

also may have started from the same beginnings, and may have passed through the same vicissitudes. But we shall never go beyond, or repeat the mistake of those who, because they found, or imagined they found fetish-worship among the least cultivated races of Africa, America, and Australia, concluded that every uncultivated race must have started from fetishism in its religious career.

What then are the documents in which we can study the origin and growth of religion among the early Aryan settlers of India?

Discovery of Sanskrit literature.

The discovery of the ancient literature of India must sound to most people like a fairy-tale rather than like a chapter of history, nor do I wonder that there is, or that there has been at least for a long time, a certain incredulity, with regard to the genuineness of that literature. The number of separate works in Sanskrit, of which manuscripts are still in existence, is now estimated to amount to about 10,000¹. What would Aristotle have said, if he had been told that at his time there existed in India, in that India which Alexander had just discovered, if not conquered, an ancient literature far richer than anything existing at that time in Greece?

¹ Rajendralal Mitra, 'Catalogue of Sanskrit MSS. in the Library of the Asiatic Library of Bengal,' 1877, Preface, p. 1. The India Office Library is said to contain 4093 separate codices; the Bodleian 854, the Berlin library about the same number. The library of the Maharaja of Tanjore is estimated at upwards of 18,000, in eleven distinct alphabets; the library of the Sanskrit College at Benares at 2000; the library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal at Calcutta at 3700; that of the Sanskrit College at Calcutta at 2000.

**Buddhism the frontier between ancient and modern
literature in India.**

At that time, the whole drama of the really ancient literature of the Brahmans had been acted. The old language had changed, the old religion, after passing through many phases, had been superseded by a new faith: for however sceptical or conscientious we may be before admitting or rejecting the claims of the Brahmans in favour of an enormous antiquity of their sacred literature, so much is certain and beyond the reach of reasonable doubt¹, that *Sandrocottus*, who

¹ In my 'History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature,' published in 1859 (p. 274), I had tried to lay down some general principles on which I thought the dates of Greek history might to a certain extent be reconciled with some of the traditional dates of the Northern and Southern Buddhists. The conclusions at which I then arrived were that *Sandrocottus* or *Kandragupta* became king in 315 B.C., that he reigned 24 years, and was succeeded by *Bindusāra* in 291 B.C.; that *Bindusāra* reigned (25 or) 28 years, and was succeeded by *Asoka* in (266 or) 263 B.C.; and that *Asoka* was formally inaugurated in (262 or) 259 B.C., reigned 37 years, and died in (225 or) 222 B.C. The great Council took place in the seventeenth year of his reign, therefore either (245 or) 242 B.C.

In my attempt at arriving at some kind of rough chronology for the Buddhistic age, I was chiefly guided by a number of native traditions bearing on the distance between certain events and Buddha's death. Thus we find:—(1) That 162 years were supposed to have passed between Buddha's death and *Kandragupta's* accession, $315 + 162 = 477$, this giving us 477 B.C. as the probable date of that event. (2) We found that 218 years were supposed to have passed between Buddha's death and *Asoka's* inauguration, $259 + 218 = 477$, this giving us 477 B.C. as the probable date of that event.

I therefore proposed that 477 B.C. should provisionally be accepted as the probable date of Buddha's death, instead of 543 B.C., and I tried to strengthen that position by some other evidence available at the time.

by Greek writers is mentioned as a child when Alexander invaded India, who after Alexander's retreat was king at Palibothra, who was the contemporary of Seleucus Nicator, and several times visited by Megasthenes, was the same as the *Kandragupta* of Indian literature, who reigned at Pataliputra, the founder of a new dynasty, and the grandfather of Asoka. This Asoka was the famous king who made himself the patron of Buddhism, under whom the great Buddhist Council was held in 245 or 242 B.C.,

An important confirmation of that hypothesis has lately been added by two inscriptions discovered by General Cunningham, and published by Dr. Bühler in the 'Indian Antiquary.' Dr. Bühler seems to me to have shown conclusively in his two articles that the writer of these inscriptions could have been no other but Asoka. According to his interpretation, Asoka states that he has been for a long time, or for more than $33\frac{1}{2}$ years, an *upāsaka* or worshipper of Buddha, and that during one year or more he has been a member of the *Samgha*. Now if Asoka was consecrated in 259, and became an *upāsaka* three or four years later, 255 B.C., these inscriptions would have been put up in $255 - 33\frac{1}{2} = 221$ B.C. According to the same inscriptions, 256 years had passed since the departure of Buddha (here, too, I follow Dr. Bühler's interpretation,) $221 + 256 = 477$, thus giving us 477 B.C. as the probable date of Buddha's death.

This confirmation was entirely unexpected, and becomes therefore all the more important. (See, however, the critical remarks of Professor Oldenberg in his 'Introduction to the Vinaya Pīṭaka,' p. L, and Senart, 'Les Inscriptions de Piyadasi,' Introduction, p. 8.

I may add one other confirmation. Mahinda, the son of Asoka, became an ascetic in the sixth year of his father's reign, i.e. in 253 B.C. At that time he was twenty years of age, and must therefore have been born in 273 B.C. Between his birth and Buddha's death 204 years are supposed to have passed, $273 + 204 = 477$, this giving us once more 477 B.C. as the probable date of Buddha's death.

I learn that so high an authority as General Cunningham has arrived at the same conclusion with regard to the date of Buddha's death, and had published it before the appearance of my 'History of Sanskrit Literature,' in 1859; but I do not know whether his arguments were the same as those on which I chiefly relied.

and of whose time we have the first inscriptions, still extant on rocks in different parts of India. These inscriptions are not in Sanskrit, but in a language which stands to Sanskrit in the same relation as Italian to Latin. The days therefore, when Sanskrit was the spoken language of the people, were over in the third century B.C.

(Buddhism, again, the religion of Asoka, stands in the same relation to the ancient Brahmanism of the Veda as Italian to Latin, or as Protestantism to Roman Catholicism. Buddhism, in fact, is only intelligible as a development of, and a reaction against, Brahmanism. As against those, therefore, who consider the whole of Indian literature a modern forgery, or against ourselves, when unwilling to trust our own eyes, we have at least these two facts, on which we can rely: that, in the third century B.C., the ancient Sanskrit language had dwindled down to a mere *volgare* or Prakrit, and that the ancient religion of the Veda had developed into Buddhism, and had been superseded by its own offspring, the state religion in the kingdom of Asoka, the grandson of Kandragupta.

The Veda proclaimed as revealed.

One of the principal points on which Buddhism differed from Brahmanism, was the sacred and revealed character ascribed to the Veda. This is a point of so much historical importance in the growth of the early theology of India, that we must examine it more carefully. The Buddhists, though on many points merely Brahmanists in disguise, denied the

authority of the Veda as a divine revelation; this being so, we may advance another step, and ascribe to the theory of a divine inspiration of the Veda a pre-Buddhistic origin and prevalence.

At what time the claim of being divinely revealed and therefore infallible, was first set up by the Brahmans in favour of the Veda, is difficult to determine. This claim, like other claims of the same kind, seems to have grown up gradually, till at last it was formulated into a theory of inspiration as artificial as any known to us from other religions.

The poets of the Veda speak in very different ways of their compositions. Sometimes they declare that they have made the hymns, and they compare their work, as poets, with that of the carpenter, the weaver, the maker of butter (*ghrita*), the rower of a ship (X, 116, 9)¹.

In other places, however, more exalted sentiments appear. The hymns are spoken of as shaped by the heart (I, 171, 2; II, 35, 2), and uttered by the mouth (VI, 32, 1). The poet says that he found the hymn (X, 67, 1); he declares himself powerfully inspired after having drunk the Soma juice (VI, 47, 3), and he compares his poem to a shower of rain bursting from a cloud (VII, 94, 1), or to a cloud impelled by the wind (I, 116, 1).

After a time the thoughts that rose in the heart and were uttered in hymns were called God given (I, 37, 4), or divine (III, 18, 3). The gods were supposed to have roused and sharpened the mind of the poets (VI, 47, 10); they were called the friends

¹ A most useful collection of passages bearing on this point may be found in Dr. J. Muir's 'Sanskrit Texts,' vol. III.

and helpers of the poets (VII, 88, 4; VIII, 52, 4), and at last the gods themselves were called seers or poets (I, 31, 1). If the petitions addressed to the gods in the hymns of the poets were fulfilled, these hymns were naturally believed to be endowed with miraculous powers, the thought arose of a real intercourse between gods and men (I, 179, 2; VII, 76, 4), and the ideas of inspiration and revelation thus grew up naturally, nay inevitably in the minds of the ancient Brahmans.

By the side of it, however, there also grew up, from the very first, the idea of doubt. If the prayers were not heard, if, as in the contest between Vasisht^a and Visvâmitra, the enemy who had called on other gods prevailed, then a feeling of uncertainty arose which, in some passages of the hymns, goes so far as to amount to a denial of the most popular of all gods, Indra¹.

If, however, the claims to a divine origin of the Veda had amounted to no more than these poetic thoughts, they would hardly have roused any violent opposition. It is only when the divine and infallible character of the whole Veda had been asserted by the Brahmans, and when the Brâhmanas also, in which these claims were formulated, had been represented as divinely inspired and infallible, that a protest, like that of the Buddhists, becomes historically intelligible. This step was taken chiefly during the Sûtra period. Although in the Brâhmanas the divine authority of the Vedas is asserted as a fact, it is not yet, so far as I know, used as an instrument to silence all opposition; and between these two positions the

¹ See this subject treated in Lecture VI.

difference is very great. Though *sruti*, the later technical name for revelation, as opposed to *smṛiti*, tradition, occurs in the *Brāhmanas* (Ait. Br. VII, 9), it is not yet employed there to crush all doubt or opposition. In the old *Upanishads*, in which the hymns and sacrifices of the *Veda* are looked upon as useless, and as superseded by the higher knowledge taught by the forest-sages, they are not yet attacked as mere impositions.

That opposition, however, sets in very decidedly in the *Sūtra* period. In the *Nirukta* (I, 15) *Yāska* quotes the opinions of *Kautsa*, that the hymns of the *Veda* have no meaning at all. Even if *Kautsa* be not the name of a real person, but a nickname only, the unquestioning reverence for the *Veda* must have been on the wane before the days of *Yāska* and *Pāṇini*¹. Nor is it at all likely that *Buddha* was the first and only denier of the sacred authority of the *Veda*, and of all the claims which the *Brahmans* had founded on that authority. The history of heresy is difficult to trace in India, as elsewhere. The writings of *Bṛhaspati*, one of the oldest heretics, constantly quoted in later controversial treatises, have not yet been recovered in India. Without committing myself to any opinion as to his age, I shall state here some of the opinions ascribed to *Bṛhaspati*, to show that even the mild Hindu can hit hard blows, and still more in order to make it clear that the stronghold of *Brahmanism*, namely the revealed character of the

¹ *Pāṇini* was acquainted with infidels and nihilists, as may be seen from IV, 4, 60. *Lokāyata*, another name applied to unbelievers, from which *Laukāyatika*, is found in the *Gaṇa ukthādi*, and IV, 2, 60. *Bārhaspatya* occurs in the commentary only, V, 1, 121.

Vedas, was to them not a mere theory, but a very important historical reality.

In the 'Sarva-darśana-samgraha' (translated by Professor Cowell, Pandit, 1874, p 162), the first philosophical system of which an account is given, is that of the *Kârṣvaka*, who follows the tenets of *Brīhaspati*. The school to which they belonged is called the *Lokāyata*, i e. prevalent in the world. They hold that nothing exists but the four elements, a kind of protoplasm, from which, when changed by evolution into organic body, intelligence is produced, just as the inebriating power is developed from the mixing of certain ingredients. The self is only the body qualified by intelligence, there being no evidence for a self without a body. The only means of knowledge is perception, the only object of man, enjoyment.

But if that were so, it is objected, why should men of proved wisdom offer the *Agnihotra* and other Vedic sacrifices? To this the following answer is returned:—

'Your objection cannot be accepted as any proof to the contrary, since the *Agnihotra*, etc. are only useful as means of livelihood, for the Veda is tainted by the three faults of untruth, self-contradiction, and tautology. Then again the impostors, who call themselves Vedic pandits, are mutually destructive, as the authority of the *Gnānakāṇḍa* (Upanishads) is overthrown by those who maintain that of the *Karmakāṇḍa* (Hymns and *Brāhmaṇas*), while those who maintain the authority of the *Gnānakāṇḍa* reject that of the *Karmakāṇḍa*. Lastly, the three Vedas themselves are only the incoherent rhapsodies

of knaves, and to this effect runs the popular saying:—

'The Agnihotra, the three Vedas, the ascetic's three staves, and smearing oneself with ashes,

Brīhaspati says, these are but means of livelihood for those who have no manliness or sense.'

And again it has been said by *Brīhaspati*:—

'If a beast slain in the *Gyotishṭoma* rite will itself go to heaven,¹

Why then does not the sacrificer forthwith offer his own father?

If the *Srāddha* produces gratification to beings who are dead,

Then there too, in the case of travellers when they start, it is needless to give provisions for the journey.

If beings in heaven are gratified by our offering the *Srāddha* here,

Then why not give the food down below to those who are standing on the house-top?

While life remains, let a man live happily, let him feed on ghee, even though he runs into debt,

When once the body becomes ashes, how can it ever return again?

He who departs from the body goes to another world,

How is it that he comes not back again, restless for love of his kindred?

Hence it is only as a means of livelihood that Brahmins have established here

All these ceremonies for the dead,—there is no other fruit anywhere.

The three authors of the Vedas were buffoons, knaves, and demons.

All the well-known formulas of the pandits, *garphari turphari*, etc.,

And all the horrid rites for the queen commanded in the *Asvamedha*,

These were invented by buffoons, and so all the various kinds of presents to the priests,

While the eating of flesh was similarly commanded by night prowling demons.'

Some of these objections may be of later date, but most of them are clearly Buddhistic. The retort, Why if a victim slain at a sacrifice goes to heaven, does not a man sacrifice his own father, is, as Professor Burnouf has shown, the very argument used by Buddhist controversialists¹. Though Buddhism

¹ Burnouf, 'Introduction à l'histoire du Bouddhisme,' p. 209. In the '*Rāmāyana*' also some of these arguments are employed by the

became recognised as a state religion through Aśoka in the third century only, there can be little doubt that it had been growing in the minds of the people for several generations, and though there is some doubt as to the exact date of Buddha's death, his traditional era begins 543 B.C., and we may safely assign the origin of Buddhism to about 500 B.C.

It is the Sanskrit literature before that date which is the really important, I mean historically important literature of India. Far be it from me to deny the charms of Kālidāsa's play, 'Sakuntalā,' which are very real, in spite of the exaggerated praises bestowed upon it. The same poet's 'Meghadûta,' or Cloud-Messenger, is an elegy which deserves even higher praise, as a purer and more perfect work of art. 'Nala,' if we could only remove some portions, would be a most charming idyll; and some of the fables of the 'Pankatantra' or 'Hitopadeśa,' are excellent specimens of what story-telling ought to be. But all this literature is modern, secondary,—as it were, Alexandrian.

These works are literary curiosities, but no more; and though we may well understand that they formed a pleasant occupation for such men as Sir W. Jones and Colebrooke, during their leisure hours, they could never become the object of a life-study.

Historical character of the Vedic language.

It is very different with the literature of the Veda. First of all, we feel in it on historical ground. The

Frahman Gābāli in order to induce Rāma to break his vow. See Muir, 'Metrical Translations,' p. 218.

language of Vedic literature differs from the ordinary Sanskrit. It contains many forms which afterwards have become extinct, and those the very forms which exist in Greek or other Aryan dialects. Ordinary Sanskrit, for instance has no subjunctive mood. Comparative Philology expected, nay postulated, such a mood in Sanskrit, and the Veda, when once discovered and deciphered, supplied it in abundance.

Ordinary Sanskrit does not mark its accents. The Vedic literature is accentuated and its system of accentuation displays the same fundamental principles as the Greek system.

I like to quote one instance to show the intimate relationship between Vedic Sanskrit and Greek. We know that the Greek *Ζεύς* is the same word as the Sanskrit *Dyaus*, the sky. *Dyaus*, however, occurs in the later Sanskrit as a feminine only. It is in the Veda that it was discovered, not only as a masculine, but in that very combination in which it became the name of the supreme deity in Greek and Latin. Corresponding to Jupiter, and *Ζεύς πατήρ*, we find in the Veda *Dyaush pitar*. But more than that, *Ζεύς* in Greek has in the nominative the acute, in the vocative the circumflex. *Dyaus* in the Veda has in the nominative the acute in the vocative the circumflex. And while Greek grammarians can give us no explanation of that change, it is a change which in Sanskrit has been shown to rest on the general principles of accentuation¹.

¹ The general rule is that in the vocative the high accent is on the first syllable of the word. Remnants only of this rule exist in Greek and Latin, while in Sanskrit it admits of no exception. *Dyaus* having the *svarita* or the combined accent in the vocative is only an apparent

Now I confess that such a vocative, as *Dyaus*, having the circumflex instead of the acute, is to my mind a perfect gem, of the most precious material and the most exquisite workmanship. Who has not wondered lately at those curious relics, of pre-Hellenic art, brought to light at Hissarlik and Mykene by the indefatigable labours of Dr. Schliemann? I am the last man to depreciate their real value, as opening to us a new world on the classical soil of Greece. But what is a polished or perforated stone, what is a drinking vessel, or a shield, or a helmet, or even a gold diadem, compared with this vocative of *Dyaus*? In the one case we have mute metal, rude art, and very little thought: in the other, a work of art of the most perfect finish and harmony, and wrought of a material more precious than gold,—human thought. If it took thousands, or hundreds of thousands of men to build a pyramid, or to carve an obelisc, it took millions of men to finish that single word *Dyaus*, or *Zeús*, or *Jupiter*, originally meaning the illuminator, but gradually elaborated into a name of God! And remember, the Veda is full of such pyramids, the ground is strewn with such gems. All we want is labourers to dig, to collect, to classify, and to decipher them, in order to lay free once more the lowest chambers of that most ancient of all labyrinths, the human mind.

These are not isolated facts or mere curiosities, that can be disposed of with a patronising Indeed! That accent in the vocative of *Dyaus* and *Zeús* is like the nerve of a living organism, still trembling and beating,

exception. The word was treated as dissyllabic, *di* had the high, *aus* the low accent, and the high and low accents together gave the *svarita* or combined accent, commonly called *circumflex*.

and manifesting its vitality under the microscope of the comparative philologist. There is life in it—truly historic life. As modern history would be incomplete without medieval history, or medieval history without Roman history, or Roman history without Greek history, so we learn that the whole history of the world would henceforth be incomplete without that first chapter in the life of Aryan humanity, which has been preserved to us in Vedic literature

It was a real misfortune to Sanskrit scholarship that our first acquaintance with Indian literature should have begun with the prettinesses of Kâlidâsa and Bhavabhûti, and the hideousnesses of the religion of Siva and Vishnu. The only original the only important period of Sanskrit literature, which deserves to become the subject of earnest study, far more than it is at present, is that period which preceded the rise of Buddhism, when Sanskrit was still the spoken language of India, and the worship of Siva was still unknown.

The four strata of Vedic literature.

I. *Sûtra* period, 500 B.C.

We can distinguish three or four successive strata of literature in that pre-Buddhist period. First comes the *Sûtra period*, which extends far into Buddhist times, and is clearly marked by its own peculiar style. It is composed in the most concise and enigmatical form, unintelligible almost without a commentary. I cannot describe it to you, for there is nothing like it in any other literature that I am acquainted with. But I may quote a well known saying of the Brahmans themselves, that the author of a *Sûtra* rejoices more

in having saved one single letter than in the birth of a son: and remember that without a son to perform the funeral rites, a Brahman believed that he could not enter into heaven. The object of these Sûtras was to gather up the knowledge, then floating about in the old Brahmanic settlements or Parishads. They contain the rules of sacrifices, treatises on phonetics, etymology, exegesis, grammar, metre, customs and laws, geometry, astronomy and philosophy. In every one of these subjects they contain original observations and original thought such as can no longer be ignored by any students of these subjects.

Ritual is not a subject that seems to possess any scientific interest at present, still the origin and growth of sacrifice is an important page in the history of the human mind, and nowhere can it be studied to greater advantage than in India.

The science of phonetics arose in India at a time when writing was unknown and when it was of the highest importance to the Brahmans to preserve the accurate pronunciation of their favourite hymns. I believe I shall not be contradicted by Helmholtz, or Ellis or other representatives of phonetic science, if I say that, to the present day, the phoneticians of India of the fifth century B.C. are unsurpassed in their analysis of the elements of language.

In grammar, I challenge any scholar to produce from any language a more comprehensive collection and classification of all the facts of a language than we find in Pâṇini's Sûtras.

With regard to metre, we possess in the observations and the technical terms of the ancient Indian authors a clear confirmation of the latest theories of

modern meticians, viz. that metres were originally connected with dancing and music. The very names for metre in general confirm this. *Khandas* metrie, is connected with *scandere*, in the sense of stepping; *vritta*, metrie, from *vrit*, *verto*, to turn, meant originally the last three or four steps of a dancing movement, the turn, the *versus*, which determined the whole character of dance and of a metre. *Trish-tubh*, the name of a common metre in the Veda¹, meant three step, because its turn, its *vritta* or *versus*, consisted of three steps, ॐ — —.

I do not feel competent to speak with equal certainty of the astronomical and geometrical observations, which we find in some of the ancient Sûtra works. It is well known that at a later time the Hindus became the pupils of the Greeks in these subjects. But I have seen no reason as yet to modify my opinion, that there was an ancient indigenous Hindu astronomy, founded on the twenty-seven Nakshatras or Lunar Mansions and an ancient indigenous Hindu geometry, founded on the construction of altars and their enclosures. The problem, for instance, treated in the *Sulva Sûtras*², how to construct a square altar that should be of exactly the same magnitude as a round altar, suggested probably the first attempt at solving the problem of the squaring of the circle³. Anyhow, the terminology used in

¹ M. M., 'Translation of the Rig Veda,' I, p. ci.

² These Sûtras have for the first time been edited and translated by Professor G. Thibaut, in the 'Pandit.'

³ In Greece, too, we are told that the Delians received an oracle that the misfortunes which had befallen them and all the Greeks would cease, if they built an altar double the present one. In this they did not succeed, because they were ignorant of geometry. Plato, whom

those early Sûtras seems to me home-grown, and it deserves, I believe, in the highest degree the attention of those who wish to discover the first beginnings of mathematical science.

The rules on domestic ceremonies, connected with marriage, birth, baptism, burial, the principles of education, the customs of civil society, the laws of inheritance, of property, of taxation and government, can nowhere be studied to greater advantage than in the *Grihya* and *Dharma-sûtras*. These are the principal sources of those later metrical law-books, the laws of *Manu*, *Yâṇavalkya*, *Parâsara*, and the rest, which, though they contain old materials, are in their present form decidedly of a much later date.

In the same Sûtras¹ we find also certain chapters devoted to philosophy, the first germs of which exist in the *Upanishads*, and receive at a later time a most perfect systematic treatment in the six collections of philosophical Sûtras. These Sûtras may be of a much later date², but to whatever period they belong, they

they consulted, told them how to set about it, and explained to them that the real object of the oracle was to encourage them to cultivate science, instead of war, if they wished for more prosperous days. See Plutarch, 'De Dæmonio Socratis,' cap. vii.

¹ See *Âpastamba Sûtras*, translated by G. Buhler, in 'Sacred Books of the East.'

² The *Sâṅkhya kârikâ* with a commentary was translated into Chinese about 560 A.D. See S. Beal, 'The Buddhist Tripitaka,' p. 84. I owe the date, and the fact that the translation, 'the Golden Seventy Shaster,' agrees with Colebrooke's text, to a private communication from Mr. S. Beal. The author is said to have been Kapila. Originally, it is stated towards the end of the book, there were 60,000 gâthâs, composed by *Paṇḍita* (Kâpileya), the pupil of *Âsuri*, the pupil of Kapila; and afterwards a *Brâhmana*, *Îsvara Kṛishna*, selected 70 out of the 60 000 gâthâs, and published them as the *Suvarṇa-saptati śāstra*. There is also a translation by Hien-tsang of the *Vaiśeṣika nîkāya-darśanapârthasāstra*, composed by *Gūṇakāṇḍa*.

contain not only, as Cousin used to say, the whole development of philosophic thought in a nutshell, but they show us in many cases a treatment of philosophic problems, which, even in these days of philosophic apathy, will rouse surprise and admiration.

II. Brâhmana period, 600-800 B.C.

This period of literature, the Sûtra period, presupposes another, *the period of the Brâhmanas*, works written in prose, but in a totally different style, in a slightly different language, and with a different object. These Brâhmanas, most of which are accentuated, while the Sûtras are so no longer, contain elaborate discussions on the sacrifices, handed down in different families, and supported by the names of various authorities. Their chief object is the description and elucidation of the sacrifice, but they incidentally touch on many other topics of interest. The Sûtras, whenever they can, refer to the Brâhmanas as their authority; in fact, the Sûtras would be unintelligible except as following after the Brâhmanas.

A very important portion of the Brâhmanas are the *Âranyakas*, the forest-books, giving an account of the purely mental sacrifices that have to be performed by the Vânaprasthas, or the dwellers in the forest and ending with the Upanishads, the oldest treatises on Hindu philosophy.

If the Sûtra period began about 600 B.C., the Brâhmana period would require at least 200 years to account for its origin and development, and for the large number of ancient teachers quoted as authorities. But I care little about these chronological dates. They

are mere helps to our memory. What is really important is the recognition of a large stratum of literature lying below the Sûtras but placed itself above another stratum, which I call the *Mantra period*.

III. Mantra period, 800-1000 B.C.

To this period I ascribe the collection and the systematic arrangement of the Vedic hymns and formulas, which we find in four books or the *Samhitâs* of the Rig-Veda the Yaçur-Veda, the Sâma-Veda and the Atharva-Veda. These four collections were made with a distinct theological or sacrificial purpose. Each contains the hymns which had to be used by certain classes of priests at certain sacrifices. The Sâma-veda-samhitâ¹ contains the verses to be used by the singing priests (Udgâtari); the Yaçur-veda-samhitâ the verses and formulas to be muttered by the officiating priests (Adhvaryu). These two collections followed in their arrangement the order of certain sacrifices. The Rig-veda-samhitâ contained the hymns to be recited by the Hotri priests, but mixed up with a large mass of sacred and popular poetry, and not arranged in the order of any sacrifice. The Atharva-veda-samhitâ is a later collection, containing, besides a large number of Rig veda verses, some curious relics of popular poetry connected with charms, imprecations, and other superstitious usages.

We move here already, not only among Epigonoï, but among priests by profession, who had elaborated a most complicated system of sacrifices, and had

¹ With the exception of about seventy five verses, all the rest of the Sâma-veda samhitâ is found in the Rig-Veda.

assigned to each minister and assistant his exact share in the performance of each sacrifice, and his portion of the ancient sacred poetry, to be recited, sung, or muttered by him as the case might be.

Fortunately for us, there was one class of priests for whom no special prayer-book was made containing such extracts only as were required to accompany certain ceremonies but who had to know by heart the whole treasure of their sacred and national poetry. In this manner much has been preserved to us of the ancient poetry of India which has no special reference to sacrificial acts. We have in fact, one great collection of ancient poetry, and that is the collection which is known by the name of the *Rig-Veda*, or the Veda of the hymns in truth the only real or historical Veda, though there are other books called by the same name.

This Veda consists of ten books, each book being an independent collection of hymns, though carried out under the same presiding spirit¹. These collections were preserved as sacred heirlooms in different families, and at last united into one great body of sacred poetry. Their number amounts to 1017 or 1028.

The period during which the ancient hymns were collected, and arranged as prayer-books for the four classes of priests, so as to enable them to take their part in the various sacrifices, has been called the *Mantra period*, and may have extended from about 1000 to 800 B. C.

¹ This is pointed out by the *Paribhāṣhās* of the *Anukramanīs*, which explain the order of the deities according to which the hymns in each *Mandala* were arranged.

IV. *Khandas* period, 1000- x B.C.

It is therefore before 1000 B.C. that we must place the spontaneous growth of Vedic poetry, such as we find it in the Rig-Veda and in the Rig-Veda only, the gradual development of the Vedic religion, and the slow formation of the principal Vedic sacrifices. How far back that period, the so-called *Khandas* period, extended, who can tell? Some scholars extend it to two or three thousand years before our era, but it is far better to show the different layers of thought that produced the Vedic religion, and thus to gain an approximate idea of its long growth, than to attempt to measure it by years or centuries, which can never be more than guess-work.

If we want to measure the real depth of that period, we should measure it by the change of language and metre, even by the change of locality from the north-west to the south-east, clearly indicated in some of the hymns; by the old and new songs constantly spoken of by the poets; by the successive generations of kings and leaders; by the slow development of an artificial ceremonial, and lastly by the first signs of the four castes perceptible in the very latest hymns only. A comparison of the Rig-Veda with the Atharva-veda will in many cases show us how what we ourselves should expect as a later development of the more primitive ideas of the Rig-Veda is what we actually find in the hymns of the Atharva-veda, and in the later portions of the Yağur-veda; nay it is the confirmation of these expectations that gives us a real faith in the historical growth of Vedic literature.

One thing is certain : there is nothing more ancient and primitive, not only in India, but in the whole Aryan world, than the hymns of the Rig-Veda. So far as we are Aryans in language, that is in thought, so far the Rig-Veda is our own most ancient book.

And now let me tell you, what will again sound like a fairy-tale, but is nevertheless a simple fact. That Rig-Veda which, for more than three, or it may be four thousand years, has formed the foundation of the religious and moral life of untold millions of human beings, had never been published ; and by a combination of the most fortunate circumstances, it fell to my lot to bring out the first complete edition of that sacred text, together with the commentary of greatest authority among Hindu theologians, the commentary of Sâyana Âlârya.

The Rig-Veda consists of 1017 or 1028 hymns, each on an average of ten verses. The total number of words, if we may trust native scholars, amounts to 153,826.

The Veda handed down by oral tradition.

But how, you may ask, was that ancient literature preserved ? At present, no doubt, there are MSS. of the Veda, but few Sanskrit MSS. in India are older than 1000 after Christ nor is there any evidence that the art of writing was known in India much before the beginning of Buddhism, or the very end of the ancient Vedic literature. How then were these ancient hymns, and the Brâhmanas, and it may be, the Sûtras too, preserved ? Entirely by memory, but by memory kept under the strictest discipline.

As far back as we know anything of India, we find that the years which we spend at school and at university, were spent by the sons of the three higher classes in learning, from the mouth of a teacher, their sacred literature. This was a sacred duty, the neglect of which entailed social degradation, and the most minute rules were laid down as to the mnemonic system that had to be followed. Before the invention of writing, there was no other way of preserving literature, whether sacred or profane, and in consequence every precaution was taken against accidents.

It has sometimes been asserted that the Vedic religion is extinct in India, that it never recovered from its defeat by Buddhism; that the modern Brahmanic religion, as founded on the Purāṇas¹ and Tāntias, consists in a belief in Vishṇu, Siva and Brahma, and manifests itself in the worship of the most hideous idols. To a superficial observer it may

¹ We must carefully distinguish between the Purāṇas, such as they now exist, and the original Purāṇa, a recognised name for ancient tradition, mentioned already in the Atharva Veda, XI, 7, 24, *rikāḥ sāmāni khandāmsi purāṇam yagushā saha*; XV, 6, 4, *itihāsaḥ purāṇam ka gāthās ka nārāmsis ka*. The original Purāṇa formed part, from the earliest times, of the traditional learning of the Brahmins (see *Āsv. Gṛhya Sūtras*, III, 3, 1), as distinct from the Itihāsas, the legends; and we hear of Purāṇa and Itihāsas being repeated for entertainment, for instance at funerals, *Āsv. Gṛhya Sūtras*, IV, 6, 6. The law-books frequently refer to the Purāṇa as authoritative, as distinct from Veda, Dharmaśāstras and Vedāṅgas, Gautama, XI, 19. Extracts from the Purāṇa are given in *Āpastamba's Dharmaśūtras*, I, 19, 13; II, 23, 3. These are metrical and they are repeated, the former in Manu, IV, 248, 249, the latter in Yāgyavalkya, III, 186. Prose quotations occur, *Āpast. Dh. S.*, I, 29, 7. Totally distinct from this are the Purāṇas. So late as the time of Gaimini no importance was attached to the Purāṇas, for he does not even refer to them in his system of *Mīmāṃsā*. Cf. *Shaddarsana Kintanikā*, I, p. 164.

seem to be so, but English scholars who have lived in India, in intimate relations with the natives, or native scholars who now occasionally visit us in England, give a very different account. No doubt, Prahmanism was for a time defeated by Buddhism; no doubt it had, at a later time, to accommodate itself to circumstances, and tolerate many of the local forms of worship, which were established in India, before it was slowly subdued by the Brahmans. Nor did Brahmanism ever possess a state machinery to establish uniformity of religious belief, to test orthodoxy, or to punish heresy over the whole of India. But how was it that, during the late famine, many people would rather die than accept food from unclean hands¹? Are there any priests in Europe or elsewhere, whose authority would be proof against starvation? The influence of the priests is still enormous in India, and all the greater, because it is embodied in the influence of custom, tradition and superstition. Now those men who are, even at the present moment, recognised as the spiritual guides of the people, those whose influence for good or evil is even now immense, are believers in the supreme authority of the Veda. Everything, whether founded on individual opinion, on local custom, on Tantras or Purānas, nay, even on the law-books of Manu, must give way, as soon as it can be proved to be in direct conflict with a single sentence of the Veda. On that point there can be no controversy. But those Brahmans, who even in this Kali age, and

¹ It is curious that the popular idea that, even during a famine, food must not be accepted from unclean hands, rests on no sacred authority, nay, is flatly contradicted by both *Sruti* and *Smṛiti*.

during the ascendancy of the *Mlecchhas*, uphold the sacred traditions of the past are not to be met with in the drawing-rooms of Calcutta. They depend on the alms of the people, and live in villages, either by themselves, or in colleges. They would lose their prestige, if they were to shake hands or converse with an infidel, and it is only in rare cases that they drop their reserve, when brought in contact with Europeans whose knowledge of their own sacred language and literature excites their wonderment, and with a little pressure, opens their heart and their mouth, like a treasure-house of ancient knowledge. Of course, they would not speak English or even Bengali. They speak Sanskrit and write Sanskrit, and I frequently receive letters from some of them couched in the most faultless language.

And my fairy-tale is not all over yet. These men, and I know it as a fact, know the whole Rig-Veda by heart, just as their ancestors did, three or four thousand years ago; and though they have MSS.,¹ and though they now have a printed text, they do not learn their sacred lore from them. They learn it, as their ancestors learnt it, thousands of years ago, from the mouth of a teacher, so that the Vedic succession should never be broken¹. That oral teaching

¹ This oral teaching is carefully described in the *Prātisākhya* of the Rig-Veda, i.e. probably in the fifth or sixth century B.C. It is constantly alluded to in the *Brāhmaṇas*, but it must have existed even during the earlier periods, for in a hymn of the Rig Veda (VII, 103), in which the return of the rainy season, and the delight and quacking of the frogs is described, we read: 'One repeats the speech of the other, as the pupil (repeats the words) of the teacher.' The pupil is called *sikṣamāṇaḥ*, the teacher *śakṭaḥ*, while *sikṣā*, from the same root, is the recognised technical term for phonetics in later times.

and learning became in the eyes of the Brahmans one of the 'Great Sacrifices,' and though the number of those who still keep it up is smaller than it used to be, their influence, their position, their sacred authority, are as great as ever. These men do not come to England, they would not cross the sea. But some of their pupils, who have been brought up half on the native, and half on the English system, are less strict. I have had visits from natives who knew large portions of the Veda by heart; I have been in correspondence with others who, when they were twelve or fifteen years old, could repeat the whole of it¹. They learn a few lines every day, repeat them for hours, so that the whole house resounds with the noise, and they thus strengthen their memory to that degree, that when their apprenticeship is finished, you can open them like a book, and find any passage you like, any word, any accent. One native scholar, Shankar Pandurang, is at the present moment collecting various readings for my edition of the Rig-Veda, not from MSS., but from the oral tradition of Vaidik Śrotriyas. He writes, on the 2nd March, 1877, 'I am collecting a few of our walking Rig-Veda MSS., taking your text as the basis. I find a good many differences which I shall soon be able to examine more closely, when I may be able to say whether they are various readings, or not. I will, of course, communicate them all to you before making any use of them publicly, if I ever do this at all. As I write, a Vaidik scholar

¹ 'Indian Antiquary,' 1878, p. 140. 'There are thousands of Brāhmanas,' the editor remarks, 'who know the whole of the Rig-Veda by heart, and can repeat it,' etc.

is going over your Riga-Veda text. He has his own MS. on one side, but does not open it, except occasionally. He knows the whole Samhitâ and Pada texts by heart. I wish I could send you his photograph, how he is squatting in my tent with his Upavîta (the sacred cord) round his shoulders, and only a Dhoti round his middle, not a bad specimen of our old Rishis.'

Think of that half-naked Hindu, repeating under an Indian sky the sacred hymns which have been handed down for three or four thousand years by oral tradition. If writing had never been invented, if printing had never been invented, if India had never been occupied by England, that young Brahman, and hundreds and thousands of his countrymen, would probably have been engaged just the same in learning and saying by heart the simple prayers first uttered on the Sarasvatî and the other rivers of the Penjab by Vasish'ha, Viśvâmitra, Syâvâ-va, and others. And here are we, under the shadow of Westminster Abbey, in the very zenith of the intellectual life of Europe, nay, of the whole world, listening in our minds to the same sacred hymns, trying to understand them (and they are sometimes very difficult to understand), and hoping to learn from them some of the deepest secrets of the human heart, that human heart which is the same everywhere, however widely we ourselves may be separated from each other by space and time, by colour and creed.

This is the story I wished to tell you to-day. And though it may have sounded to some of you like a fairy-tale, believe me it is truer in all its details than many a chapter of contemporary history.

POSTSCRIPT TO THE THIRD LECTURE.

As I find that some of my remarks as to the handing down of the ancient Sanskrit literature by means of oral tradition, and the permanence of that system to the present day have been received with a certain amount of incredulity, I subjoin some extracts from the Rig-Veda prâti âkhyâ, to show how the oral teaching of the Vedas was carried on at least 500 B.C., and some statements from the pen of two native scholars, to show how it is maintained to the present day.

The Prâti-âkhyâ of the Rig-Veda, of which I published the text and a German translation in 1856, contains the rules according to which the sacred texts are to be pronounced. I still ascribe this, which seems to me the oldest Prâti-âkhyâ, to the 5th or 6th century B.C., to a period between Yâska on one side, and Pâini on the other, until more powerful arguments can be brought forward against this date than have been hitherto advanced. In the 15th chapter of that Prâtisâkhyâ we find a description of the method followed in the schools of ancient India. The teacher, we are told, must himself have passed through the recognised curriculum, and have fulfilled all the duties of a Brahmanical student (*brahmatârin*), before he is allowed to become a teacher and he must teach such students only as submit to all the rules of studentship. He should settle down in a proper place. If he has only one pupil or two, they should sit on his right side; if more, they must sit as there is room for them. At the beginning of each

lecture the pupils embrace the feet of their teacher, and say: Read Sir. The teacher answers: Om, Yes, and then pronounces two words, or, if it is a compound, one. When the teacher has pronounced one word or two, the first pupil repeats the first word, but if there is anything that requires explanation, the pupil says Sir; and after it has been explained to him (the teacher says) Om, Yes, Sir.

In this manner they go on till they have finished a *prāṣṇa* (question), which consists of three verses, or, if they are verses of more than forty to forty-two syllables, of two verses. If they are *pañkti*-verses of forty to forty-two syllables each, a *prāṇa* may comprise either two or three; and if a hymn consists of one verse only, that is supposed to form a *pra na*. After the *pra-na* is finished, they have all to repeat it once more, and then to go on learning it by heart, pronouncing every syllable with the high accent. After the teacher has first told a *pra-na* to his pupil on the right, the others go round him to the right, and this goes on till the whole *adhyāya* or lecture is finished: a lecture consisting generally of sixty *prāṣṇas*. At the end of the last half-verse the teacher says Sir, and the pupil replies, Om, Yes, Sir, repeating also the verses required at the end of a lecture. The pupils then embrace the feet of their teacher, and are dismissed.

These are the general features of a lesson, but the *Prātisākhya* contains a number of minute rules besides. For instance, in order to prevent small words from being neglected, the teacher is to repeat twice every word which has but one high accent, or consists of one vowel only. A number of small words

are to be followed by the particle *iti*, 'thus,' others are to be followed by *iti*, and then to be repeated again, e.g. *ka-iti ka*.

These lectures continued during about half the year, the term beginning generally with the rainy season. There were, however, many holidays on which no lectures were given, and on these points also the most minute regulations are given both in the *Gṛhya* and *Dharma sūtras*.

This must suffice as a picture of what took place in India about 500 B.C. Let us now see what remains of the ancient system at present.

In a letter received from the learned editor of the '*Shaḍdarāna-kīrtanikā*,' or *Studies in Indian Philosophy*, dated Poona, 8 June, 1878, the writer says:

'A student of a *Rig-Veda-ākhā* (a recension of the *Rig Veda*) if sharp and assiduous, takes about eight years to learn the *Dasagranthas*, the ten books, which consist of

- (1) The *Saṃhitā*, or the hymns.
- (2) The *Brāhmaṇa*, the prose treatise on sacrifices, etc.
- (3) The *Āraṇyaka*, the forest-book.
- (4) The *Gṛhya-sūtras*, the rules on domestic ceremonies.

(5-10) The six *Āngas*, treatises on *Sikshā*, pronunciation, *Gyotisha*, astronomy, *Kalpa*, ceremonial, *Vyākaraṇa*, grammar, *Nighaṇṭu* and *Nirukta*, etymology, *Kāṇḍas*, metre.

'A pupil studies every day during the eight years, except on the holidays the so-called *anadhyāya*, i. e. non-reading days. There being 360 days in a lunar

year, the eight years would give him 2890 days. From this 384 holidays have to be deducted leaving him 2496 work-days during the eight years.

‘Now the ten books consist on a rough calculation of 29,500 *slokas*, so that a student of the *Rig-Veda* has to learn about twelve *slokas* a day, a *sloka* consisting of thirty-two syllables.

‘I ought to point out to you the source of my information. We have an association in Poona which is called the *Vedaśāstrottejakasabhā*, which annually awards prizes in all recognised branches of Sanskrit learning such as the six schools of Indian philosophy, the *Alaṅkāra-śāstra* or rhetoric, *Vaidyaka* or medicine, *Gyotisha* or astronomy, recitation of the *Veda* in its different forms, such as *Pada*, *Krama*, *Ghana*, and *Gatā*, and all the subjects I have already mentioned under the name of *Daśagrantha*, in the case of the *Rig-Veda* Brahmins. The prize-men are recommended by a board of examiners. In every subject a threefold test is employed,—theoretical knowledge of the subject (*prākriyā*), general knowledge of the subject (*upasthiti*), and the construction of passages from recognised works in each branch of knowledge (*granthārthaparīkshā*). About 1000 rupees are distributed by the leading native gentlemen of Poona. At a meeting held the 8th May last there were about fifty Sanskrit Pandits and Vaidikas. In their presence I got the information from an old Vaidika much respected in Poona.’

Another interesting account of the state of native learning comes from the pen of Professor R. G. Bhandarkar, M.A. (*‘Indian Antiquary,’* 1874, p. 132):

‘Every Brahmanic family’ he writes, ‘is devoted

to the study of a particular Veda, and a particular *sâkhâ* (recension) of a Veda; and the domestic rites of the family are performed according to the ritual described in the *Sûtra* connected with that Veda. The study consists in getting by heart the books forming the particular Veda. In Northern India, where the predominant Veda is the White *Yagush*, and the *sâkhâ* that of the *Mâdhyandinas*, this study has almost died out, except at Banâras, where Brahmanic families from all parts of India are settled. It prevails to some extent in Gujarât, but to a much greater extent in the *Marâṭhâ* country; and in *Tailangana* there is a large number of Brahmans who still devote their life to this study. Numbers of these go about to all parts of the country in search of *dakshinâ* (fee, alms), and all well-to-do natives patronise them according to their means, by getting them to repeat portions of their Veda, which is mostly the Black *Yagush*, with *Âpastamba* for their *Sûtra*. Hardly a week passes here in Bombay in which no *Tailangana* Brahman comes to me to ask for *dakshinâ*. On each occasion I get the men to repeat what they have learned, and compare it with the printed texts in my possession.

With reference to their occupation, Brahmans of each Veda are generally divided into two classes, *Grîthasthas* and *Bhikshukas*. The former devote themselves to a worldly avocation, while the latter spend their time in the study of their sacred books and the practice of their religious rites.

Both these classes have to repeat daily the *Sandhyâ-vandana* or twilight prayers, the forms of which are somewhat different for the different Vedas.

But the repetition of the Gâyatrî mantra 'Tat Savitur varenyam,' etc., five, ten, twenty-eight or a hundred and eight times, which forms the principal portion of the ceremony, is common to all.

'Besides this, a great many perform daily what is called *Brahmayajna*, which on certain occasions is incumbent on all. This for the Rig-vedis consists of the first hymn of the first *maṇḍala*, and the opening sentences of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, the five parts of the *Aitareya Âranyaka*, the *Yagur-saṃhitâ*, the *Sâma-saṃhitâ*, the *Atharva-saṃhitâ*, *Âsvalâyana Kalpa Sûtra*, *Nirukta*, *Kṛandas*, *Nighantû*, *Gyotisha*, *Sikshâ*, *Pânini*, *Yâgyavalkya-Smṛiti*, *Mahâbhârata*, and the *Sûtras* of *Kaṇâda*, *Gaimini*, and *Bâdarâyana*.

'Such *Bhikshukas*, however, as have studied the whole Veda repeat more than the first hymn; they repeat as much as they wish (*sa yâvan manyeta tâvad adhîtya, Âsvalâyana*).

'Some of the *Bhikshukas* are what are called *Yâgnikas*. They follow a priestly occupation, and are skilled in the performance of sacred rites. . . .

'But a more important class of *Bhikshukas* are the *Vaidikas*, some of whom are *Yâgnikas* as well. Learning the Vedas by heart and repeating them in a manner never to make a single mistake, even in the accents, is the occupation of their life. The best Rig-vedi *Vaidika* knows by heart the *Samhitâ*, *Pada*, *Krama*, *Gatâ* and *Ghana* of the hymns, the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* and *Âranyaka*, the *Kalpa* and *Grhya Sûtra* of *Âsvalâyana*, the *Nighantû*, *Nirukta*, *Kṛandas*, *Gyotisha*, *Sikshâ*, and *Pânini's* grammar. A *Vaidika* is thus a living Vedic library.

'The *Samhitâ*, *Pada*, *Krama*, *Gatâ* and *Ghana* are different names for peculiar arrangements of the text of the hymns.

'In the *Samhitâ* text all words are joined according to the phonetic rules peculiar to Sanskrit.

'In the *Pada* text the words are divided, and compounds also are dissolved.

'In the *Krama* text, suppose we have a line of eleven words, they are arranged as follows, the rules of *Sandhi* being observed throughout for letters and accent:

1, 2 ; 2, 3 ; 3, 4 ; 4, 5 ; 5, 6 ; 6, 7 ; 7, 8 ; etc. The last word of each verse, and half-verse too, is repeated with *iti* (*vesh/ana*).'

These three, the *Samhitâ*, *Pada*, and *Krama* texts, are the least artificial, and are mentioned already in the *Aitareya-âraṇyaka*, though under different and, as it would seem, older names. The *Samhitâ* text is called *Nirbhūṣa*, i. e. inclined, the final and initial letters being as it were inflected; the *Pada* text is called *Pratrinna*, i. e. cut asunder; the *Krama* text, *Ubhayam-antarena*, i. e. between the two¹.

'In the *Gatâ* the words are arranged as follows:

'1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 2 ; 2, 3, 3, 2, 2, 3 ; 3, 4, 4, 3, 3, 4 ; etc.

¹ 'Rig-veda-prât'sâkhya,' ed. M. M., p. iii, and 'Nachträge,' p. 11. Quite a different nomenclature is that found in the 'Samhitopanishad-brâhmana,' I. (ed. Burnell, pp. 9, 11, seq.) The three *Samhitâs* mentioned there are called *sudihâ*, *aduhaprishhâ*, and *anirbhugâ*. The first is explained as recited after bathing, etc. in a pure or holy place; the second as recited without any mistake of pronunciation; the third *anirbhugâ*, as recited while the arms do not extend beyond the knees, the accents being indicated with the tip of the thumb striking against the fingers.

The last word of each verse and half-verse is repeated with *iti*.

‘In the *Ghana* the words are arranged as follows:

1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 2, 3, 3, 2, 1, 1, 2, 3; 2, 3, 3, 2, 2, 3, 4, 4, 3, 2, 2, 3; 2, 3, 3, 2, 2, 3, 4, 4, 3, 2, 2, 3, 4; 3, 4, 4, 3, 3, 4, 5, 5, 4, 3, 3, 4, 5; etc. The last two words of each verse and half-verse are repeated with *iti*, as e.g. 7, 8, 8, 7, 7, 8; 8 *iti* 8; and again, 10, 11, 11, 10, 10, 11; 11 *iti* 11. Compounds are dissolved (*avagraha*).

‘The object of these different arrangements is simply the most accurate preservation of the sacred text. Not is the recital merely mechanical, the attention being constantly required for the phonetic changes of final and initial letters, and for the constant modification of the accents. The different accents are distinctly shown by modulations of the voice. The *Rig-Vedis*, *Kānvas*, and *Atharva-vedis* do this in a way different from the *Taittirīyas*, while the *Mādhyandinas* indicate the accents by certain movements of the right hand.

‘Among the *Rig-Vedis* it is not common to go so far as the *Ghana*, they are generally satisfied with *Samhitā*, *Pada*, and *Krama*. Among the *Taittirīyas*, however, a great many *Vaidikas* go up to the *Ghana* of the hymns, since they have to get up only their *Brāhmaṇa* and *Āraṇyaka* in addition. Some learn the *Taittirīya Prātiśākhya* also, but the *Vedīngas* are not attended to by that class, nor indeed by any except the *Rig-Vedis*. The *Mādhyandinas* get up the *Samhitā*, *Pada*, *Krama*, *Gatā*, and *Ghana* of their hymns; but their studies generally stop there, and there is hardly one to be found who knows

the whole Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa by heart, though several get up portions of it. There are very few Atharva-vedis in the Bombay Presidency. The students of the Sâma-veda have their own innumerable modes of singing the Sîmas. They get up their Brāhmaṇas and Upanishads also.

‘There is another class of Vedic students called Śrotriyas, or popularly Śrautis. They are acquainted with the art of performing the great sacrifices. They are generally good Vaidikas and in addition study the Kalpa-sûtras and the Prayogas, or manuals. Their number is very limited.

‘Here and there one meets with Agnihotris, who maintain the three sacrificial fires, and perform the fortnightly Ish/ris (sacrifices), and Kâturnâsyas (particular sacrifices every four months). The grander Soma sacrifices are now and then brought forward, but they are, as a matter of course, very unfrequent.’

These extracts will show what can be done by memory for the preservation of an ancient literature. The texts of the Veda have been handed down to us with such accuracy that there is hardly a various reading in the proper sense of the word, or even an uncertain accent, in the whole of the Rig-Veda. There are corruptions in the text, which can be discovered by critical investigation; but even these corruptions must have formed part of the recognised text since it was finally settled. Some of them belong to different Sâkhâs or recensions, and are discussed in their bearing by ancient authorities.

The authority of the Veda, in respect to all religious questions, is as great in India now as it has ever been. It never was contested any more than the authority

of any other sacred book has been. But to the vast majority of orthodox believers the Veda forms still the highest and only infallible authority, quite as much as the Bible with us, or the Koran with the Mohammedans.

THE WORSHIP OF TANGIBLE, SEMI-TANGIBLE, AND INTANGIBLE OBJECTS.

LET us clearly see the place from which we start, the point which we wish to reach, and the road which we have to travel. We want to reach the point where religious ideas take their first origin, but we decline to avail ourselves of the beaten tracks of the fetish theory on the left, and of the theory of a primordial revelation on the right side, in order to arrive at our goal. We want to find a road which, starting from what everybody grants us, viz the knowledge supplied by our five senses, leads us straight, though it may be slowly to a belief in what is not, or at least not entirely, supplied to us by the senses:—the various disguises of the infinite, the supernatural, or the divine.

Evidence of religion never entirely sensuous.

All religions, however they may differ in other respects, agree in this one point, that their evidence is not entirely supplied by sensuous perception. This applies, as we saw, even to fetish-worship, for in worshipping his fetish, the savage does not worship a common stone but a stone which, besides being a

stone that can be touched and handled is supposed to be something else, this something else being beyond the reach of our hands, our ears, or our eyes.

How does this arise? What is the historical process which produces the conviction, that there is or that there can be, anything beyond what is manifest to our senses, something invisible, or, as it is soon called, infinite, super-human, divine? It may, no doubt, be an entire mistake, a mere hallucination, to speak of things invisible, or infinite, or divine. But in that case, we want to know all the more, how it is that people, apparently sane on all other points, have, from the beginning of the world to the present day, been insane on this one point. We want an answer to this, or we shall have to surrender religion as altogether unfit for scientific treatment.

External revelation.

If we thought that mere words could help us, we should say that all religious ideas which transcend the limits of sensuous perception, owed their origin to some kind of external revelation. This sounds well, and there is hardly any religion that does not put forward some such claim. But we have only to translate this argument as it meets us everywhere, into fetish language, in order to see how little it would help us in removing the difficulties which bar our way in an historical study of the origin and growth of religious ideas. Suppose we asked an Ashanti priest how he knew that his fetish was not a common stone, but something else, call it as you like; and suppose he were to say to us that the fetish

himself had told him so, had revealed it to him, what should we say? Yet the theory of a primeval revelation, disguise it as you may, always rests on this very argument. How did man know that there are gods? Because the gods themselves told him so.

This is an idea which we find both among the lowest and amongst the most highly civilised races. It is a constant saying among African tribes, that 'formerly heaven was nearer to men than it is now, that the highest god, the creator himself, gave formerly lessons of wisdom to human beings; but that afterwards he withdrew from them, and dwells now far from them in heaven¹.' The Hindus² say the same, and they, as well as the Greeks³, appeal to their ancestors, who had lived in closer community with the gods, as their authority on what they believe about the gods.

But the question is, how did that idea of gods, or of anything beyond what we can see, first rise up in the thoughts of men, even in the thoughts of their earliest ancestors. The real problem is, how man gained the predicate *God*: for he must clearly have gained that predicate before he could apply it to any object, whether visible or invisible.

Internal revelation.

When it was found that the concept of the infinite, the invisible, or the divine, could not be forced into us from without, it was thought that the difficulty

¹ Watz, ii, p. 171.

² Rig-Veda, I, 179, 2; VII, 76, 4.; Muir's 'Sanskrit Texts,' iii, p. 215.

³ Nagelsbach, 'Homerische Theologie,' p. 151.

could be met by another word. Man, we were told, possessed a religious or superstitious instinct, by which he, alone of all other living creatures, was enabled to perceive the infinite, the invisible, the divine.

Let us translate this answer also into simple fetish language and I think we shall be surprised at our own primitiveness.

If an Ashanti were to tell us that he could see that there was something else in his fetish beyond a mere stone, because he possessed an instinct of seeing it, we should probably wonder at the progress which he had made in hollow phraseology under the influence of European teaching, but we should hardly think that the study of man was likely to be much benefitted by the help of unsophisticated savages. To admit a religious instinct, as something over and above our ordinary mental faculties, in order to explain the origin of religious ideas, is the same as to admit a linguistic instinct in order to explain the origin of language, or an arithmetic instinct in order to explain our power of counting. It is the old story of certain drugs producing sleep, because forsooth they possess a soporific quality.

I do not deny that there is a grain of truth in both these answers, but that grain must first be picked out from a whole bushel of untruth. For shortness' sake, and after we have carefully explained what *we* mean by a primeval revelation, what *we* mean by a religious instinct, we may perhaps be allowed to continue to employ these terms; but they have so often been used with a wrong purpose, that it would seem wiser to avoid them in future altogether.

Having thus burnt the old bridges on which it was so easy to escape from the many difficulties which stare us in the face, when we ask for the origin of religious ideas, all that remains to us now is to advance, and to see how far we shall succeed in accounting for the origin of religious ideas, without taking refuge in the admission either of a primeval revelation or of a religious instinct. We have our five senses, and we have the world before us, such as it is, vouched for by the evidence of the senses. The question is, how do we arrive at a world beyond? or rather, how did our Aryan forefathers arrive there?

The senses and their evidence.

Let us begin then from the beginning. We call real or manifest what we can perceive with our five senses. That is at least what a primitive man calls so, and we must not drag in here the question, whether our senses really convey to us real knowledge or not. We are not dealing at present with Berkeleys and Humes, not even with an Empedokles or Xenophanes, but with a quaternary, it may be a tertiary Troglodyte. To him a bone which he can touch, smell, taste, see, and, if necessary, hear, as he cracks it, is real, very real, as real as anything can be.

We should distinguish, however, even in that early stage between two classes of senses, the senses of touch, scent, and taste, which have sometimes been called the *palaioteric* senses¹, on one side, and the senses of sight and hearing, the so-called *neoteric* senses, on the other. The first three give us the

¹ H. Muirhead, 'The Senses.'

greatest material certainty; the two last admit of doubt, and have frequently to be verified by the former.

Touch seems to offer the most irrefragable evidence of reality. It is the lowest, the least specialised and developed sense, and, from an evolutionary point of view, it has been classed as the oldest sense. Scent and taste are the next more specialised senses, and they are used, the former by animals, and the latter by children, for the purpose of further verification.

To many of the higher animals scent seems the most important test of objective reality, while with man, and particularly with civilised man, it has almost ceased to render any service for that purpose. A child makes but little use of scent, but in order to convince itself of the reality of an object, it first touches it, and afterwards, if it can, it puts it into its mouth. The latter process is surrendered as we grow older, but the former, that of touching things with our hands for the purpose of verification, remains. Many a man, even now, would say that nothing is real that cannot be touched, though he would not insist, with the same certainty, that everything that is real must have a smell or a taste.

The meaning of manifest.

We find this confirmed by language also. When we wish to affirm that the reality of any object cannot be reasonably doubted, we say that it is *manifest*. When the Romans formed this adjective, they knew very well what they meant, or what it meant. *Manifest* meant, with them, what can be touched or struck

with the hands. *Fendo* was an old Latin verb, meaning to strike. It was preserved in *offendo*, or in *defendo*, to strike or to push away from a person. *Festus*, an old irregular participle, stands for *fend* and *tus*, just as *fus-tis*, a cudgel, stands for *fos-tis*¹, *fons-tis*, *fond-tis*.

This *fustis*, cudgel, however, has nothing to do with *fist*². *F* in English points to Latin and Greek *p*; hence *fist* is probably connected with the Greek *πίξ*, with clenched fists, Latin *pugna*, a battle, originally a boxing, *πυκτός* and *pugil*, a boxer. The root of these words is preserved in the Latin verb *pungo*, *pūpūgi*, *punctum*, so that the invisible point in geometry, or the most abstruse point in metaphysics, takes its name from boxing.

The root which yielded *fendo*, *fustis*, and *festus* is quite different. It is *dhan* or *han*, to strike down, which appears in Greek *θείναι*, to strike, *θέναρ*, the flat of the hand, in Sanskrit *han*, to kill, *nidhana*, death, etc.

Let us return now to the things which the early inhabitants of this earth would call manifest or real. A stone, or a bone, or a shell, a tree also, a mountain or a river, an animal also or a man, all these would be called real, because they could be struck with the hand. In fact, all the common objects of their sensuous knowledge would to them be real.

Division of sense-objects into tangible and semi-tangible.

We can, however, divide this old stock of primeval knowledge into two classes:—

¹ Corssen, 'Aussprache,' i. 149, ii 190.

² Grimm, 'Dictionary,' s. v. *faust*.

(1) Some objects, such as stones, bones, shells, flowers, berries, branches of wood, can be touched, as it were, all round. We have them before us in their completeness. They cannot evade our grasp. There is nothing in them unknown or unknowable, at least so far as those are concerned who had to deal with them in early days. They were the most familiar household-words of primitive society.

(2) The case is different when we come to trees, mountains, rivers, or the earth.

Trees.

Even a tree, at least one of the old giants in a primeval forest, has something overwhelming and overawing. Its deepest roots are beyond our reach, its head towers high above us. We may stand beneath it, touch it, look up to it, but our senses cannot take it in at one glance. Besides, as we say ourselves, there is life in the tree¹, while the beam is dead. The ancient people felt the same, and how should they express it, except by saying that the tree lives? By saying this, they did not go so far as to ascribe to the tree a warm breath or a beating heart, but they certainly admitted in the tree that was springing up before their eyes, that was growing, putting forth branches, leaves, blossoms, and fruit, shedding its foliage in winter, and that at last was cut down or killed, something that went beyond the limits of their sensuous knowledge, something unknown and strange, yet undeniably real;—and this unknown and unknowable, yet undeniable something, became to

¹ Matthews, 'Ethnography of Hidatsa Indians,' p. 48.

the more thoughtful among them a constant source of wonderment. They could lay hold of it on one side by their senses, but on the other it escaped from them — 'it fell from them, it vanished.'

Mountains.

A similar feeling of wonderment became mixed up with the perceptions of mountains, rivers, the sea, and the earth. If we stand at the foot of a mountain, and look up to where its head vanishes in the clouds, we feel like dwarfs before a giant. Nay, there are mountains utterly impassable, which to those who live in the valley, mark the end of their little world. The dawn, the sun, the moon, the stars, seem to rise from the mountains, the sky seems to rest on them, and when our eyes have climbed up to their highest visible peaks, we feel on the very threshold of a world beyond. And let us think, not of our own flat and densely peopled Europe, not even of the Alps in all their snow-clad majesty, but of that country, where the Vedic hymns were first uttered, and where Dr Hooker saw from one point twenty snow-peaks, each over 20,000 feet in height, supporting the blue dome of an horizon that stretched over one-hundred-and-sixty degrees, and we shall then begin to understand, how the view of such a temple might make even a stout heart shiver, before the real presence of the infinite.

Rivers.

Next to the mountains come the waterfalls and rivers. When we speak of a river, there is nothing in reality corresponding to such a name. We see

indeed the mass of water which daily passes our dwelling but we never see the whole river we never see the same river. The river, however familiar it may seem to us, escapes the ken of our five senses, both at its unknown source and at its unknown end.

Seneca, in one of his letters, says: 'We contemplate with awe the heads or sources of the greater rivers. We erect altars to a rivulet, which suddenly and vigorously breaks forth from the dark. We worship the springs of hot water, and certain lakes are sacred to us on account of their darkness and unfathomable depth.'

Without thinking as yet of all the benefits which rivers confer on those who settle on their banks, by fertilising their fields feeding their flocks and defending them, better than any fortress, against the assaults of their enemies, without thinking also of the fearful destruction wrought by an angry river, or of the sudden death of those who sink into its waves, the mere sight of the torrent or the stream, like a stranger coming they know not whence, and going they know not whither, would have been enough to call forth in the hearts of the early dwellers on earth, a feeling that there must be something beyond the small speck of earth which they called their own or their home, that they were surrounded on all sides by powers invisible, infinite, or divine.

The Earth.

Nothing, again, may seem to us more real than the earth on which we stand. But when we speak of the earth, as something complete in itself, like a stone, or

an apple, our senses fail us, or at least the senses of the early framers of language failed them. They had a name, but what corresponded to that name was something, not finite, or surrounded by a visible horizon, but something that extended beyond that horizon, something to a certain extent visible and manifest, but, to a much greater extent, non-manifest and invisible.

These first steps which primitive man must have made at a very early time, may seem but small steps, but they were very decisive steps, if you consider in what direction they would lead. They were the steps that would lead man, whether he liked it or not, from the perception of finite things, which he could handle, to what we call the perception of things, not altogether finite, which he could neither span with his fingers, nor with the widest circle of his eyes. However small the steps at first, this sensuous contact with the infinite and the unknown gave the first impulse and the lasting direction in which man was meant to reach the highest point which he can ever reach, the idea of the infinite and the divine.

Semi-tangible objects.

I call this second class of percepts *semi-tangible*, in order to distinguish them from the first class, which may for our purposes be designated as *tangible* percepts, or percepts of tangible objects.

This second class is very large, and there is considerable difference between the various percepts that belong to it. A flower, for instance, or a small tree might scarcely seem to belong to it, because there is

hardly anything in them that cannot become the object of sensuous perception, while there are others in which the hidden far exceeds the manifest or visible portion. If we take the earth, for instance, it is true that we perceive it, we can smell, taste, touch, see and hear it. But we can never perceive more than a very small portion of it, and the primitive man certainly could hardly form a concept of the earth, as a whole. He sees the soil near his dwelling, the grass of a field, a forest, it may be, and a mountain on the horizon ;—that is all. The infinite expanse which lies beyond his horizon he sees only, if we may say so, by not seeing it, or by what is called the mind's eye.

This is no playing with words. It is a statement which we can verify for ourselves. Whenever we look around us from some high mountain-peak, our eye travels on from crest to crest, from cloud to cloud. We rest, not because there is nothing more to see, but because our eyes refuse to travel further. It is not by *reasoning* only, as is generally supposed, that we know that there is an endless view beyond ;—we are actually brought in contact with it we see and feel it. The very consciousness of the finite power of our perception gives us the certainty of a world beyond ; in feeling the limit, we also feel what is beyond that limit.

We must not shrink from translating the facts before us into the only language that will do justice to them : we have before us, before our senses, the visible and the tangible infinite. For infinite is not only that which has no limits, but it is *to us*, and it certainly was to our earliest ancestors, that also of which *we cannot perceive the limits.*

Intangible objects.

But now let us go on. All these so-called semi-tangible percepts can still be verified, if need be, by some of our senses. Some portion, at least, of every one of them can be touched by our hands.

But we now come to a third class of percepts where this too is impossible, where we see or hear objects, but cannot strike them with our hands. What is our attitude towards them?

Strange as it may seem to us that there should be things which we can see, but not touch, the world is really full of them; and more than that, the primitive savage does not seem to have been very much disturbed by them. The clouds to most people are visible only, not tangible. But even if, particularly in mountainous countries, we reckoned clouds among the semi-tangible percepts, there is the sky, there are the stars, and the moon, and the sun, none of which can ever be touched. This third class I call *non-tangible*, or if I might be allowed to coin such a technical term, *intangible* percepts.

We have thus, by a simple psychological analysis, discovered *three classes of things*, which we can perceive with our senses, but which leave in us three very distinct kinds of impression of reality:

(1) *Tangible* objects, such as stones, shells, bones, and the rest. These were supposed to have been the earliest objects of religious worship by that large school of philosophers who hold fetishism to be the first beginning of all religion, and who maintain that the first impulse to religion came from purely finite objects.

(2) *Semi-tangible objects*, such as trees, mountains, rivers, the sea, the earth. These objects supply the material for what I should propose to call *semi-deities*.

(3) *Intangible objects*, such as the sky, the stars, the sun, the dawn, the moon. In these we have the germs of what hereafter we shall have to call by the name of *deities*.

**Testimonies of the ancients as to the character
of their gods.**

Let us first consider some of the statements of ancient writers as to what they considered the character of their gods to be. Epicharmos says¹, the gods were the winds, water, the earth, the sun, fire, and the stars.

Prodikos² says that the ancients considered sun and moon, rivers and springs, and in general all that is useful to us, as gods, as the Egyptians the Nile; and that therefore bread was worshipped as Demeter, wine as Dionysos, water as Poseidon, fire as Hephaestus.

Cæsar³, when giving his view of the religion of the Germans, says that they worshipped the sun, the moon, and the fire.

Herodotus⁴, when speaking of the Persians, says that they sacrificed to the sun, the moon, the earth, fire, water, and the winds.

¹ Stobæus, 'Floril.' xci. 29: 'Ο μὲν Ἐπίχαρμος τοὺς θεοὺς εἶναι λέγει, Ἀνέμους, ὕδωρ, γῆν, ἥλιον, πῦρ, ἀστέρας.

² Zeller, 'Philosophie der Griechen,' vol. i. p. 926; Sext. Math. ix. 18, 51; Cic. N. D. i. 42. 118; Epiph. Exp. Fid. 1088, C.

³ Bell. Gall. vi. 21.

⁴ Herod. i. 31.

Celsus¹, when speaking of the Persians, says that they sacrificed on hill-tops to *Dis*, by whom they mean the circle of the sky; and it matters little, he adds, whether we name this being *Dis*, or 'the Most High,' or *Zsús*, or *Adonai*, or *Sabaoth*, or *Ammon*, or with the Scythians *Papa*.

Quintius Curtius gives the following account of the religion of the Indians: 'Whatever they began to reverence they called gods, particularly the trees, which it is criminal to injure².'

Testimony of the Veda.

Let us now turn to the old hymns of the Veda themselves, in order to see what the religion of the Indians, described to us by Alexander's companions and their successors, really was. To whom are the hymns addressed which have been preserved to us as the most ancient relics of human poetry in the Aryan world? They are addressed not to stocks or stones, but to rivers, to mountains, to clouds, to the earth, to the sky, to the dawn, to the sun—that is to say, not to tangible objects or so-called fetishes but to those very objects which we called semi-tangible, or intangible.

This is indeed an important confirmation, and one that a hundred years ago no one could have looked forward to. For who would then have supposed that we should one day be able to check the statements of Alexander's historians about India and the Indians, by contemporary evidence, nay by a literature at

¹ Fronde, in 'Fraser's Magazine,' 1878, p. 157.

² Curtius, lib. viii, c. 9. § 34. See Happel, 'Anlage zur Religion,' p. 119.

least a thousand years older than Alexander's expedition to India?

But we can go still further; for by comparing the language of the Aryans of India with that of the Aryans of Greece, Italy, and the rest of Europe, we can reconstruct some portions of that language which was spoken before these different members of the Aryan family separated.

Testimony of the undivided Aryan language.

What the ancient Aryans thought about the rivers and mountains, about the earth and the sky, the dawn and the sun, how they conceived what they perceived in them, we can still discover to a certain extent, because we know how they named them. They named them on perceiving in them certain modes of activity with which they were familiar themselves, such as striking, pushing, rubbing, measuring, joining, and which from the beginning were accompanied by certain involuntary sounds, gradually changed into what in the science of language we call *roots*.

This is, so far as I can see at present, the origin of all language and of all thought, and to have put this clearly before us, undismayed by the conflict of divergent theories and the authorities of the greatest names, seems to me to constitute the real merit of Noiré's philosophy¹.

¹ I have lately treated this subject elsewhere in an article 'On the Origin of Reason,' published in the 'Contemporary Review' of February, 1878, to which, as well as to Professor Noiré's original works, I must refer for further detail.

Origin of language.

Language breaks out first in action. Some of the simplest acts, such as striking, rubbing, pushing, throwing, cutting, joining, measuring, ploughing, weaving, etc., were accompanied then, as they frequently are even now, by certain involuntary sounds, sounds at first very vague and varying, but gradually becoming more and more definite. At first these sounds would be connected with the acts only. *Mar*¹, for instance, would accompany the act of rubbing, polishing stones, sharpening weapons, without any intention, as yet, of reminding either the speaker or others of anything else. Soon, however, this sound *mar* would become not only an indication, say on the part of a father, that he was going to work, to rub and polish some stone-weapons himself. Pronounced with a certain unmistakable accent, and accompanied by certain gestures, it would serve as a clear indication that the father meant his children and servants not to be idle while he was at work. *Mar!* would become what we call an imperative. It would be perfectly intelligible because, according to our supposition, it had been used from the first, not by one person only, but by many, when engaged in some common occupation.

After a time, however, a new step would be made. *Mar* would be found useful, not only as an imperative, addressed in common to oneself and others (*mar*, let us work!), but, if it was found necessary to carry stones that had to be smoothed, from one place to

¹ See 'Lectures on the Science of Language,' vol. ii. p. 347.

another, from the sea-shore to a cave, from a chalk-pit to a bee-hive hut, *mar* would suffice to signify not only the stones that were brought together to be smoothed and sharpened, but likewise the stones which were used for chipping, sharpening, and smoothing. *Mar* might thus become an imperative sign, no longer restricted to the act, but distinctly referring to the various objects of the act.

This extension of the power of such a sound as *mar* would, however, at once create confusion; and this feeling of confusion would naturally bring with it a desire for some expedient to avoid confusion.

If it was felt to be necessary to distinguish between *mar*, 'let us rub our stones,' and *mar*, 'now, then, stones to rub,' it could be done in different ways. The most simple and primitive way was to do it by a change of accent, by a different tone of voice. This we see best in Chinese and other monosyllabic languages, where the same sound, pronounced in varying tones, assumes different meanings.

Another equally natural expedient was to use demonstrative or pointing signs, what are commonly called *pronominal roots*; and by joining them to such sounds as *mar*, to distinguish, for instance, between 'rubbing here,' which would be the man who rubs, and 'rubbing there,' which would be the stone that is being rubbed.

This may seem a very simple act, yet it was this act which first made man conscious of a difference between subject and object, nay which over and above the perceptions of a worker and the work done, left in his mind the concept of working, as an act, that could be distinguished both from the subject of the

act, and from its object or result. This step is the real *salto mortale* from sound expressive of percepts to sound expressive of concepts, which no one has hitherto been able to explain, but which has become perfectly intelligible through Noiré's philosophy. The sounds which naturally accompany repeated acts are from the very beginning signs of incipient concepts, i. e. signs of repeated sensations comprehended as one. As soon as these sounds become differentiated by accents or other outward signs so as to express either the agent, or the instrument, or the place, or the time, or the object of any action, the element common to all these words is neither more nor less than what we are accustomed to call the root, the phonetic type, definite in form, and expressive of a general act, and therefore conceptual.

These considerations belong more properly to the science of language ; yet we could not omit them here altogether in treating of the science of religion.

Early concepts.

If we want to know, for instance, what the ancients thought when they spoke of a river, the answer is, they thought of it exactly what they called it, and they called it, as we know, in different ways, either the runner (*sarit*), or the noisy (*nadî* or *dhuni*); or if it flowed in a straight line, the plougher or the plough (*sîrâ*, river, *sîrâ*, plough), or the arrow; or if it seemed to nourish the fields, the mother (*mâtar*); or if it separated and protected one country from another, the defender (*sindhu*, from *sidh*, *sedhati*, to keep off). In all these names you will observe

that the river is conceived as acting. As man runs, so the river runs; as man shouts, so the river shouts; as man ploughs, so the river ploughs; as a man guards, so the river guards. The river is not called at first the plough, but the plougher; nay even the plough itself is for a long time conceived and called an agent, not a mere instrument. The plough is the divider, the tearer, and thus shares often the same name with the burrowing boar, or the tearing wolf¹.

Everything named as active.

We thus learn to understand how the whole word, which surrounded the primitive man, was assimilated or digested by him, he discovering everywhere acts similar to his own acts, and transferring the sounds which originally accompanied his acts to these surrounding agents.

Here, in the lowest depths of language, lie the true germs of what we afterwards call figurism, animism², anthropopathism, anthropomorphism. Here we recognise them as necessities, necessities of language and thought, and not as what they appear to be afterwards, free poetical conceptions. At a time when even the stone which he had himself sharpened was still looked upon by man as his deputy, and called a *cutter*,

¹ *Vrika* is both wolf and plough in the Veda. See 'Lectures on the Science of Language,' vol. i. p. 296. The Slavonic name for boar, *Kjer-nos*, i.e. sweep-nose, is used for plough-share; see 'Gottesidee und Cultus bei den alten Preussen,' p. 36.

² *Animism*, formerly the name of Stahl's doctrine that the soul has two functions, that of thought and that of organic life (see Saisset, 'L'ame et la vie,' 1864), is now often used to signify that view of the world which ascribes life and thought to inanimate things.

not a something to cut with ; when his measuring rod was a measurer, his plough a tearer, his ship a flier, or a bird, how could it be otherwise than that the river should be a shouter, the mountain a defender, the moon a measurer ? The moon in her, or rather in his daily progress, seemed to measure the sky, and in doing so helped man to measure the time of each lunation, of each moon or month. Man and moon were working together, measuring together, and as a man who helped to measure a field or to measure a beam might be called a measurer, say *mâ-s*, from *mâ*, to measure, to make ; thus the moon also was called *mâs*, the measurer, which is its actual name in Sanskrit, closely connected with Greek *μῆς*, Latin *mensis*, English *moon*.

These are the simplest, the most inevitable steps of language. They are perfectly intelligible, however much they may have been misunderstood. Only let us be careful to follow the growth of human language and thought step by step.

Active does not mean human.

Because the moon was called *measurer*, or even *carpenter*, it does not follow that the earliest framers of languages saw no difference between a moon and a man. Primitive men, no doubt, had their own ideas very different from our own ; but do not let us suppose for one moment that they were idiots, and that, because they saw some similarity between their own acts and the acts of rivers, mountains, the moon, the sun, and the sky, and because they called them by names expressive of those acts, they therefore saw no

difference between a man, called a measurer, and the moon, called a measurer, between a real mother, and a river called the mother.

When everything that was known and named had to be conceived as active, and if active, then as personal, when a stone was a cutter, a tooth, a grinder or an eater, a gimlet, a borer, there was, no doubt, considerable difficulty in dispersonifying, in distinguishing between a measurer and the moon, in neutralising words, in producing in fact neuter nouns, in clearly distinguishing the tool from the hand, the hand from the man; in finding a way of speaking even of a stone as something simply trodden under foot. There was no difficulty in figuring, animating, or personifying.

Thus we see how, for our purposes, the problem of personification, which gave so much trouble to former students of religion and mythology, is completely inverted. Our problem is not, how language came to personify, but how it succeeded in dispersonifying.

Grammatical gender.

It has generally been supposed that grammatical gender was the cause of personification. It is not the cause, but the result. No doubt, in languages in which the distinction of grammatical gender is completely established, and particularly in the later periods of such languages, it is more easy for poets to personify. But we are here speaking of much earlier times. No, even in sex-denoting languages, there was a period when this denotation of sex did not yet exist. In the Aryan languages, which afterwards

developed the system of grammatical gender so very fully, some of the oldest words are without gender. *Pater* is not a masculine, nor *mater* a feminine; nor do the oldest words for river, mountain, tree, or sky disclose any outward signs of grammatical gender. But though without any signs of gender, all ancient nouns expressed activities.

In that state of language it was almost impossible to speak of things not active, or not personal. Every name meant something active. If *calx*¹, the heel, meant the kicker, so did *calx*, the stone. There was no other way of naming it. If the heel kicked the stone, the stone kicked the heel; they were both *calx*. *Vi* in the Veda is a bird, a flier, and the same word means also an arrow. *Yudh* meant a fighter, a weapon, and a fight.

A great step was made, however, when it was possible, by outward signs, to distinguish between the Kick-here, and the Kick-there, the Kicker and the Kicked, and at last between animate and inanimate names. Many languages never went beyond this. In the Aryan languages a further step was made by distinguishing, among animate beings, between males and females. This distinction began, not with the introduction of masculine nouns, but with the introduction of feminines, i.e. with the setting apart of certain derivative suffixes for females. By this all other words became masculine. At a still later time, certain forms were set apart for things that were neuter, i.e. neither feminine

¹ *Calx* s, from $\sqrt{\text{kal}}$, cel lo; heel, the Old N. *hæl-l*; Gr. *λάξ* for *κλαξ*, for *καλξ*. *Calx*, cal-cul us, cal cul are, etc.

nor masculine, but generally in the nominative and accusative only.

Grammatical gender, therefore, though it helps very powerfully in the later process of poetical mythology, is not the real motive power. That motive power is inherent in the very nature of language and thought. Man has vocal signs for his own acts, he discovers similar acts in the outward world, and he grasps, he lays hold, he comprehends the various objects of his outward world by the same vocal signs. He never dreams at first, because the river is called a defender, that therefore the river has legs, and arms, and weapons of defence; or that the moon, because he divides and measures the sky, is a carpenter. Much of this misunderstanding will arise at a later time. At present, we move as yet in much lower strata of thought.

Auxiliary verbs.

We imagine that language is impossible without sentences, and that sentences are impossible without the copula. This view is both right and wrong. If we mean by sentence what it means, namely an utterance that conveys a sense, then it is right: if we mean that it is an utterance consisting of several words, a subject, and a predicate, and a copula, then it is wrong. The mere imperative is a sentence; every form of the verb may be a sentence. What we now call a noun was originally a kind of sentence, consisting of the root and some so-called suffix, which pointed to something of which that root was predicated. So again, when there is a subject and a predicate, we may say that a copula is understood,

but the truth is that at first it was not expressed, it was not required to be expressed; nay in primitive languages it was simply impossible to express it. To be able to say *vir est bonus*, instead of *vir bonus*, is one of the latest achievements of human speech.

We saw that the early Aryans found it difficult to speak, that is to think, of anything except as active. They had the same difficulties to overcome, when trying to say that a thing simply is or was. They could only express that idea at first, by saying that a thing did something which they did themselves. Now the most general act of all human beings was the act of breathing, and thus where we say that things are, they said that things breathe.

AS, to breathe.

The root *as*, which still lives in our *he is*, is a very old root. it existed in its abstract sense previous to the Aryan separation. Nevertheless we know that *as* before it could mean to be, meant to breathe.

The simplest derivation of *as*, to breathe, was *as-u*, in Sanskrit, breath; and from it probably *as-u-ra*, those who breathe, who live, who are, and at last, the oldest name for the living gods, the Vedic *Asura*¹.

¹ This Sanskrit *asu* is the Zend *ahu*, which in the Avesta has the meanings of conscience and world (see Darmesteter, 'Ormazd et Ahriman,' p 47). If *ahu* in Zend is used also in the sense of lord, it does not follow that therefore *ahura* in *Ahura mazda* meant lord, and was formed by a secondary suffix *ra*. Zend may have assigned to *ahu* two meanings, breath and lord, as it did in the case of *ratu*, order and orderer. But to assign to Sanskrit *asura* the meaning of lord, because *Ahu* in Zend is used in that sense, seems inadmissible.

BHŪ, to grow.

When this root as to breathe, was felt to be inconvenient, as applied, for instance, to trees and other things which clearly do not breathe, a second root was taken, bh ū, meaning originally to grow, the Greek *φύω*, which still lives in our own *to be*. It was applicable, not to the animal world only, but also to the vegetable world to everything growing, and the earth itself was called Bh ūs, the growing one.

VAS, to dwell.

Lastly, when a still wider concept was wanted the root vas was taken, meaning originally to abide, to dwell. We find it in Sanskrit, vas-tu a house, the Greek *ἄστυ*, town, and it still lingers on in the English *I was*. This could be used of all things which fall neither under the concept of breathing, nor under that of growing. It was the first approach to an expression of impersonal or dead being. There is, in fact, a certain analogy between the formation of masculine, feminine, and neuter nouns and the introduction of these three auxiliary verbs.

Primitive expression.

Let us apply these observations to the way in which it was possible for the early Aryan speakers to say anything about the sun, the moon, the sky, the earth, the mountains and the rivers. When we should say, the moon exists, the sun is there, or it blows, it rains, they could only think and say, the

sun breathes (sûryo asti) the moon grows (mâ bha-vati), the earth dwells (bhûr vasati) the wind or the blower blows (vâyur vâti), the rain rains (indra unatti or vîshâ vaishati, or soma/sunoti).

We are speaking here of the earliest attempts at comprehending and expressing the play of nature, which was acted before the eyes of man. We are using Sanskrit only as an illustration of linguistic processes long anterior to Sanskrit. How the comprehension determined the expression, and how the various expressions, in becoming traditional, reacted on the comprehension, how that action and reaction produced by necessity ancient mythology, all these are problems which belong to a later phase of thought, and must not be allowed to detain us at present. One point only there is which cannot be urged too strongly. Because the early Aryans had to call the sun by names expressive of various kinds of activity, because he was called illuminator or warmer, maker or nourisher, because they called the moon the measurer, the dawn the awakener, the thunder the roarer, the rain the rainer, the fire the quick runner, do not let us suppose that they believed these objects to be human beings, with arms and legs. Even when they still said 'the sun is breathing,' they never meant that the sun was a man or at least an animal, having lungs and a mouth to breathe with. Our troglodyte ancestors were neither idiots nor poets. In saying 'the sun or the nourisher is breathing,' they meant no more than that the sun was active, was up and doing, was moving about like ourselves. The old Aryans did not yet see in the moon two eyes, a nose, and a mouth, nor did they represent

to themselves the winds that blew, as so many fat-cheeked urchins. puffing streams of wind from the four corners of the sky. All that will come by and bye, but not in these early days of human thought.

Likeness, originally conceived as negation.

During the stage in which we are now moving I believe that our Aryan ancestors, so far from animating, personifying, or humanizing the objects, which we described as semi-tangible or intangible, were far more struck by the difference between them and themselves than by any imaginary similarities.

And here let me remind you of a curious confirmation of this theory preserved to us in the Veda. What we call comparison is still, in many of the Vedic hymns, negation. Instead of saying as we do, 'firm like a rock,' the poets of the Veda say, 'firm, not a rock¹;' that is, they lay stress on the dissimilarity, in order to make the similarity to be felt. They offer a hymn of praise to the god, not sweet food², that is, as if it were sweet food. The river is said to come near roaring not a bull, i.e. like a bull; and the Maruts or storm-gods are said³ to hold their worshippers in their arms, 'a father, not the son,' viz. like as a father carries his son in his arms.

Thus the sun and the moon were spoken of, no

¹ Rig-Veda, I, 52, 2, *saḥ parvataḥ na ākṛyutaḥ*; I, 64, 7, *girayaḥ na svatayasaḥ*. The *na* is put after the word which serves as a comparison, so that the original conception was 'he, a rock, no;' i.e. he not altogether, but only to a certain point, a rock.

² Rig Veda, I, 61, 1.

³ Ibid. 38, 1.

doubt, as moving about, but *not* as animals; the rivers were roaring and fighting, but they were *not* men; the mountains were not to be thrown down, but they were *not* warriors; the fire was eating up the forest, yet it was *not* a lion.

In translating such passages from the Veda, we always render *na*, not, by *like*; but it is important to observe that the poets themselves were originally struck by the dissimilarity quite as much, if not more than by the similarity.

Standing epithets.

In speaking of these various objects of nature, which from the earliest times excited their attention, the poets would naturally use certain epithets more frequently than others. These objects of nature were different from each other, but they likewise shared a certain number of qualities in common; they therefore could be cilled by certain common epithets, and afterwards fall into a class, under each epithet, and thus constitute a new concept. All this was possible:—let us see what really happened.

We turn to the Veda, and we find that the hymns which have been preserved to us, are all addressed, according to the views of the old Indian theologians, to certain *devatâs*¹. Etymologically this word *devatâ* corresponds exactly to our word *deity*, but in the hymns themselves *devatâ* never occurs in that sense. The idea of *deity* as such, had not yet been formed. Even the old Hindu commentators say that what

¹ *Anukramanikâ*: *Yasya vâkyam sa rishih, yâ teno'lyate, sâ devatâ. Tena vâkyena prâtipâdyam yad vastu, sâ devatâ.*

they mean by *devatâ*, is simply whatever or whoever is addressed in a hymn, the object of the hymn, while they call *rîshi* or seer, whoever addresses anything or anybody, the subject of the hymn. Thus when a victim that has to be offered is addressed, or even a sacrificial vessel, or a chariot, or a battle-axe, or a shield, all these are called *devatâs*. In some dialogues which are found among the hymns whoever speaks is called the *rîshi*, whoever is spoken to is the *devatâ*. *Devatâ* has become in fact a technical term, and means no more in the language of native theologians than the object addressed by the poet. But though the abstract term *devatâ* deity, does not yet occur in the hymns of the Rig-Veda, we find that most of the beings to whom the ancient poets of India addressed their hymns were called *deva*. If the Greeks had to translate this *deva* into Greek, they would probably use *θεός*, just as we translate the Greek *θεοί* by gods, without much thinking what we mean by that term. But when we ask ourselves what thoughts the Vedic poets connected with the word *deva*, we shall find that they were very different from the thoughts expressed by the Greek *θεός* or the English god; and that even in the Veda, the Brâhmanas, the *Âranyakas* and *Sûtras*, the meaning of that word is constantly growing and changing. The true meaning of *deva* is its history, beginning from its etymology and ending with its latest definition.

Deva, from the root *div*, to shine, meant originally bright: the dictionaries give its meaning as god or divine. But if in translating the hymns of the Veda we always translate *deva* by *deus*, or by god, we should sometimes commit a mental anachronism of a

thousand years. At the time of which we are now speaking, gods in our sense of the word, did not yet exist. They were slowly struggling into existence, that is to say, the concept and name of deity was passing through the first stages of its evolution. 'In contemplation of created things men were ascending step by step to God¹.' And this is the real value of the Vedic hymns. While Hesiod gives us, as it were, the past history of a theogony, we see in the Veda the theogony itself, the very birth and growth of the gods, i. e. the birth and growth of the words for god; and we also see in later hymns—later in character, if not in time—the subsequent phases in the development of these divine conceptions.

Nor is *deva* the only word in the Veda which, from originally expressing one quality shared in common by many of the objects invoked by the *Rishis*, came to be used at last as a general term for deity. *Vasu*, a very common name for certain gods in the Veda, meant likewise originally bright.

Some of these objects struck the mind of the early poets as unchangeable and undecaying, while everything else died and crumbled away to dust. Hence they called them *amarta*, ἀμβροτος, not dying, *agara*, ἀγήρως, not growing old or decaying.

When the idea had to be expressed, that such objects as the sun or the sky were not only unchangeable, undecaying, undying, while everything else, even animals and men, changed, decayed, and died, but that they had a real life of their own, the word *asura* was used, derived, as I have little doubt, from *asu*, breath². While *deva* owing to its origin, was re-

¹ Brown, 'Dionysiak Myth,' i. p. 50. ² Taitt. Br. II, 3, 8, 1.

stricted to the bright and kindly appearances of nature, asura was under no such restriction, and was therefore from a very early time, applied not only to the beneficent, but also to the malignant powers of nature. In this word asura, meaning originally endowed with breath, and afterwards god, we might recognise the first attempt at what has sometimes been called animism in later religions.

Another adjective, ishira, had originally much the same meaning as asura. Derived from ish, sap, strength, quickness, life, it was applied to several of the Vedic deities, particularly to Indra, Agni, the Asvins Maruts, Âdityas, but likewise to such objects as the wind, a chariot, the mind. Its original sense of quick and lively crops out in Greek *ἑρὸς ἰχθύς*, and *ἑρὸν μένος*¹, while its general meaning of divine or sacred in Greek, must be accounted for like the meaning of asura, god, in Sanskrit.

Tangible objects among the Vedic deities.

To return to our three classes of objects, we find the first hardly represented at all among the so-called deities of the Rig-Veda. Stones, bones, shells, herbs, and all the other so called fetishes, are simply absent in the old hymns, though they appear in more modern hymns particularly those of the Atharva-Veda. When artificial objects are mentioned and celebrated in the Rig-Veda, they are only such as might be praised even by Wordsworth or Tennyson—chariots, bows, quivers, axes, drums, sacrificial vessels and similar

¹ The identity of *ἑρὸς* with ishira was discovered by Kuhn, 'Zeitschrift,' ii. 274. See also Curtius, 'Zeitschrift,' iii. 154.

objects. They never assume any individual character, they are simply mentioned as useful, as precious, it may be, as sacred¹.

Semi-tangible objects among the Vedic deities.

But when we come to the second class, the case is very different. Almost every one of the objects, which we defined as semi-tangible, meets us among the so-called deities of the Veda. Thus we read, Rig-Veda I, 90, 6-8:—

‘The winds pour down honey upon the righteous, the rivers pour down honey; may our plants be sweet;’ 6.

‘May the night be honey, and the dawn; may the sky above the earth be full of honey; may heaven, our father, be honey;’ 7.

‘May our trees be full of honey, may the sun be full of honey; may our cows be sweet;’ 8.

I have translated literally, and left the word *madhu*,

¹ It has been stated that utensils or instruments never become fetishes; see Kapp, ‘Grundlinien der Philosophie der Technik,’ 1878, p. 104. He quotes Caspari, ‘Urgeschichte der Menschheit,’ i. 309, in support of his statement. In H. Spencer’s ‘Principles of Sociology,’ i. 343, we read just the contrary: ‘In India the woman adores the basket which seems to bring or to hold her necessities, and offers sacrifices to it; as well as the rice mill and other implements that assist her in her household labours. A carpenter does the like homage to his hatchet, his adze, and his other tools; and likewise offers sacrifices to them. A Brahman does so to the style with which he is going to write; a soldier to the arms he is to use in the field; a mason to his trowel.’ This statement of Dubois would not carry much conviction. But a much more competent authority, Mr. Lyall, in his ‘Religion of an Indian Province,’ says the same: ‘Not only does the husbandman pray to his plough, the fisher to his net, the weaver to his loom; but the scribe adores his pen, and the banker his account books.’ The question only is, what is meant here by adoring?

which means honey, but which in Sanskrit has a much wider meaning. Honey meant food and drink, sweet food and sweet drink; and hence refreshing rain, water, milk, anything delightful was called honey. We can never translate the fulness of those ancient words; only by long and careful study can we guess how many chords they set vibrating in the minds of the ancient poets and speakers.

Again, Rig-Veda X, 64, 8, we read:—

‘We call to our help the thrice seven running rivers, the great water, the trees, the mountains, and fire.’

Rig-Veda VII, 34, 23. ‘May the mountains, the waters, the generous plants, and heaven, may the earth with the trees, and the two worlds (*rodasî*), protect our wealth.’

Rig-Veda VII, 35, 8. ‘May the far-seeing sun rise propitious, may the four quarters be propitious; may the firm mountains be propitious, the rivers, and the water.’

Rig-Veda III, 54, 20. ‘May the strong mountains hear us.’

Rig-Veda V, 46, 6. ‘May the highly-praised mountains and the shining rivers shield us.’

Rig-Veda VI, 52, 4. ‘May the rising dawns protect me! May the swelling rivers protect me! May the firm mountains protect me! May the fathers protect me, when we call upon the gods!’

Rig-Veda X, 35, 2. ‘We choose the protection of heaven and earth; we pray to the rivers the mothers, and to the grassy mountains to the sun and the dawn, to keep us from guilt. May the Soma juice bring us health and wealth to-day!’

Lastly, one more elaborate invocation of the rivers, and chiefly of the rivers of the Penjâb, whose borders form the scene of the little we know of Vedic history:—

Rig-Veda X, 75. 'Let the poet declare, O waters, your exceeding greatness, here in the seat of Vivasvat. By seven and seven they have come forth in three courses, but the Sindhu (Indus) exceeds all the other wandering rivers by her strength;' 1.

'Varuna dug out a path for thee to walk on, when thou rankest to the race. Thou proceedest on a precipitous ridge of the earth, when thou art lord in the van of all the moving streams;' 2.

'The sound rises up to heaven above the earth; she stirs up with splendour her endless power. As from a cloud, the showers thunder forth, when the Sindhu comes, roaring like a bull;' 3.

'To thee, O Sindhu, they (the other rivers) come as lowing mother cows (run) to their young, with their milk. Like a king in battle thou leadest the two wings, when thou reachest the front of these down-rushing rivers;' 4.

'Accept, O Gangâ (Ganges), Yamunâ (Jumna), Sarasvatî (Sursûti), Sutudri (Sutlej), Parushni (Ravi), my praise! With the Asikni (Akesines), listen O Marudvridhâ, and with the Vitastâ (Hydaspes, Ec-hat), O Arjikiyâ, listen with the Sushomâ!' 5.

'First thou goest united with the Trishâmâ on thy journey, with the Susartu, the Rasâ, and the Sveti, O Sindhu, with the Kulhâ (Kophen, Cabul river), to the Gomati (Gomal), with the Mehatnu to the Krumu (Kurum), with whom thou proceedest together;' 6.

'Sparkling, bright, with mighty splendour she

carries the waters across the plains, the unconquered Sindhu, the quickest of the quick, like a beautiful mare, a sight to see;' 7.

'Rich in horses, in chariots, in garments, in gold, in booty, in wool, and in straw, the Sindhu, handsome and young, clothes herself with sweet flowers;' 8.

'The Sindhu has yoked her easy chariot with horses; may she conquer prizes for us in this race! The greatness of her chariot is praised as truly great, that chariot which is irresistible, which has its own glory, and abundant strength.' 9.

I have chosen these invocations out of thousands, because they are addressed to what are still perfectly intelligible beings semi-tangible objects. semi-deities.

The question which we have to answer now is this: Are these beings to be called gods? In some passages decidedly not, for we ourselves, though we are not polytheists could honestly join in such language as that the trees, and the mountains, and the rivers, the earth, the sky, the dawn, and the sun may be sweet and pleasant to us.

An important step, however, is taken when the mountains, and the rivers, and all the rest, are invoked to protect man. Still even that might be intelligible. We know what the ancient Egyptians felt about the Nile¹, and even at present a Swiss patriot might well invoke the mountains and rivers to protect him and his house against foreign enemies.

But one step follows another. The mountains are asked to listen; this, too, is to a certain extent intelligible still; for why should we address them, if they were not to listen?

¹ Le Page Renouf, 'Hibbert Lectures,' p. 223.

The sun is called far-seeing—why not? Do we not see the first rays of the rising sun, piercing through the darkness, and glancing every morning at our roof? Do not these rays enable us to see? Then, why should not the sun be called far-lighting, far-glancing, far-seeing?

The rivers are called mothers! Why not? Do they not feed the meadows, and the cattle on them? Does not our very life depend on the rivers not failing us with their water at the proper season?

And if the sky is called 'not a father,' or 'like a father,' or at last father,—does not the sky watch over us, protect us, and protect the whole world? Is there anything else so old, so high, at times so kind, at times so terrible as the sky¹?

If all these *beings*, as we call them in our language, devas², bright ones, as they were often called in the

¹ We seldom meet with writers who defend their belief in the powers of nature against the attacks of believers in one supreme God; nay, it is difficult for us to imagine how, when the idea of one God had once been realised, a faith in independent deities could still be sustained. Yet such defences exist. Celsus, whoever he was, the author of the 'True Story,' which we know as quoted and refuted by Origen, distinctly defends the Greek polytheism against the Jewish or Christian monotheism. 'The Jews,' he writes, 'profess to venerate the heavens and the inhabitants of the heavens; but the grandest, the most sublime, of the wonders of those high regions they will not venerate. They adore the phantasm of the dark, the obscure visions of their sleep; but for those bright and shining harbingers of good, those ministers by whom the winter rains and the summer warmth, the clouds and the lightnings and the thunders, the fruits of the earth and all living things are generated and preserved, those beings in whom God reveals his presence to us, those fair celestial heralds, those angels which are angels indeed, for them they care not, they heed them not.' Orig. c. Cels. v. 6. Froude, 'On Origen and Celsus,' in 'Fraser's Magazine,' 1878, p. 157.

² In the Upanishads *deva* is used in the sense of forces or faculties;

language of our forefathers, were implored to grant honey, that is joy, food, happiness, we are not startled ; for we too know there are blessings proceeding from all of them.

The first prayer that sounds really strange to us is when they are implored to keep us from guilt. This is clearly a later thought ; nor need we suppose, because it comes from the Veda, that all we find there belongs to one and the same period. Though the Vedic hymns were collected about 1000 B.C., they must have existed for a long time before they were collected. There was ample time for the richest growth, nor must we forget that individual genius, such as finds expression in these hymns, frequently anticipates by centuries the slow and steady advance of the main body of the great army for the conquest of truth.

We have advanced a considerable way, though the steps which we had to take were simple and easy. But now let us suppose that we could place ourselves face to face with the poets of the Veda, even with those who called the rivers mothers, and the sky father, and who implored them to listen, and to free them from guilt ; what would they say, if we asked them whether the rivers and the mountains, and the sky were their *gods* ? I believe they would not even understand what we meant. It is as if we asked children whether they considered men, horses, flies and fishes as animals, or oaks and violets as vegetables. They would certainly answer, No ; because

the senses are frequently called *devas*, also the *prāṇas*, the vital spirits. *Devatā* too sometimes must be translated by a being ; see *Kāṇḍ. Up. 6, 3, 2, seq.*

they had not yet arrived at the higher concept which, at a later time, enables them to comprehend by one grasp objects so different in appearance. The concept of *gods* was no doubt silently growing up, while men were assuming a more and more definite attitude towards these semi-tangible and intangible objects. The search after the intangible, after the unknown, which was hidden in all these semi-tangible objects, had begun as soon as one or two or more of our perceptive tentacles were disappointed in their search after a corresponding object. Whatever was felt to be absent in the full reality of a perception, which full reality meant perceptibility by all five senses, was taken for granted, or looked for elsewhere. A world was thus being built up, consisting of objects perceptible by two senses, or by one sense only, till at last we approach a world of objects perceptible by none of our senses, and yet acknowledged as real, nay as conferring benefits on mankind in the same manner as trees, rivers, and mountains.

Let us look more closely at some of the intermediate steps which lead us from semi-tangible to intangible, from natural to supernatural objects:—and first the *fire*.

The fire.

Now the fire may seem not only very visible, but also very tangible; and so, no doubt, it is. But we must forget the fire as we know it now, and try to imagine what it was to the early inhabitants of the earth. It may be that, for some time, man lived on earth, and began to form his language, and his thoughts, without possessing the art of kindling fire.