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### The History and Development of the Hindu Scriptures

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THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
HINDU SCRIPTURES

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Historical Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity

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by

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June 1956

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## CHAPTER I

### AN INTRODUCTION TO HINDU SCRIPTURE

This study is designed to be an introduction to the Hindu Scriptures. As a by-product of this, it is unavoidably an introduction to Hinduism. As such, it should be used by the student as a stepping stone prior to branching out into the midstream of Hindu theology.

The writer had two reasons for undertaking this study. The first being that he feels that the next great world power to arise will arise in Asia. He feels that this power will not arise by might of arms but by the power of the mind, since it will follow in the wake of an atomic war involving the United States, China and Russia. This power will be primarily a peaceful power advocating non-violence, which the world will accept because it will be worn out by violence. The writer feels that if this power is not India, it will borrow much from the religion of India, Hinduism.

The second reason for this study is a negative one. It arises from the paucity of material on Hinduism to be found in Pritzlaff Memorial Library. The writer is making suggestions of books to obtain so that this condition may be remedied, and he offers this brief overview of Hindu religious literature in the hope that it, too, may help the interested student.

There are two divisions of Hindu Scriptures. The first is known as Sruti (That Which Was Heard). This section includes the four Vedas, the Brahmanas, and the Upanishads. Hindus attribute divine origin to these books and regard them as divine revelation. Most authorities believe that these books were completed and in a written form before the year 500 B.C. Additional writings have been gathered; these are called Smriti (That Which Is Remembered). These books are generally listed under five headings: Vedangas, Dharma, Sastras, Nibhandas, Puranas, and the epics. The Smriti is regarded as the divinely inspired works of men.

This study will concern itself mainly with the Sruti; although a chapter is devoted to the description of the Smriti in the interest of completeness. Each of the four Vedas will be investigated, described, and characterized. We will find that the Rigveda is the richest in theological content; so that we will delve into the theology of Hinduism at this point. The Yajurveda is the Leviticus of the Vedas, and also the cause of a schism in Hinduism. The Samaveda is wholly metrical in form, and at this point, we will enter into a discussion of Hindu music and poetic meter. The Atharvaveda is the book of superstitions. The Brahmanas are the books for the priests explaining the sacrifices and verses of the Veda to which they are attached. The latter part of the Brahmanas are called the Aranyakas. These books are designed for Brahmans, priests, who become wanderers. They represent the dawn of Hindu Vedic

philosophy. The Upanishads are attached to the Vedas by being a part of the Brahmanas. These writings form the Vedanta philosophy, which represents the full flower of Vedic philosophy.

The hymns of the Vedas are called Mantras or Suktas. A collection of these hymns is called a Samhita; thus Samhita is a general way of referring to any of the Vedas. There are two ways of dividing the Samhita. This study will follow the most popular way which divides the Veda first into ten Mandalas comprised of one hundred Anuwakas which can be made up of any number of Suktas or Mantras. Hence when a passage is cited from the Vedas (e.g. Rigveda I. 30. 6.), the first reference will be to the Samhita, the Roman numeral refers to the Mandala, the first Arabic numeral refers to the Anuwaka, and the second Arabic numeral refers to the Mantra.

Dating the Samhitas of the Śruti is an all but impossible task because of the way they were formed and handed down. Hinduism has always been an ethnic religion and never creedal. The religion developed with the people, and the writings of the religion as a by-product of development. Hence, the beginnings of the Vedas, which means knowledge, are veiled in antiquity. The Vedas were spoken and sung long before they were committed to inscriptions. The Rigveda is the oldest and most original of the Vedas. Half of the verses in the Yajurveda have been traced to the Rigveda. The Samaveda has only seventy-eight verses in it

that have not been traced to the Rigveda. The Atharvaveda is merely a collection of popular superstitions that have persisted since ancient days. Guesses that have been made as to the dates of the Srutis have been likened to ten pins that have been set up only to be knocked down again.

This study leans heavily upon J. M. Farquhar, An Outline of the Religious Literature of India; A. C. Bouquet, Hinduism; and J. Murdoch, An Account of the Vedas; for its western interpretation of Hinduism. Hindu scholars like D. S. Sarma, S. C. Chatterjee, and Swami Nirvedananda have helped the writer understand Hinduism from the viewpoint of a Hindu.

The writer is indebted to R. E. Hume and V. Raghaven for the bulk of his Vedic translations.

<sup>1</sup> W. W. Hunter, Heritage of India (Calcutta: India Co., 1891), p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> S. C. Chatterjee, editor, The Religion of the Hindus (New York: The World Press, 1902), p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> J. M. Farquhar, A History of Hinduism (London: The Asiatic Society for India, 1911), p. 10.

## CHAPTER II

### THE RIGVEDA

#### General History

The Rigveda is the oldest and most important book of the Vedas of Hinduism. The date when this work was completed is not definitely known. Mueller claims that it was in its present form by the year 1500 B.C.<sup>1</sup> Sarma traces the development of the Rigveda to the year 2500 B.C.<sup>2</sup> Most of the other estimates fall between these two dates; although a very few authorities say that it was not in its completed form until the year 1000 B.C.<sup>3</sup>

When the problem of establishing dates for any of the Vedas arises, we find the scholars very chary of basing their reputations on any one date that they maintain. The reason for this difficult chronology is the manner in which the Vedas were formed and the manner in which they were transmitted. They were formed in antiquity and transmitted verbally. Even today, the Hindu scorns the written page of

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<sup>1</sup>Max Mueller, *Heritage of India* (Calcutta: Susil Gupta Ltd., c.1951), p. 93.

<sup>2</sup>K. W. Morgan, editor, *The Religion of The Hindus* (New York: The Ronald Press, c.1953), p. 23.

<sup>3</sup>J. N. Farquhar, *A Primer of Hinduism* (London: The Christian Literature Society for India, 1911), p. 18.

his Veda and relies on his memory as the source of his Vedic knowledge.

The first extant manuscript that has been found dated from the year 1500 B.C.<sup>4</sup> By the year 600 B.C. enough divinity had been ascribed to the Rigveda to warrant counting the verses, words, and syllables. There are 10,622 verses, 153,826 words, and 432,000 syllables in the Rigveda.<sup>5</sup>

The Hindu remains aloof in all of this talk about dates, since for him the Vedas are eternal. It is the common belief in India that these Vedas existed in the mind of the Deity before the beginning of time. At the commencement of each Kalpa, Brahm reveals them to Brahma, and they issue forth from his four mouths. They are taught by the Brahma to the Rishis whose name they bear. The Vedas themselves give us fourteen explanations as to their origins. The fourteen are listed with the Sanskrit texts as listed by Murdoch.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Mueller, op. cit., p. 98.

<sup>5</sup> J. Murdoch, An Account of the Vedas (London and Madras: The Christian Literature Society for India, 1897), Hindu Series, I, 8.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 9-17.

## The Characteristics of the Rigveda

The name Rigveda means the Veda of hymns of praise. Rich, which before the initial soft letter of Veda, is changed into Rig, is derived from a root which in Sanskrit means to celebrate.

The hymns are called Mantras or Suktas. The entire number form the Samhita, or collection. They are arranged in two methods. One divides them amongst either Khandas or Astakas, each of which is again divided into eight Adhivas. The other plan classes the Suktas under ten Mandalas, subdivided into more than a hundred Anuwakas. A further division of the Suktas into Vargas, of five stanzas each is common to both classifications.<sup>7</sup>

The Rigveda itself, in its development of thought toward monotheism, abstract deities and the praising of a divinity without assigning it any name show that there was in the earlier part of the Veda a philosophic tendency. A notable instance is in the very first book of the Rigveda, where one finds the well-known affirmation that "Truth is one, and the wise call it by different names," which is as emphatic a declaration of the one Truth as any that the Upanishads make.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>V. Raghavan, Prayers, Praises and Psalms (Madras: G. A. Nateson & Co., 1938), p. XIV.

<sup>8</sup>Murdoch, op. cit., p. 107.

The Rigvedic hymns are also notable for the richness of the devotional moods with which the devotee approaches his favorite deity, a devotion which was expressed in poetry far more striking than any in the best of the later hymnal literature. Thus the Vedic poets approached their gods not only as friends, as sons to their fathers, as servants to their masters, but also as the lover to the beloved.

The mystic potency pertaining to the mere text of the Vedas has been recognized from the earliest times; thinkers such as those in the Mimamsa school emphasized the text itself and those in the school of grammar developed the philosophy of an indestructible ultimate sound substratum for the universe and held that the world of things was an emanation from the word of the Veda. Absolute sanctity attaches to the correctness of accents in pronouncing the words of the Vedas and any flaw in pronunciation may be attended with a change of meaning and with demerit and with sin.<sup>9</sup>

#### The Theology of the Rigveda

The hymns of the Rigveda may be divided into three classes at this point of the discussion, those in which especially lauded the older divinities, those in which

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<sup>9</sup>Govinda Das, Hinduism (Madras: G. A. Natesan & Co., 1924), pp. 80f.

appear as most prominent the sacrificial gods, and those in which a long weakened polytheism is giving place to the light of a clearer pantheism. Even when the gods had been reduced one, pantheistic being, the old polytheism still held on. Even the firmest of pantheists would never stop to question the advisability of propitiating the Sun-God, however much he might regard this god as but a part of one that was greater. Belief in India was never so philosophical that the believer did not dread the lightning, and seek to avert it by praying to the special god that wielded it.

With some few exceptions, however, it would be impossible to say whether any one deity belonged to the first pantheon. The best one can do is to separate the mass of gods from those that become the popular gods, and endeavor to learn what was the character of each, and what were the conceptions of the poets in regard both to his nature, and in his relations with man. Therefore a different grouping of gods will be followed in this exposition. Instead of discussing the gods as early, middle and late, we will classify them as to their position in the universe, so that we will discuss the Upper, Middle, and Lower gods.

#### The Upper Gods in the Rigveda

The Hymn to the Sun God, Rigveda, I. 50, which is reproduced below, has been for some thousands of years the daily prayer of the Hindu. They have been incorporated into the ritual in this form. They are rubricated and the stanzas

form part of a prescribed service. This hymn epitomizes the various references to the Sun God in the other parts of the Rigveda. This hymn has a directness and a simplicity, without affectation, which shows a genuine feeling.

#### Hymn to The Sun God

Aloft this all-wise shining god  
His beams of light are bearing now,  
That everyone the sun may see.

Apart, as were they thieves, you stars,  
Together with the night, withdraw  
Before the sun, who seeth all.

His beams of light have been beheld  
Afar, among (all) creatures; rays  
Splendid as were they fires.

Impetuous-swift, beheld of all  
Of light the maker, thou, O Sun,  
Thou all the gleaming (sky) illum'st.

Before the folk of shining gods  
Thou risest up, and men before,  
'Fore all -- to be as light beheld.

To be thine eye, O pure bright Heaven,  
Wherewith amid all creatures born  
Thou gazest down on busy man.

Thou goest across the sky's broad place,  
Meting with rays, O Sun, the days,  
And watching generations pass.

The steeds are seven that at thy car  
Bear up the god whose hair is flame  
O shining god, O Sun far seen!

Yoked hath he now his seven fair steeds,  
The daughters of the sun-god's car,  
Yoked but by him; with these he comes.

Rigveda, I. 50<sup>10</sup>

The god described above is Surya. He is usually identified with the sun or as the deity of the sun. He is one of the three chief deities in the Vedas, as the great source of light and warmth, but the references to him are more poetic than precise. Sometimes he is identical with Savitar, sometimes he is distinct. Sometimes he is called the son of Dyaus, sometimes of Additi. In one passage<sup>11</sup> he is called the child of the dawns, in another Ushas, the dawn, is his wife.<sup>12</sup> Surya has several wives, but, according to later legends, his twin sons, the Aswins, who are ever young and handsome and ride in a golden car as the heralds of the dawn, were born of a nymph called Aswini, from her having concealed herself in the form of a mare.

Savitar is a name used in the Vedas for Surya. His name means Generator. He is sometimes distinguished from Surya. There are many hymns addressed to him, the chief hymn being Rigveda I. 35.

Pushan is a deity frequently mentioned in the Vedas but he is not of a distinctly defined character. Many hymns are addressed to him. The idea in the meaning of the name

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<sup>10</sup>Edward Washburn Hopkins, The Religions of India (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1895), pp. 17 f.

<sup>11</sup>Rigveda II. 29.

<sup>12</sup>Rigveda IV. 32.

seems to be that of "nourisher" or providence. He is the protector of cattle and of human possessions in general. As a cowherd he carries an ox-goad, and he is drawn by goats. In the character of a solar deity, he beholds the entire universe, and is a guide on roads and journeys and to the other world. The chief hymn addressed to him is found in Rigveda, VI. 56.

Varuna is somewhat similar to Ouranos in Greek mythology, with some notable differences, however. He is called the universal encompasser, the all embracer. He is one of the oldest of the Vedic deities, a personification of the all-investing sky, and the maker and upholder of heaven and earth. The following Hymn of Creation is taken from Rigveda, X. 29 as it was translated by V. Raghavan:<sup>13</sup>

At that time there was neither non-existence nor existence; neither the worlds nor the sky; nor anything that is beyond; what covered everything and where for whose enjoyment? Was there water unfathomable and deep? Death was not nor immortality there; no knowing of night or day; that One breathed without air, by its own strength; besides that, nothing did exist. Darkness there was, wrapped in front by darkness; undistinguished, all this was (one) water; the incipient that lay covered by void, that One became creative by the power of its own contemplation. There came upon it, at first, desire which was the prime seed of the mind; men of vision, searching in their heart and with their intellect found the nexus of the existent in the nonexistent. The gods are later to this creative activity; then who knows wherefrom this came into being? Where this creation came from whether one supported it or not. He who was supervising it from the highest heaven, He indeed knows; or He knows not.

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<sup>13</sup>Raghavan, op. cit., p. 283.

Varuna is considered the king of the universe, king of gods and men, possessor of illimitable knowledge, and the supreme deity to whom special honor is due. He is often associated with Mitra, he being the ruler of the night and Mitra of the day, but his name frequently occurs alone while the name of Mitra seldom does. His chief hymn is Rigveda, I. 25.

The remainder of the upper gods of the Rigveda are very confused, and contradictory accounts are given of each. We will here mention them so that they are thus classified, but we have covered the most important persons in the pantheon. The remaining gods are Additi, boundlessness, a female called by various names. She is sometimes said to be the mother of Varuna, mother of the gods, and is represented as being the mother of Daksha and the daughter of Daksha. In addition, there are a few phenomenon deities: Dawn (Rigveda VII. 77); Night (Rigveda X. 127); and the Aswins mentioned previously<sup>14</sup> (Rigveda VIII. 9.10)

#### The Middle Gods of the Rigveda

The Middle Gods are those gods who cover preeminently the space between the sky and the earth. In the main they are made up of nature gods.

Indra is the god of the firmament. He is the personified atmosphere. In the Vedas he stands in the first rank

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<sup>14</sup>Supra, p. 11.

among the gods, but he is not uncreate, and is represented as having a father and a mother.<sup>15</sup> He is described as being of a ruddy or golden color, and as having arms of enormous length; however his forms are endless, and he can assume any shape at will.<sup>16</sup> As the deity of the atmosphere, he governs the weather and sends forth the rain; he dispatches his lightnings and thunders, and he is continually at war with Vritra and Ahi, the demons of drought and inclement weather respectively. He overcomes them with his thunderbolts and compels them to pour down the rain.

More hymns are addressed to him than to any other deity in the Vedas, with the exception of Agni. For he was revered in his beneficent character as the bestower of rain and the cause of fertility, and he was feared as the awful ruler of the storm and director of the lightning and thunder. In many places of the Rigveda the highest divine functions and attributes are ascribed to him.<sup>17</sup> In the triad of pre-eminent gods -- Agni, Vayu, and Surya -- Indra often takes the place of Vayu. His chief song is addressed to him in Rigveda VI. 30.

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<sup>15</sup> Rigveda IX. 29.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., VI. 30.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., VI. 30.

Vayu is the god of the wind. He is often associated with Indra and pictured as riding with him in the latter's chariot. As has been said, his name and Indra's are used interchangeably in the Hindu triad.

The rest of the middle gods are made up of Maruts in whose squadrons fly the various nature phenomenon gods. These gods are conceded by authorities to be of minor importance.<sup>18</sup>

#### The Lower Gods of the Rigveda

The upper, heavenly gods are great. The middle gods Indra and Vayu are greater; but the greatest of all the gods are the lower, or earthly gods Agni and Soma.

Agni is the personification of fire. He is one of the most ancient and most sacred objects of Hindu worship. He appears in three phases -- heaven as the sun, in mid-air as the lightning, and on earth as ordinary fire. He is the chief deity in the Vedas. More hymns are addressed to him than to any other deity. He with Indra and Surya make up the Hindu trinity who preside over earth, air, and sky respectively.

He is considered as the mediator between men and gods, as the protector of men and their homes, and as the witness

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<sup>18</sup> Cf., Hopkins, op. cit., pp. 96 ff.

of their actions; hence he is invoked at all solemn occasions.<sup>19</sup>

Soma is the joyful god of the Hindus. His name literally means the juice that is extracted from a milky, climbing plant (AsclepiasAcida). After this juice is extracted, it is fermented, forming a beverage used in libations to the deities and drunk by the Brahmans. The priests enjoyed its exhilarating qualities very much, and the gods are represented as being quite fond of it. This soma juice occupies a large space in the Rigveda; one Mandala is almost wholly devoted to its praise and uses. It was raised to the position of a deity and represented to be primeval, all powerful, healing all diseases, bestower of riches, lord of other gods, and even identified with the Supreme Being. As a result, the deity, Soma, became a Hindu Bacchus.

#### Significant Quotations from the Rigveda<sup>20</sup>

In order to give the reader a feeling of the tone and thought of the Rigveda, the following readings have been chosen. These selections are made with an eye toward the mystical, poetical, philosophical, and esoteric feeling one

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<sup>19</sup> John Dowson, A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion, Geography, History, and Literature (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1928), p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> Raghavan, op. cit., pp. 277-84, *passim*.

gets in going through the Rigveda.

The Asyavamiya is an unusually long hymn, and apparently miscellaneous in subject matter but clearly mystical and philosophical. It has been taken as a philosophical hymn by Hindu scholars and has been expounded extensively in later writings. In the Laws of Manu the hymn is mentioned as an expiation for heinous sins. It anticipates the Upanishads, and is quoted by them. The following is an excerpt:

Who saw that First when it was born? What is that unembodied that bears the embodied? From earth are breath and blood: wherefrom the Soul? Who went to the learned to ask this? Ignorant, I ask here the knowing sages of vision: not knowing, I ask for the sake of knowing. He props up these six worlds: what is that ONE in the form of the unborn? They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, and even the fleet winged celestial bird Garuda. The One Reality, the learned speak of in many ways (I. 164).

The Gayatri is a prayer named after its meter,<sup>21</sup> which means "the savior of the singer." It is considered to be the mantra of all mantras, the most important mantra, repeated as many times as possible every day in the sandhya worship at morning, noon, and night. It is the essence of the spiritual power that a Brahman gains. It is imparted at the time of a young man's initiation, giving him his second spiritual birth into the company of the twice born. The Vedas themselves describe it as the "Mother of the Vedas." It is primarily a hymn to the Sun, Savitar.

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<sup>21</sup>Infra, p. 29.

WE MEDITATE UPON THAT ADORABLE EFFULGENCE OF THE  
RESPLENDENT VIVIFIER, SAVITAR; MAY HE STIMULATE  
OUR INTELLECTS, (III. 62. 10).

The following is an important mantra among those re-  
cited at the time of cremation. It is recited to the dead  
person, as the corpse is being buried. It has reference  
to the beliefs concerning eschatology and rebirth.

Let your eye go to the Sun; your life to the wind;  
by the meritorious acts that you have done, go to heaven,  
and then for rebirth to the earth again; or resort to  
the Waters, if you feel at home there; remain in the  
herbs with the bodies you propose to take (X. 16. 3).

The Purusha-Sukta, or Hymn to the Supreme Being, describes  
the Supreme Being and the Universe, setting forth the creation  
of the Universe out of the Supreme Being as a sacrifice. It  
presents an epitome of the essential ideas of Hinduism. It  
is one of the most popular hymns, forming an essential part  
of worship in the home and temple at the time of the bathing  
of the Image. The recital of this hymn is also prescribed  
for expiation of one of fine heinous sins.

Thousand-headed was the Supreme Being, thousand-eyed  
and thousand-footed. Covering the world all around,  
He yet exceeded it by a span. All this is the Supreme  
Being, what is past and what is in the future; He is  
the Lord of immortality as well as of that which grows  
by food. Such is His greatness, and even greater than  
that is this Supreme Being. A fourth of Him constitutes  
all being; three fourths of His is immortal and in heaven.  
With His three fourths, this Supreme Being stood above,  
and one fourth of Him came here into the animate and the  
inanimate. Therefrom the Cosmic Egg was born and within  
it this Supreme Being; having been born, He stretched  
Himself further (as gods, man, and created beings),  
then created the earth and the bodies. When they (the  
gods) apportioned the Cosmic Being (thus), into how  
many parts did they make Him? What became of His mouth?  
What are said to be His two arms, His two thighs and  
two feet? His face became the Brahman, His arms were

made into the Kshatriya; he who is the Vaisya is His thighs; from His feet was the Sudra born. The moon was born from His mind, the sun from His eyes, from His mouth, Indra and fire, and from his own breath was wind born. From His navel there arose the sky, from His head the heaven, the earth from His feet, the quarters from His ear -- thus they fashioned the worlds (X. 90).

## CHAPTER III

### THE YAJURVEDA

#### History and Origin

The Yajurveda is divided into two parts; the Taittriva (also called Krishna), which means black or dark, Yajurveda, and the Vajasneyi, or white, Yajurveda. The Yajurveda developed contemporaneously with the Rigveda. A large portion of the materials of the Yajurveda is derived from the Rigveda. Over one-half of the Yajurveda can be traced back to a Rigvedic origin.<sup>1</sup>

How the separation into two Samhitas arose has not yet been ascertained. It probably originated in a schism led by the sage Yajñawalkya. If it did not originate in a schism, it surely did lead to one, since the adherents of each formula were hostile to each other and quarrelled like men of different creeds. Later on, a legend was invented to account for the two divisions.

This legend is given by the Vishnu and Vayu Puranas. The Yajurveda, in twenty seven Sakhas (branches), was taught by Vaisampayana to his disciple Yajñawalkya. Vaisampayana had the misfortune to kill his sister's child by an accidental kick, and he then called upon his disciples to perform

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<sup>1</sup>J. Murdoch, An Account of the Vedas (London and Madras: The Christian Literature Society for India, 1897), Hindu Series, I, p. 9.

the appropriate expiatory penance. Yajñawalkya refused to join the "miserable and inefficient Brahmans," and a quarrel ensued. The teacher called upon the disciple to give up all that he had learned from him; and the disciple vomited forth the Yajur texts which he had acquired, and they fell upon the ground stained with blood. The other pupils were turned into partridges (Tittiri), and they picked up the disgorged texts; hence the part of the Veda which was thus acquired was called Taittiriya, and black.

Yajñawalkya sorrowfully departed, and by the performance of severe penances induced the Sun to impart to him those Yajur texts which his master had not possessed. The Sun then assumed the form of a horse and communicated to him the desired texts. The priests of this portion of the Veda were called Vajins, while the collection itself was called Vajasaneyi, and also white and bright because it was revealed by the Sun.<sup>2</sup>

A more reasonable and intelligible explanation is that Vajasaneyi is a patronymic of Yajñawalkya, the offspring of Vajāsani, and that Taittiriya is derived from Tittiri, a pupil of Yaska's.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> P. Thomas, Epics, Myths, and Legends of India (Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Co., n. d.), p. 72-75, passim.

<sup>3</sup> J. N. Farquhar, An Outline of the Religious Literature of India (London: Oxford University Press, 1920), p. 94.

### Character of the Yajurveda

The name comes from Yaj, sacrifice. It contains the formulas and verses to be muttered by the priests and their assistants who had chiefly to prepare the sacrificial ground, to dress the altar, slay the victims, and pour out the libations. The first sentences in one of the two divisions were to be uttered by the priest as he cut from a particular tree a switch with which to drive away the calves from the cows whose milk was to furnish the material for the offering.<sup>4</sup>

The Black and White Yajus differ in their arrangement. In the Black Yajurveda the sacrificial formulas are for the most part immediately followed by their explanation. In the White Yajurveda they are entirely separated from one another.

It is safe to assume that the Yajurveda came along as a natural companion to the Rigveda. The Rigveda furnished the knowledge, and this knowledge was in turn applied to the worship of the gods propounded in the Rigveda. Though the formation of the Yajurveda had to take place at a later time than the composition of the earliest Rigvedic hymns, its beginnings are still veiled in the cloud of Hindu antiquity, and no authority will venture a guess as to its date but will place it along with the other Vedas in the Vedic period, which dates from 2500 B.C. to 500 B.C.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>A. C. Bouquet, Hinduism (New York: Hutchinson's University Library, 1948), p. 206.

<sup>5</sup>Farquhar, op. cit., p. 90.

### Significant Quotations from the Yajurveda

The following is extracted from the Black Yaju. This is a prayer used at the feast in memory of the departed. It is a favorite with many modern scholars, writers, and public figures who consider it suitable for a national prayer. Both translations quoted in this section were made by V. Raghavan.

Among the Brahmins, may the Brahmin be born with spiritual luster; in this country, may the kind be born a warrior, a capable archer and chariot fighter; may the cow be born a milch cow; the ox a good draught ox; the horse a fleet one; the damsel the object of the city's admiration; the fighter victorious; and the youth fit for the assembly; may a hero be born to the performer of the sacrifice; whenever we wish may the cloud rain; may our vegetation ripen with fruits; may there be for us acquisition and conserving of prosperity (Yajurveda VII. 5. 18. 1).<sup>6</sup>

The Hymn of Good Intent was selected from the White Yaju. This Hymn is placed on a par with the Purusha-Sukta.<sup>7</sup> In the Smritis, this hymn is held to be of great value as an expiatory hymn.

That Mind, the Divine, which when one is wakeful or asleep reaches far, which is the far-reaching light of all lights, may that Mind of mine be of good intent. By which the active and the wise perform the duties in sacrifice and intellectual activities, that which is the wonder-being inside the beings, may that Mind of mine be of beautiful intent. That which knowledge and fortitude, that which is the immortal light within all beings, without which no act is done,

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<sup>6</sup> V. Raghavan, Prayers, Praises, and Psalms (Madras: G. A. Nateson & Co., 1938), p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Supra, p. 18.

may that Mind of mine be of auspicious resolve.  
That which directs men like a good charioteer,  
directing the horses with reins, that which is  
established in the heart, is immortal and swiftest,  
may that Mind of mine be of good intent (XXXIV).

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

The *Samaveda* is wholly metrical. It contains 1541  
verses, only seventy-eight of which have not been traced to  
the *Rigveda*.<sup>1</sup> The readings of the text in this *Veda* fre-  
quently differ, like those of the *Yajur*, from the text as  
found in the *Rigveda*. At least our authority feels that  
the verses occurring in the *Sam* stand themselves as older  
and were original by the greater antiquity of their gram-  
matical forms,<sup>2</sup> but this opinion is disputable.

The verses of the *Sam* have been selected and changed  
at the sacrifices or offerings of the *Soma*. Many of the  
invocations are addressed to *Soma*, some to *Agni*, and some  
to *Indra*.

There were different sets of priests for each of the  
three *Vedas*. Those whose duty it was to recite the *Rigveda*  
were called *Rishis* or *Ṛishibrahmins*, and they were required  
to know the whole *Veda*. The priests of the *Yajur*, who  
uttered its formulas in a peculiar manner at sacrifices,

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<sup>1</sup>A. W. Bosquet, *Samaveda* (New York: Hutchinson  
University Library, 1923), p. 107.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SAMAVEDA

#### History and Character of the Samaveda

The Samaveda is wholly metrical. It contains 1549 verses, only seventy-eight of which have not been traced to the Rigveda.<sup>1</sup> The readings of the text in this Veda frequently differ, like those of the Yaju, from the text as found in the Rigveda. At least one authority feels that the verses occurring in the Sama stamp themselves as older and more original by the greater antiquity of their grammatical forms,<sup>2</sup> but this opinion is disputed.

The verses of the Sama have been selected and chanted at the sacrifices or offerings of the Soma. Many of the invocations are addressed to Soma, some to Agni, and some to Indra.

There were different sets of priests for each of the three Vedas. Those whose duty it was to recite the Rigveda were called Hotris or Bahvrichas, and they were required to know the whole Veda. The priests of the Yaju, who muttered its formulas in a peculiar manner at sacrifices,

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<sup>1</sup>A. C. Bouquet, Hinduism (New York: Hutchinson's University Library, 1948), p. 167.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 160.

were called Adwaryus. The chanters of the verses of the Sama were called Udgatris.<sup>3</sup>

### Hindu Music

The music to which the hymns are sung in India are stated in ancient Sanskrit manuscripts. Hindu hymnody has two fundamental aspects, melody and time. These are embodied in systems of rags, or tune patterns, and tals, or rhythmic phrases. Two schools of Indian music are differentiated, the Hindustani of the North, and the Carnatic of the South. The Carnatic is considered the most genuine carrier of the traditional music, since the Hindustani was influenced during the centuries of the Mohammedan conquest.<sup>4</sup>

The rag of Hindu music has no counterpart in European music, although it is in some respects similar to the Western concept of mode. Each rag expresses a certain motion and is linked with a certain time of the day and a certain season of the year.<sup>5</sup> The swars are the notes of the rag. They are called Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni, Sa, and correspond to the Do, Re, Mi, Fa, So, La, Ti, Do of the Western scale.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>4</sup>H. A. Popley, The Music of India (Calcutta: Y.M.C.A. Publishing House, 1950), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

Hindu music is improvisational within the limits of the rag. The musician must know not only the swars but also the arohi and avrohi, or ascending and descending structure, of the rag and the order in which these are to be used in connection with the characteristic phrase. He must also know the vadi and samvadi, or notes of the drone, and the proper time and season for playing them.

The typical Hindu instrumental tune starts with a long prelude, which is in effect, a statement of the rag and serves the dual purpose of familiarizing the listener with the musical materials to be employed and of assisting the musician to fall into the appropriate mood. After the prelude, the rhythm scheme is introduced, and the performer proceeds to improvise and get interesting musical patterns while remaining within the confines of the rag.<sup>6</sup>

The rags stem primarily from the devotional hymns, although tribal songs and poetical creations have made their contributions. The Carnatic system of classification is mathematically derived. There are seventy-two primary rags, called janaka. These are formed by varying each of the seven notes of the scale in regular order. The secondary rags, called ragini, are formed by omitting one or two of the scale notes or by altering a primary rag. This alteration within a limited system makes possible thousands

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 47-58.

of variations, but there are not more than three hundred rags in use today, so that their number was probably less during the Vedic period.<sup>7</sup>

The tals or rhythm patterns of Hindu music are formed from long and short beats, none of which is stressed. In Hindu music, there is nothing corresponding to the measure, nor is there an exact equivalent to the time signature, although the music can be expressed in terms of these concepts. The system of tals is a mnemonic system, in contrast to the classificatory system of the West; thus the Hindu musician must learn the tals beat for beat. Certain tals are associated with certain rags, but considerable latitude is permitted. There are three tempos in Hindu Music; slow, medium, and fast. No acceleration is permitted, although the time may be doubled.<sup>8</sup>

The tals are ordinarily expressed on percussion instruments, of which the drums are the most important. There are almost three hundred varieties of drums that Hindu musicians may choose from. The most important of the melodic, stringed instruments is the vina or bin, which is a seven stringed, plectrum instrument with gourd resonators.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 2-10.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 145-87.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

## Hindu Poetic Meter

Great importance is attached by Hindus to the meters used in speaking the Vedas. The power and significance of the priests at a sacrifice consists in their being the masters of the sacred word, which is frequently personified by the god Vach, speech, who is identical with Sarasvati, the goddess of learning, in the later Hindu Pantheon. Vach has ascribed to him the power of vivifying and killing. The sacred words pronounced by the priest effect, by dint of the innate power of Vach, the spiritual birth of the sacrificer, form his body, raise him up to heaven, connect him with the prototypes of those things which he wishes to obtain (such as children, cattle, etc.) and make him attain to his full life term, which is a hundred years.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time they are a weapon by means of which the sacrificers' enemies, or they themselves (if the priest has any evil designs against them) can be killed, and all the evil consequences of sin can be destroyed.

The power and effect of Vach as regards the obtaining of any particular thing wished for, mainly lies in the form in which it is uttered, thence the great importance of the meters and the choice of words and terms. Each meter is the invisible master of something obtainable in this world,

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<sup>10</sup>A. C. Bouquet, *Hinduism* (New York: Hutchinson's University Library, 1948), p. 305.

It is, as it were, its exponent and ideal. This great significance of the metrical speech is derived from the number of syllables of which it consists. There is a certain numerical proportion for each thing.<sup>11</sup>

The Gayatri meter consists of three times eight syllables. This is the most sacred meter. It is the meter to be addressed to Agni and Indra. The hymn named after this meter<sup>12</sup> is considered the most sacred of all Hindu hymns. The meter expresses the idea of Brahma; therefore, the sacrificer must use it when he wishes anything closely connected with Brahma, such as the acquirement of knowledge and the thorough understanding of all of the problems of theology.

The Trishtubb meter consists of four times eleven syllables. This meter expresses the idea of strength and royal power. It is used primarily by the second class of citizens, the regal or warrior caste.

The Ushnih meter is a variety of the Trishtubb meter. The Ushnih has twenty-eight syllables. The sacrificer who aspires to longevity uses this meter since twenty-eight is the symbol of life.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 307.

<sup>12</sup> Supra, p. 17.

The Jagati meter consists of forty-eight syllables. The meter expresses cattle, and anyone who wishes for cattle uses this meter to achieve his goal. The same idea is expressed by the Pankti meter, which has five times eight syllables.

The Brihati meter consists of thirty-six syllables. It is used when the sacrificer is aspiring to fame and renown, since this meter is the exponent of those ideas.

The Anushtubh meter consists of thirty-two syllables. This meter is the symbol of the celestial world. A candidate for a place in heaven must use this meter.

The Viraj meter consists of thirty syllables. It is the symbol of food and satisfaction. Anyone who would wish for plenty of food would use this meter.

Exponents of the theological evolutionary theory try to show this work before the Rigveda. Their theory assumes that religion evolved from a much form, as is found in the Atharvaveda, to the more, flowing form found in the Rigveda. This application of a principle is discarded by most scholars in the face of the internal and external evidence.

## CHAPTER V

### THE ATHARVAVEDA

#### Origin and History

There are no authorities who will venture a guess as to the date of this book. From the internal evidence, it would seem to come after the writing of the tenth Mandala of the Rigveda, since its quotations come exclusively from Mandalas after the tenth. Also the Laws of Manu mention only three Vedas, so that it would have to postdate that work, which is a Brahmanic commentary on the Vedas. It would be safest to assume, along with most authorities that this writing comes from the later part of the Vedic period, somewhere around 800 B.C.<sup>1</sup>

Exponents of the theological evolutionary theory try to date this work before the Rigveda. Their theory assumes that religion evolved from a rough form, as is found in the Atharvaveda, to the smooth, flowing form found in the Rigveda. This application of a principle is discarded by most scholars in the face of the internal and external evidence.

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Washburn Hopkins, The Religions of India (Boston: Ginn & Co., c.1895), pp. 153 ff.

## The Character of the Atharvaveda

Edward Washburn Hopkins, after reading the Rigveda, characterizes the Atharvaveda as:

The hymns of the Rigveda inextricably confused; the deities of an earlier era confounded, and again merged together in a pantheism now complete; the introduction of strange gods; recognition of a hell of torture; instead of many divinities the One that represents all gods, and nature as well; incantations for evil purposes and charms for a worthy purpose; formulae of malediction to be directed 'those whom I hate and who hate me;' magical verses to obtain children, to prolong life, to dispel evil magic; to guard against poison and other ills; the paralyzing extreme of ritualistic reverence indicated by the exaltation to godhead of the 'remnant' of sacrifice; hymns to snakes, to diseases, to sleep, time, and the stars; curses on the priest plager.<sup>2</sup>

It is true that the Rigveda is not lacking in incantations, in witchcraft practices, in hymns to inanimate things, and in indications of pantheism. However, after reading both works, the collective impression is that what is added to the Rigveda is essential to the Atharvaveda. The explanation for this is put forth that these practices developed with the Rigveda and antedated it. They were, however, left out of the Rigveda and given but a perfunctory nod on rare occasions in the Rigveda. The Atharvaveda, on the other hand was produced with the express intention of preserving these things; however this is pointed out that this lies in

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

the realm of historical probabilities and can neither be proved nor disproved.<sup>3</sup>

#### Quotations from the Atharvaveda

The following selections have been excerpted from V. Raghavan's translations of the Atharvaveda.<sup>4</sup>

For success in trade:

I urge Indra the merchant, may he come to us and be our forerunner; warding off the unpaying, the cutting beast, let that masterful Indra be a bringer of wealth to me. O Gods! That money with which, desiring more money, I carry on my bargains, let that multiply, never decrease. O Agni, with this oblation, do thou frustrate those who ruin my profit (III. 16).

To Varuna:

The great superintendent of all this sees as if from nearby; whoever thinks he is going secretly, all that the gods know. He who stands or moves, he who walks crooked, he who moved the third, him Varuna knows. Even he who may cross to the other side of the sky will not escape King Varuna; from heaven, his spies are patrolling this earth; with a thousand eyes they scan through the earth (IV. 16).

The Earth:

Great truth, formidable moral order, vow, penance, spiritual knowledge, and sacrifice sustain the Earth; may that Earth, mistress of our past and future, afford us a wide world for our life. Without congestion, amidst men, She who has many heights, stretches, and level grounds, who bears herbs of manifold potency, may that Earth spread out and be rich for us. Let all the people milk her with amity; O Earth, give me sweet words (X. 1).

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<sup>3</sup>S. C. Chatterjee, The Fundamentals of Hinduism (Calcutta: Das Gupta & Co., 1950), pp. 72-75.

<sup>4</sup>V. Raghavan, Prayers, Praises and Psalms (Madras: G. A. Nateson & Co., 1938), pp. 25, 34, 117.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE BRAHMANAS AND THE UPANISHADS

#### Description of the Brahmanas

Brahmana means "Belonging to Brahmins." These are works composed by and for Brahmins to be used as a guide for Brahmins in the use of the hymns of the Mantra. Because of this, they are assumed to be of later origin than the book of the Veda to which they are attached; however the Brahmanas are held on the same level of authority as the Vedas and are included in the Sruti. Excepting its claims to divine revelation, it is a Hindu Talmud.<sup>1</sup>

The Brahmana collectively is made up of Brahmanas, which are ritualistic and liturgical writings in prose. They contain the details of the Vedic ceremonies, with long explanations of their origin and meaning; they give instructions as to the use of particular verses and meters; and they abound with curious legends divine and human,<sup>2</sup> in illustration. In them, we have the oldest rituals, the oldest linguistic explanations, the oldest traditional narratives, and the oldest philosophical speculations.

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<sup>1</sup>Swami Nirvedananda, Hinduism at a Glance (Vidysmandira, Dakhuria, Bengal: S. Mandel, 1946), p. 59.

<sup>2</sup>Supra, pp. 28-30.

As literary productions they are not of a high order,<sup>3</sup> but some striking thoughts, bold expressions, sound reasoning, and curious traditions are found among the mass of "pedantry and grandiloquence."<sup>4</sup>

Each of the Vedas has its Brahmanas. Generally, these maintain the essential character of the Veda to which they belong. Thus the Brahmanas of the Rigveda are specially devoted to the duties of the Hotri<sup>5</sup> who recites the verses, those of the Yajurveda to the performance of the sacrifices by the Adhwaryu, and those of the Samaveda to the chanting of the Udgatri.

The Aitareya Brahmana belongs to the Rigveda. This is generally assumed to be the oldest Brahmana and dated as far back as the seventh century B.C.<sup>6</sup> This Brahmana is sometimes called Kaushitiki or Sankhayana.

The Taittiriya, Black, Yajurveda has the Taittirive Brahmana, and the Vajasaneyi Yajurveda has the Satapatha Brahmana, one of the most important of all the Brahmanas.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>J. N. Farquhar, An Outline of the Religious Literature of India (London: Oxford University Press, 1920), p. 463.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 464.

<sup>5</sup>Supra, p. 24.

<sup>6</sup>J. Murdoch, An Account of the Vedas (London and Madras: The Christian Literature Society for India, 1897). Hindu Series, III, p. 84.

<sup>7</sup>J. N. Farquhar, op. cit., p. 472.

The Samaveda has eight Brahmanas. Of these, the best known are the Praudha or Pancha-vinsa, the Tandyu, and the Shadvinsa. The Atharvaveda has only one Brahmana, the Gopatha Brahmana.

The Brahmanas elaborated the earlier Vedic writings by selecting a passage, praising its merits, and condemning the opposite which should be avoided. This kind of treatment of the hymns led to the development of some of the scientific disciplines and mythology and made the Brahmanas the fore-runners of the Upanishads. It was the speculative and inquisitive spirit of the Brahmanas that led to Brahman as the Ultimate Absolute which is the one basis of the universe, and began giving a higher interpretation and esoteric significance to many aspects of ritual and sacrifice, transforming them into meditative exercises. The Brahmanas evolved the interpretive scheme, regularly used later in the Upanishads, according to which things are understood in three aspects: divine, natural, and subjective. It was here that the subjective shift started which eventually led to the plumbing of the self, and the esoteric interpretation of the Seers, or Rishis.<sup>8</sup>

The latter part of the Brahmanas is called the Aranyaka, or Forest Books, meaning the books meditated upon in the isolation of the forest. The Aranyakas are religious and

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<sup>8</sup>A. C. Bouquet, Hinduism (New York: Hutchinson's University Library, 1948), pp. 377-405.

philosophical writings which expound the mystical sense of the ceremonies, discuss the nature of God, speculate as to the origin of the cosmos, and the origin of man. They are attached to the Brahmanas, and intended for Brahmans who have left this world, with all of its distractions, and retired to a life of solitude in the forest.<sup>9</sup> There are four Aranyakas extant: the Brihad, the Taittiriya, the Aitareya, and the Kaushitaki Aranyaka.

The Aranyakas are closely connected with the Upanishads, and the names are occasionally used interchangeably. The Brihad is called Brihad Aranyaka or Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad. It is attached to the Satapatha Brahmana. The Aitareya Upanishad is a part of the Aitareya Brahmans. The Kaushitaki Aranyaka is composed of three chapters; the third of which is the Kaushitaki Upanishad.

Max Mueller says of the Aranyakas:<sup>10</sup>

Traces of modern ideas are not wanting in the Aranyakas, and the very fact that they are destined for a class of men who had retired from the world in order to give themselves up to the contemplation of the highest problems, shows an advanced and already declining and decaying society, not unlike the monastic age of the Christian world.

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<sup>9</sup>S. C. Chatterjee, The Fundamentals of Hinduism (Calcutta: Das Gupta & Co., 1950), p. 139.

<sup>10</sup>Max Mueller, Heritage of India (Calcutta: Susil Gupta Ltd., c.1951), p. 27.

Mueller goes on to say:<sup>11</sup>

In one sense the Aranyakas are old, for they reflect the very dawn of thought; in another they are modern, for they speak of that dawn with all the experience of a past day. There are passages in those works unequalled, in any language for grandeur, boldness, and simplicity. These passages are the relics of a better age. But the generation which became the chronicler of those Titanic wars of thought was a small race; they were dwarfs, measuring the footsteps of giants.

#### Significant Quotations from the Brahmanas and Aranyakas

The following are two purificatory mantras used in the act of purification. Purification must be done as part of all rites and especially when there has been pollution. Water into which sanctity has been infused by the recital of these purificatory mantras, along with some others, is sprinkled on the person and all over the residence or temple, and the water is sipped.<sup>12</sup>

May the purifying mantras grant us this world as well as the other; may these divine mantras which the gods themselves have gathered for us make our desires prosper. May Indra purify me with the shining goddess of right policy; Soma, with well-being; Varuna with prosperity; may the all-controlling King Yama purify me with his chastisements; may Fire purify me with invigoration (Taittiriya Brahmana I. 4. 8.).

The falsehood that we have uttered with our mouth in our desire to earn our livelihood, from that, O All-Gods, being pleased with us, free us here (Taittiriya Aranyaka II. 3. 2).

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<sup>11</sup> Max Mueller, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>12</sup> V. Raghavan, Prayers, Praises, and Psalms (Madras: G. A. Nateson & Co., 1938), p. 290.

The following is taken from the White Yajurveda's Brahmana, Satapatha. It explains the five great sacrifices that are to be made daily.

Five are the great sacrifices; they are the great continuous sacrifices: the propitiation of all things created, of human beings, of the forefathers, of the gods, and of the sacred lore. Everyone should make offerings to all creatures; thereby one achieves the propitiation of all creatures. Every day one should make gifts, even if it be only with a cup of water: thus one achieves the propitiation of human beings. Every day one should, even if it be only with a cup of water, make offering to his ancestors; thus one achieves the propitiation of the forefathers. Every day one should make offerings to the gods, even if it be only with sacred twigs and fire: thus one achieves the propitiation of the sacred lore: learning one's own Veda is that propitiation. Speech, mind, and intellect are the various utensils of this sacrifice; Truth is the final purificatory ceremony; heaven is the end. He who understands this and every day does his sacred study, gains three times the world that is gained by one who fills the whole world with wealth and gives it away. Hence one should study his own sacred scriptures (Vajasaneyi Yajurveda, Satapatha Brahmana XI. 3).

The following is recited by the followers of Samaveda in the daily morning and evening worship, called Sandhya.

This is recited after the repetition of the Gayatri.<sup>13</sup>

May I attain fame among Brahmins, among Kings and among merchants; may I attain fame as a speaker of truth; may I attain the fame of famous acts... O Sun! I have mounted for my well-being, the boat full and of excellent wings without any holes, with a hundred oars and capable of taking me across; obeisance to the Sun! May I rise along with you who rise. Following you, may I also get firmly established (Samaveda, Mantra Brahmana II. 5. 9. 16).

This final selection is taken from the Gopatha Brahmana which is the Brahmana of the Atharvaveda. It describes the

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 294.

## Supreme Being, OM.

The Supreme Being Created Brahma, the creator on the lotus. Having been created, the Brahma began to think, "By which single syllable may I be able to enjoy all the desires, all the worlds, all the gods, all the Vedas, all the sacrifices, all the sounds, all the rewards, all the beings, stationary and moving?" He practiced self-control and saw this OM, of two syllables of four short syllables, the all pervading, omnipresent, the eternally potent Brahman, the Brahman's own symbolic syllable, of which the presiding divinity is Brahman itself. With it, he enjoyed all the desires of all the worlds, all the gods, all the Vedas, all the sacrifices, all the sounds, all the rewards and all the beings stationary and moving ... Therefore the Brahman sits on sacred grass facing east and keeps under control his tongue and repeats this imperishable OM, for him all objects are realized and all his acts are successful (Atharvaveda, Gopatha Brahmana I. 16-22).

## Description of the Upanishads

Upanishad means sitting near and receiving secret teachings. The Upanishads are the third division of the Vedas and are attached to the Brahmanas. They are classed with the Srutis, or revelation. The Upanishads are usually written in prose with verses interspersed. There are about one hundred and fifty Upanishads, but not more than ten or twelve are of importance.<sup>14</sup> They are of a later date than the Brahmanas, but the oldest, the Chandogya Upanishad is reputed to have been written in the sixth century B.C.<sup>15</sup>

The object of these treatises is to ascertain the mystic sense of the text of the Vedas, and so they enter into such

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<sup>14</sup>R. E. Hume, The Thirteen Principal Upanishads (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 13.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

abstruse questions as the origin of the universe, the nature of the deity, and the connection of mind and matter. Thus they contain the beginnings of that metaphysical inquiry which ended in the full development of Hindu philosophy.

The Upanishads show an altogether different spirit from that of the Brahmanas and the other Vedas. The idea of Brahmanical exclusiveness is totally absent in the Upanishad doctrine. They also express a freedom of thought unknown up to that point, with the possible exception of the Rigveda. Another peculiarity about this section of the Veda is that the teachers of higher knowledge and the Brahmans are continually represented as going to the Kshatriya kings (the second caste of royalty and warriors) to become their pupils.<sup>16</sup>

The Rigveda has the Upanishad called Aitareya attached to the Aitareya Brahmana. The Taittiriya Yajurveda has an Upanishad of the same name. The Samaveda has the Kena and the Chandogya, the latter being the second most important Upanishad.<sup>17</sup> The Atharvaveda has the Katha, Prasna, Mundaka, Mandukya, and others. This Veda has fifty-two Upanishads attached to it.

The most important Upanishads are: Isa, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Mundakya, Aitareya, Taittiriya, Chandogya, Brihadaranyaka,

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<sup>16</sup> Alfred S. Geden, Studies in the Religions of the East (London: Kelly & Sons, 1913), p. 256.

<sup>17</sup> Hume, op. cit., p. 4.

and Svetasvetara.<sup>18</sup>

Vedanta is the orthodox school of philosophy that has grown out of the study of the Upanishads. Anta means end, so the Vedanta is the end of the Vedas. This is the final teaching from divine revelation. It is the crown of the Vedas since this applies the Vedas to life. It has been compared with the Old Testament and New Testament relationship of Holy Scripture.

#### The Basic Teachings of the Upanishads

The Upanishadic Seers turned a light inward to look at themselves. When they did this, they discovered that at the center of man's being, beyond the mind, and beyond the senses and beyond the understanding, there is the same divine spirit as there is in the heavens above. This is the meaning of their famous identification of Brahman with atman, the self.<sup>19</sup> Brahman is the universal spirit approached from the objective side; the self, atman, is the same universal spirit approached from the subjective side. In man the self is imprisoned in a particular body, mind, and understanding, all of which foster in him a congenital ignorance of his own

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<sup>18</sup> Farquhar, op. cit., p. 534.

<sup>19</sup> Chatterjee, op. cit., p. 156.

infinitude and of his oneness with all human beings.<sup>20</sup>

Moksha is liberation from this prison house of individuality. That is the true end of man, the true goal of human life; not earthly riches nor the temporary bliss of heaven to which all the sacrifices to the gods were believed to lead.<sup>21</sup>

In the age of the Upanishads, moksha became the end, and transcendent knowledge became the means. This transcendent knowledge is known as jnana. The gods receded into the background and so did the sacrifices. Even the knowledge of the Vedas was considered to be inferior knowledge.<sup>22</sup> The supreme knowledge was the knowledge of the self, the atman. All efforts were made to secure this highest knowledge. In this new religion, liberation took the place of heaven, higher knowledge of sacrifice, and the Absolute of the gods. The laws of reincarnation and the fourfold end of life were propounded as the fundamentals of Hindu philosophy and religion.<sup>23</sup>

The goal of Hindu existence, moksha, amounts to the transformation of human consciousness into divine conscious-

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<sup>20</sup>D. S. Sarma, What is Hinduism (Banares: Banares Hindu University, 1944), p. 27.

<sup>21</sup>S. Radhakrishnan, The Hindu View of Life (London: Allen & Unwin, 1927), p. 36.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>23</sup>Chatterjee, op. cit., p. 161.

ness. This is the destiny to which the Hindu believes all men to be called. The Hindu interprets all social and political institutions, arts and sciences, creeds and rituals not as ends in themselves but as means to this goal of liberation. When this goal is reached, man is lifted above his mortal plane and becomes one with that ocean of pure being, Consciousness, and Bliss, called Brahman in the Upanishads. This is the beginning of the experience which is called second birth, or the opening of the third eye or the eye of wisdom.<sup>24</sup>

Men who have attained liberation have only contempt for the pleasures of this world; they have no attachments and are untouched by sorrow. They see the whole of things and beings centered in one indivisible spirit, and the bliss they enjoy is inexpressible in human speech.<sup>25</sup>

Since, however, this transformation is not possible in the course of a single life, Hinduism teaches a series of lives for each individual and the continuity of self in all of them, either here on earth or elsewhere.<sup>26</sup> Otherwise there would be no meaning in millions of human beings dying even before they are in sight of the goal, and there could be no explanation for the fact that some men, even from

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<sup>24</sup>R. W. Frazer, Indian Thought, Past and Present (London: Unwin, 1914), pp. 47-52.

<sup>25</sup>S. N. Dasgupta, Hindu Mysticism (Chicago and London: Open Court, 1927), p. 49.

<sup>26</sup>Mueller, op. cit., p. 107.

birth, are far better equipped than others for reaching the goal.

Recognizing thus that the present life is only one in a series of lives, and that men are in different stages of their journey, Hinduism prescribes the kind of discipline which will suit their condition and will enable them to pass on to the next stage. If the metaphysical ideal, just expressed is too far advanced and abstract for a man, a theological ideal is set before him. At this stage the impersonal Absolute, Brahman, becomes a personal god, the perfect becomes the good, manifestation becomes creation, liberation becomes life in heaven, and love takes the place of knowledge. If he is not fit even for this stage, a course of ritualistic and moral action is prescribed for him. At this level the personal god is represented by an image in a temple, ritual and prayer take the place of meditation, and righteous conduct takes the place of love.

D. S. Sarma says:<sup>27</sup>

These three stages are only illustrative, not exhaustive. There are, in fact, as many stages as there are levels of culture in a vast community, and there are as many kinds of discipline. Hinduism provides for all classes of men from the highest to the lowest. In its hospitable mansions there is room for all sorts and conditions of men, from the mystic, who is very near the goal, to the illiterate peasant, who has not yet set his foot on the path. It does not thrust all men into the pigeonhole of a single, unalterable creed.

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<sup>27</sup>Sarma, op. cit., p. 5.

The belief in the fourfold end of human life is based on the principle of the progressive realization of the spirit, as was the case with the four castes and the four stages of life. The goal of life for a man is called dharmā-artha-kāma-mokṣha. In this formula dharmā means righteousness, artha means worldly prosperity, kāma means enjoyment, and mokṣha means liberation.

Liberation is the ultimate end of life, but on the way to this goal, man has to satisfy the animal wants of his body and the economic and other demands of his family and community.

The wants of his body are indicated by the word kāma, which stands for all appetites of the flesh. The demands of the social environment are indicated by the word artha, which means wealth. That is, man has to acquire wealth so that he may maintain his family and help his dependents; but all this should be done within the limits of the moral law indicated by the word dharmā; hence this becomes the formula for achieving mokṣha, or liberation.

The second of the fundamental tenets championed by the Upanishads is the belief in the law of Karma, which is sometimes referred to as the law of moral causation.<sup>28</sup> This law corresponds to the physical law of causation; however, karma operates on the moral level. It is best explained by

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<sup>28</sup>Ram Chandra Bose, Hindu Philosophy (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884), p. 87.

the example of putting one's hand into a fire and getting burned. This was the result of cause and effect. Similarly on the moral level, the more often a man steals and is successful, the more prone to thievery he becomes. Hinduism, however, also turns this principle for good by saying that whenever a man does good his moral nature is improved.

The law of karma is, then, only an extension beyond the present of this sequence, for it states that every individual must pass through a series of lives, either on earth again or somewhere else before he attains moksha. It further explains that what we are at present is the result of what we thought and did in the past life and that what we shall be in a future life will be the result of what we think and do now. This process goes on through several lives, the individual sliding upward or downward in the moral scale until his soul obtains liberation.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 90-93.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE SMRITI

#### General Description

The Vedas, that is, the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, Atharvaveda, Brahmanas, and Upanishad writings are known as the Smriti (that which was heard). All authoritative writings outside of the Vedas are comprehensively referred to as Smriti (that which is remembered). The Smriti are held as the divine revelation, gathered and handed down by God, Himself. The Smriti, on the other hand, are considered the writings of men inspired by God.<sup>1</sup>

These Smriti are generally listed under five headings: Vedangas, or the limbs of the Vedas; Dharma Sastras, which include codes of laws, commentaries and digests and manuals; Nibandhas, rituals and domestic rites; Puranas; and the epics. Associated with these are the Agamas or sectarian scriptures and the Darshanas, or six schools of philosophy.

#### The Vedangas<sup>2</sup>

The Vedangas deal with phonetics, grammar, etymology, prosody, astronomy, and ritual codes which serve as hand-

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<sup>1</sup>J. N. Farquhar, An Outline of the Religious Literature of India, (London: Oxford University Press, 1920), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 54-55.

books for sacrifices. Four supplementary Vedas deal with Ayurveda medicine emphasizing prevention and the use of mental, moral, and spiritual aids for cures; with military science, calling for peaceful negotiations first, and only when unavoidable allowing warfare under a code of righteous fighting; with music as an art of great spiritual effectiveness;<sup>3</sup> and with politics, which must always be subject to morality. A third class of writings in brief formulae are concerned again with grammar, meter, chanting, creation of sacrificial altars, and sacrificial and domestic rites. There are also metrical indices enumerating the meters, the gods, and the Seers who first heard the hymns.

#### The Dharma Sastras<sup>4</sup>

The Dharma Sastras are concerned with conduct, the way of righteousness, dealing even with personal hygiene, manners and polite behavior, morality, the administration of the state and justice, the seeking of spiritual salvation, and the duties which must be performed in carrying out domestic rituals and sacraments. The Laws of Manu are the most important statement of the way of dharma. Manu was a patriarch and great spiritual teacher who fixed Hindu conduct

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<sup>3</sup> Supra, pp. 25-27.

<sup>4</sup> Farquhar, op. cit., pp. 556-60.

for all time.<sup>5</sup>

### The Nibandhas

Later there grew up digests and manuals, called Nibandhas, which were codifications of Vedic laws and encyclopedic discussions of all aspects of conduct, even including such topics as gifts, pilgrimages, vows, worship, auspicious features of the human body, and descriptions of articles of utility. They deal with all the rituals to be performed from the time of conception to the death of the individual. In later times, popular instruction in the rules of conduct was taken over by the epics and Puranas which devoted extensive attention to the topics dealt with in the Dharma Sastras.

### The Puranas<sup>7</sup>

The Puranas and epics are the scriptures of popular Hinduism, a living literature which has been the subject matter for minstrels and story tellers who have kept the teachings and legends of the Vedas before the common people.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Govinda Das, Hinduism (Madras: G. A. Nateson & Co., 1924), p. 363.

<sup>6</sup> Farquhar, op. cit., 561-66.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 566-73.

<sup>8</sup> Govinda Das, op. cit., p. 385.

The Puranas developed as a reinforcement and amplification of the Vedic teachings, dealing with the stories of creation, periodic dissolution and recreation of the world, giving the histories and geneologies of the gods, sages, and forefathers, and recording the history of the dynasties which ruled on the earth. As these stories and legends concerning the earlier kings, heroes, sages and orders of divine and semi-divine beings increased, they became a separate class of literature enjoying status equal to the Vedas in the minds of the common folk.

The Puranas form the largest part of the writings in Sanskrit, a voluminous and bewildering mass, usually listed as eighteen major and eighteen minor Puranas, but although the number is constant, the names and texts vary considerably. They have been expanded to include the teachings of the different schools of philosophy, and stories of special interest to the different sects; they deal at great length with the different pilgrimage places, with vows and austerities, gifts, temples and images, caste, the duties of the devotee, and the responsibilities of rulers. They have become an encyclopedia of Hinduism, a popular handbook of knowledge, the source of as complete and liberal education as it is possible for the busy member of society to get, for many of them include also brief accounts of precious stones, poisons, perfumes and medicine, astrology, omens, architecture, dharma, the arts, grammar, lexicography, poetics, drama, agriculture,

and physiognomy.

The most popular hymn of the Puranas is the Bhagavata which glorifies Vishnu. It revises the old story somewhat and tells it with new force bringing a new intellectual force to bear upon the old story and giving original turns to the ideas found in the earlier texts and expressing them with a sharp pointedness. It brought about a synthesis of knowledge and devotion and inspired fresh devotional movements which are present down to this present day. Similar to the Bhagavata in importance is the Suta Samhita dedicated to Siva. It elaborately describes the worship of Siva, the path of knowledge and yoga in general, and special spiritual exercises to be followed by the Saivas, or devotees of Siva. Its exposition of Advaitic philosophy is fuller than that of the other Puranas.

### The Epics<sup>9</sup>

The two great epics of Hinduism are the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, which constitute the greatest books of popular Hinduism.<sup>10</sup> The epics treat their subject with a literary technique that distinguishes them from the Puranas; they also have a more definite authorship, but their purpose was similar to the Puranas in that they sought to fulfill

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<sup>9</sup>Farquhar, op. cit., pp. 573-80.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 573.

the same role in popular religious education, incorporating as much as possible of the Puranic accounts of creation, cosmography, dharma, and stories of heroes, sages and gods. They are also a mine of wise sayings which guide the masses in all departments of life's activities.

The Ramayana tells the story of how the Lord Vishnu, as Rama, makes himself the embodiment of righteousness and puts down Ravana the king of demons, who had prostituted all his powers in oppressing the world and gratifying his vicious lust. The epic illustrates ideals which ought to prevail in personal, domestic, social, and public life, ideals of brotherhood, friendship, kingship, and ideals of chastity among women and sexual morality on the part of men. The ideals of kingship are summed up in the concept of Ramarajya in which none injures another and the king himself is but the regent of righteousness and truth. It was this vision of Ramarajya that motivated Mahatma Gandhi during the struggle for India's freedom.<sup>11</sup>

From this epic has come one of the most popular devotional movements of India; Rama is worshiped as God Himself and Sita, his wife, as Goddess. The very name Rama has become a very popular mantra. There is not a dialect in India that does not have a Ramayana in its own tongue, and it has spread to the countries neighboring India to Cambodia, Siam,

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<sup>11</sup>M. K. Gandhi, The Story of My Experiments with Truth, an Autobiography (Washington D. C.: Public Affairs Press, 1948), p. 27.

Ceylon, and the East Indian Islands.

The Mahabharata is larger in its sweep than the Ramayana. It has more of an appeal to the intellect than the Ramayana, which appeals to the emotions. The Mahabharata begins at the victory which Vishnu achieved over Ravana and builds upon it toward the development of detachment from the transient goods of life. The stories of ideal Indian womanhood are found here. At the heart of this epic is the Bhagavad Gita regarded by many as the greatest of all Hindu scriptures, summarizing in its teachings the best of Indian devotional and intellectual writings.

#### The Darsanas<sup>12</sup>

It was inevitable that various schools of interpretation would develop. There are six main schools, Darsanas, or intuitions of truth; these are collections of aphorisms to which have been attached later commentaries. They fall into three pairs: Nyaya and Vaisheshika; Sankhya and Yoga; Mimansa and Vedanta. All these schools agree that the Vedas are a record of spiritual experiences and truths seen by seers, and the work of these systems of thought it is to codify, interpret, and reinforce them with logical arguments. Logic divorced from the Vedas is repudiated; the mere pursuit of reason leads nowhere. They set up three stages in the realization of truth: (1) listening to as set forth in the

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<sup>12</sup>Farquhar, op. cit., pp. 581-97.

Vedas; (2) understanding it well through the use of reason so that it may not be shaken; (3) contemplation of it.

The six systems that were developed were not only meant as intellectual pursuits, but as visions directed toward the realization and experience of Truth.

Before joining one of these groups for the study of Vedanta, the student must have attained a sense of values regarding things permanent and transient, an absence of desire for enjoyments of either this world or the heavenly regions, a state of quietude and self-control, and must have the anxiety to be liberated.

#### The Sektarian Scriptures<sup>13</sup>

The Sektarian scriptures are related chiefly to the three main sects of Saivism, Vaishnavism, and Saktism. They are known as the Agamas or Tantras, which names are used interchangeably. Generally they are divided into four parts, dealing with the philosophical beliefs, meditating exercises, the erection of temples and making of images, and their use in worship, and finally, conduct. In addition to the Agamas, there are many sektarian hymns written even in modern times, and in common devotional use along with the hymns taken from Vedic and Puranic sources.

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 599.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

As we now conclude this study, let us review what we have seen in the Hindu scriptures. We began, in the Rigveda, with a polytheism that even included phenomenon, with the slightest hint of a unifying whole. We watched and saw this polytheism develop into a strict type of monism in the Upanishads. However, it developed into the deadliest kind of monism that this world has ever witnessed. It is a monism that causes a rigor mortis of the body and soul called pantheism. This pantheism causes a man to leave the world of reality so completely that it could be described as a type of religious schizophrenia, catatonia, a condition in which the patient is insensible even in motor and sensory things.

Here we see Idealism at its monistic, ideational extreme. The Hindu does not even deign to contemplate matter, but he would rather contemplate an ideational, Brahmanic self, which is the subjective Brahman a part of OM, which narrows down to thin air.

However, Hinduism dare not be brushed away by us. Though there is the laughable about it, we may not laugh. For, by its adaptability, it has stood the test of time. By its philosophy it has withstood the test of a Budhistic onslaught of religion that much parallels its own religion.

Through the psychic comforts derived from Hinduism, its people withstood Mohammedan conquest better than any Christian nation. Through its patience, it abided British Imperialism and finally got rid of it by the use of non-violence, and by this very act wrote world history; for never before, in the history of the world, had a nation as a whole tried this and been successful at it. Not only did this nation, with its religion, withstand all of this, but not one of the conquerors who came to India to establish a home, remained unchanged by its stay. Hinduism, in time, like a slow moving, amorphous, glob of protoplasm, absorbed, strangled, and conquered all of its conquerors. And we have a feeling that even a thorough Communist brainwashing on a national scale could not wipe away Hinduism's centuries of pantheism.

Today, as we write this, there are western thinking Hindus at work in India trying to awaken the masses to a greater material life. They are breaking down the barriers of caste, superstition, and other-worldliness. They are using a modified classless socialism mingled with western science to do this. It is working slowly, but will history repeat itself again? Will it be just a matter of time before Hinduism adapts, absorbs, and strangles the "this-worldliness" of their program and incorporates it into death? We are speaking in terms of Hindu time which is not measured in terms of years, days, minutes, and hours but in terms of centuries.

The philosophy and religion of Hinduism is as vast as the number of people it encompasses. It can take any blow that this world can offer, and in time, absorb the blow and the one striking the blow. If it does not do it in this lifetime, it figures that it can do it in the next one that will be coming along in time.

What can defeat it? What can make the sleeping Indian giant come to life? What light can penetrate the darkness of this deadly disease called pantheism?

The answer does not lie in this world, for this world has tried and is trying everything to do it without success. However, the answer does lie in this world, in the Kingdom of Grace. God has given us the answer in Christ. God in Christ could conquer Hinduism once and for all if we would but give Him a chance. We do not mean a God in Christ who is the champion of imperialism. We do not mean a God in Christ who brings western progress. We do not mean a God in Christ who uses western philosophy to explain Himself. We do not mean a God in Christ who is an American, Englishman, German, or any other nationality. But we do mean a God in Christ who is an Indian, who speaks in the dialect of the little people of India, who understands the problems of the little people and speaks to them, who thinks Indian, who acts Indian, and who will have the courage and power to show Indians the true God in Christ, naked of all of His western attachments.

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