty, who stands forth the noblest figure in the Vedic religion. His name is identical with the Greek *Ouranos* ; coming from the root *vṛi*, "to envelop," it signifies the all embracing heaven, the outermost boundary of creation, which contains within itself the whole universe with its phenomena. Such a fundamental idea was peculiarly qualified to receive the development which has been given to it. Varuṇa, namely, is the orderer and ruler of the universe ; he established the eternal laws which govern the movements of the world, and which neither immortal nor mortal may break ; he regulated the seasons ; appointed sun, moon, and stars their courses ; gave to each creature that which is its peculiar characteristic. In a no less degree is he a moral governor : to the Ādityas and to him in particular attach themselves very remarkable, almost Christian, ideas respecting moral right and wrong, transgression and its punishment ; here the truly devout and pious spirit of the ancient Indian manifests itself most plainly. While in hymns to the other divinities long life, wealth, power, are the objects commonly prayed for, of the Ādityas is craved purity, forgiveness of sin, freedom from its farther commission ; to them are offered humble confessions of guilt and repentance ; it is a sore grief to the poets to know that man daily transgresses Varuṇa's commands ; they acknowledge that without his aid they are not masters of a single moment ; they fly to him for refuge from evil, expressing at the same time all confidence that their prayers will be heard and granted. From his station in the heaven Varuṇa sees and hears every thing : nothing can remain hidden from him ; he is surrounded, too, by a train of ministers, "spies," *spaśas*, who, restless, unerring, watch heaven and earth to note iniquity, or go about bearing in their hands Varuṇa's bonds, sickness and death, with which to bind the guilty. These spies are a very ancient feature in the Arian religion : they appear again in the Avesta, being there assigned to Mithra. The coincidences indeed throughout this whole domain between Indian and Persian religions are in the highest degree striking and interesting. Ahura Mazdā, Ormuzd, himself is, as is hardly to be doubted, a development of Varuṇa ; the Ādityas are correlatives of the Amshas-

pands ; there even exists in the Persian the same close connection between Ahura Mazdā and Mithra, as in the Indian between Mitra and Varuṇa : and this is so much the more striking as since the Zoroastric reformation of the Persian religion there was properly no longer a place there for Mithra, and he is not even numbered among the Amshaspands.

This most interesting side of the ancient Indian religion exhibits itself in the Vedic hymns as already fading into oblivion : the process of degradation of Varuṇa, its principal representation, which has later stripped him of all his majestic attributes, and converted him into a mere god of the ocean, is commenced ; Indra, on the one hand, is rising to a position of greater prominence and honor above him, and on the other hand various single allusions show that a special connection between him and the waters was already establishing itself ; on what principle the latter was founded does not admit at present of being satisfactorily shown.

Our view of the Vedic religion would be essentially defective, did we fail to take notice of what was the state of belief prevailing in it respecting that important point, immorality and a future life. That the later ideas of transmigration and the like had no existence in it, it is hardly necessary to say. In place of them appears a simple faith that the life in this world is not the last of man, that after death he goes to an abode of happiness above. Yama, here as later, is the chief personage with whom this abode stands connected. He is not the terrible being, however, into which a shuddering fear of death afterwards converted him : his character is a beneficent and attractive one ; he is simply chief and ruler of the dead ; he grants to departed souls a resting-place where they enjoy in his company happiness without alloy. His origin and primitive significance give him this position. For his name does not come, according to the usual interpretation, from the root *yam*, "to subdue, repress :" it is radically akin to the Latin *gem-ini*, etc.. and means "twin." In him and his sister Yamī are conceived the first human pair, parents of the whole following race ; he is therefore, as is

expressly stated in the hymns, the first who made his way to the skies, pointing out the road thither to all succeeding generations, and preparing a place for their reception; by the most natural transition, then, he becomes their king. It is in entire consistency with this, that in the Persian story, where he appears as Yima (later Jem-shid), he is made ruler of the golden age, and founder of the Paradise.*

Such are the main features of the Vedic religion: the considerable number of less prominent and important deities, personifications, apotheoses perhaps even, which also figure in it, it will not be worth while here to catalogue. Their nature and value is not in all cases clear, and their absence will not affect the general correctness of this picture.

We will close, then, here our consideration of the Vedas, expressing once more the hope that this presentation of the subject, however imperfect, may suffice to show their high importance to all students of antiquity, of civilization, of religions; as well as their absolute indispensability to those who would understand that portion of the history of our race which has been transacted within the limits of India.

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* See Roth, in the *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenl. Gesellschaft*, vol. iv. for 1850: where this interpretation of the myths is first given, and they, in both their Indian and Persian form, are expressly handled.