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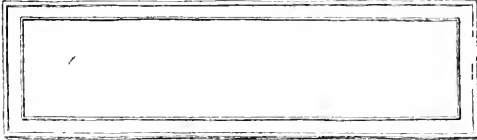
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THE

BEGINNINGS OF HINDU PANTHEISM:

An Address

DELIVERED AT THE TWENTY-SECOND ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE AMERICAN PHILOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION,

IN THE

SLATER MEMORIAL HALL OF THE FREE ACADEMY AT NORWICH,
CONNECTICUT, JULY 8, 1890,

BY THE PRESIDENT,

CHARLES ROCKWELL LANMAN,

PROFESSOR OF SANSKRIT IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

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THE
BEGINNINGS OF HINDU PANTHEISM.

MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION :

IT is twenty-one years ago this month that the convention assembled at Poughkeepsie which organized the American Philological Association. We may congratulate ourselves, accordingly, that we as a society are no longer minors,—that we have now attained our majority. Our youth has been vigorous and fruitful. That we should praise the men who have made it so, is not fitting; for most of them, happily, are still living. Their activity and devotion to the interests of the Association are witnessed by a stately row of published volumes of Transactions,—the twentieth of which, along with an index of contributors and an index of subjects covering the whole series, was issued last March. The prospects for our continued fruitfulness and vigor were never brighter.

We should be, and I believe that we are, conscious of our manhood and power, of the importance and dignity of our calling. The duty which the scholar as a citizen owes to the state is one of the most frequent themes of the day; but the duties which we owe to society and the body politic as philologists and public teachers may also well engage for a moment our reflection at this beginning of our new year.

We stand here as the representatives of one of those “useless things” which it is the true province of a university to teach. Our labors, be they never so faithful, will not avail one whit to lessen the cost of carrying a barrel of flour from

Minneapolis to New York, or to diminish by the hundredth of a cent the price of a yard of cloth at Fall River. Now not for a moment do we underrate the vast intellectual force involved in the great economies of spinning and weaving, or of railway administration ; and yet we boldly maintain the true usefulness of our useless discipline. For is not ours the ministry of teaching men,—by holding up to them the noblest ideals of virtue and of patriotism, the fairest works of poet and of artist, and the truest and loftiest conceptions of God and of our relations to the world about us,—of teaching men, I say, to love better things? Or else, of what avail is the cheaper bread or clothing, except as giving the man who is hurried and hustled along by the materialism of the age a little more time to cultivate his nobler self by some actual experience in enjoying the ideal and the useless,—in short, a little more time to learn that the “ useful ” is useful only in so far as it enables us to attain unto the useless.

To us students of philology belongs the privilege of renewing in our experience some of the best thought and feeling of the past. As regards success in turning that to account for our fellows, there is one condition that I would fain mention ; it is, that we keep ourselves in touch, in living, active sympathy, with the life and thought of to-day. No longer may the scholar be a cloistered recluse. He must mingle with men. He must be quick to see the possibilities which the material progress of mankind offers him for the promotion of his science. He must be up and away, to Olympia or to Delphi, to the Nile Delta or to Mesopotamia, or to the ends of the earth, to explore and to dig, to collect seals and clay tablets, coins and inscriptions, manuscripts and printed books,—in short, whatever material may yield back the treasures of the past. He must study the land and people with his own eyes and mind. He must know of the best recent progress of the graphic arts, in order that he may aid the diffusion of knowledge effectively, no less than its advancement. He must

understand the course of current events, in order that a lesson of the past may be applied with telling force to a fault or a problem of to-day. And above all, he must have that discriminating recognition of interest and of character which tells him what to teach and to whom to teach it, and that sympathy which engenders the spirit of docility in the taught. The dictionaries tell us that the word "scholar" goes back to the Greek *σχολή*, "spare time, leisure, especially for learned pursuits." No true-hearted American scholar supposes that this leisure is his for mere selfish acquisition of knowledge. Such treasures are barren, and hoarded in vain. It is only as he puts them to the service of his day and generation that his acquisitions of knowledge beget in the scholar himself wisdom and culture and character, — the end of all learning.

But if we do well on this occasion to magnify our office as *American* philologists, let us not forget that even since the founding of this Association the duties and responsibilities of *philologists*, of whatever nation, have been greatly widened. Philology aims to unfold to us the whole intellectual life of a people as that life is manifested in its language and literature, its art, its antiquities, its religion. As such, philology is a historical discipline; but it must now be regarded as also a philosophical discipline, for it seeks not only to reproduce the great phases of that life, but also to trace their genetic relations and the causal connections between them. It thus becomes, in fact, one chapter in the great book of the History of Evolution. In this light, its driest and meanest results gain new significance and dignity. No language, no literature, no antiquity can be dead to us so long as we can see the living, acting forces which are ever at work shaping its growth.

I suppose there are few of us who have not been oppressed by the vastness, the many-sidedness, of philology; by a feeling of hopeless inability to get a commanding grasp of the science as a whole; by a sense that what we do accomplish is

after all so painful and fragmentary as to be almost in vain, — is, in the words of Goethe's Pylades, —

Voll Müß' und eitel Stückwerk.

May not the contemplation of this noblest aspect of philology — as a study of human evolution — console and help us, take us each out of his self-centred isolation of purpose and action, and co-ordinate the work of each individual with that of the many who precede and follow him, so that his own life-work seems to him no longer a broken fragment lost among countless other lost and broken fragments, but rather a well-jointed part — small, indeed, perhaps — but fitting perfectly into its place in the one grand structure of human elevation, of human ennoblement.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

IT is to a study of evolution, of the genesis of a form of religion, that your attention is asked this evening. My theme is *The Beginnings of Hindu Pantheism*. The materials for its study are the Upanishads, — brief Sanskrit treatises of the Hindu mystics of perhaps the sixth century before Christ. The Upanishads teach the absolute identity of man and God, of the individual soul and the Supreme Spirit, and declare that only by the recognition of its true nature can the soul be released from its attachment to the world-illusion, and from the consequent round of transmigrations. Our subject involves the consideration of the religion of the Upanishads rather than of their philosophy, of their practical rather than of their theoretical aspects.

He who would discourse upon the religion of Israel has a theme that needs no apology when it asks our attention. The history of that religion is inseparably connected with the beginnings of our own. To the Semites we owe the contribution of the most important single factor in the civili-

zation of the world. Quite different is it with the Hindus. Leaving out of account the Extreme Orient, India has had no grand part in the history of world-civilization. It is true, the primitive Hindus are a branch of the same great Aryan family to which we also by right of birth belong; but so far as their influence upon our life and thought, or of ours upon them, is concerned, the Hindus might almost as well have lived on the planet Jupiter as on the banks of the Indus and the Ganges. But, once more, supposing that they had lived on the planet Jupiter, and that we here, earth-dwellers in this the nineteenth century, had in some wondrous wise got knowledge of the history of their life and thought, and had learned that they in their isolation had, like us, realized and tried to solve the mystery of existence, — would not our interest be heightened to most eager curiosity? And yet, barring Jupiter, this is the case. Centuries ago their tranquil sages grappled with the problems of existence and of evil, “*their* young men saw visions, and *their* old men dreamed dreams.” Rude and incoherent were these “words of the wise and their dark sayings,” but containing withal a few great thoughts, — thoughts which were taken up by the Hindu thinkers of later times and elaborated into philosophical systems, and of which, even in their crude and unsystematic forms, there are striking counterparts in Occidental philosophy.

But the human interest of the Upanishads lies not alone in the analogies and the contrasts which they present when compared with Occidental speculation; they have a great intrinsic interest for the student of one of the most important phases of evolution, inasmuch as they are the reflex of a most wonderful period in the history of India, — the period, namely, in which the sturdy, life-loving Vedic Aryans are being transformed into quietistic, pessimistic Hindus. Let me set forth more clearly who and what the people were among whom the Upanishads originated, and explain briefly the place of these works in the literature of India.

The early Aryan tribes immigrant into the northwest of India were, in blood and language, of the same primitive stock from which we ourselves are sprung; they were the easternmost members of the Indo-European or Aryan family, — that primeval group of clans which included the progenitors of the Persian, Greek, Italic, Celtic, Germanic, and Slavic tribes. They have left us a record of their character and religion in the hymns of the Veda, — the oldest recorded documents of our branch of the human race. The Vedic Aryans were pastoral clans, vigorous from open-air life in a comparatively vigorous climate. They evidently enjoyed life; for they beseech their gods for length of days and numerous children as the greatest blessings. Their wealth lay in their herds and fields. Raids upon neighboring clans fostered a warlike spirit in them; and their religious instincts were strongly developed by the intensity of action of the forces of Nature which is peculiar to the tropical and subtropical zones. The burst of the monsoon, which ushers in the rainy season in India, is a spectacular drama which defies all human mimicry. Small wonder that the Vedic Aryans conceived the crash and din of the aerial commotion as a battle of god Indra with the dragon, and the forked lightnings as the thunderbolts with which he was smiting the demon of drought and famine. And so it was with the other elemental forces: all were anthropomorphized. The wind, the sun, the fire, the waters, — each was the manifestation of a divine personality whose anger was to be appeased and whose favor was to be sought. The relations of deity and worshipper are often on a simple give-and-take basis. The gods accept the cakes of rice and the oblations of butter, and give in return rain and food, health and wealth, children and cattle. Lofty spiritual aspiration, flights of the poetic mythologizing fancy, — these are not wholly absent; but of them there is rather disappointingly little.

The elements that should inform the Vedic religion with

life are not strong enough to insure its vitality. The simple rites of worship, which were at first conducted by the patriarchal head of a family or clan, fell into the hands of a caste of priests, whose interest it was to develop these rites into a system so complex and minute that only they, the trained sacrificers by profession, could perform them, — to secure, in short, a monopoly of the sacerdotal functions and offices. The nature-religion of the Vedas has been transformed into a rigid, soul-deadening ritualism. This is the second phase in the history of Indian life; and we name it Brahmanism, after the caste of Brahmans, who in priestly robes lorded it over their fellows for centuries.

It need hardly be said that this transformation could not and did not take place without a great change in the character of the Vedic Aryans; it was, in fact, the most palpable manifestation of that change. And this change of character in turn was conditioned by a most important change of environment. The tribes which perhaps a couple of thousand years before Christ had dwelt in the extreme northwest of India, or even beyond its borders, have advanced southeastward across the basin of the Indus and into the valleys of the Ganges and Jumna. Burning sunshine, torrid winds, sultry rainy seasons, — these tell, in the course of generations, no less on the moral than on the physical fibre of a race. If we look at the descendants of the Vedic tribes, say in the sixth pre-Christian century, we must write *Ichabod*.

Their exuberant love of life has vanished. Nay, more, life is a burden. And worse still, it is a burden from which even death itself provides no escape. The belief in the transmigration of souls, the metempsychosis, has become ingrained in the Hindu character. It is not a dogma of the learned only, it is an established conviction among the lowest and meanest. Even the birds and animals in the quaint beast-fables are represented as believing in it, and as attributing their misfortunes to their sins in a former existence. There is not a

trace of this belief in the Veda proper; but the later literature is saturated with it. The Greeks, as is well known, had the doctrine; but their national temper was too happy to allow it to influence their life and character appreciably. To the Hindu, on the other hand, the misery of the prospect of life after life and death after death was a reality so terrible as to pervade the whole current of his thought and action.

The ancient, or pre-classical, literature of India may be comprehended, for the purposes of this discussion, under two heads, — the Vedic hymns, and the Brahmanas. Of the hymns we have spoken. They contain the prayers and praises offered by a simple people to their gods, and, as the oldest records of Indo-European antiquity, furnish most important material for the study of ethnic religions. With the supersession of the nature-religion of the Vedas by Brahmanism came the writings called Brahmanas. They belong to the oldest Indo-European prose extant. They are theological and mystical disquisitions upon the ritualism into which religion had degenerated. The sacrifice had become the one all-engrossing object of religious and literary activity. Its importance, legends concerning its efficacy, the esoteric significance of each act of its endless, dreary details, — these matters fill the great tomes called Brahmanas. Above all, we find in them the most extravagant symbolism. About the sacrifice the Brahman has spun a flimsy web of mystery, and in each of its elements and events he sees a hidden meaning. The blessings which these priestly scriptures hold out as a reward for ritualistic observances are chiefly temporal. Thus, to the prescriptions for the morning and evening oblations in the sacred fire it is added that one should offer sesamum oil who desires personal beauty; porridge, if he desire children; rice-broth, if he desire to get possession of a village; water, if he desire long life; and so on. The means and ends of such a system are not lofty; and therefore it could not in the long run make its appeal to the noble.

For there *were* noble souls left in degenerate India, — men who had been brought up in the priestly schools, had been taught the wisdom of the ancients, and had seen its vanity. These were the promoters of the great religious awakenings of about 500 B. C., of Buddhism, Jainism, the Brahmanic revival, — the men who felt moved to show to India a “more excellent way.” I have said “awakenings:” Buddhism, the greatest of them, was only one of many dissenting movements; and none of them, any more than the Protestant Reformation in Europe, was the work of one man.

Under the Brahmanic dispensation there were four orders, or stages, in the well-rounded life: a man became in turn, first, a pupil; then, a householder; thirdly, a forest-hermit; and lastly, an ascetic. Now the forest-hermit life and asceticism are the outward manifestations of the transition from the ritualism of the Brahmanas to the religion of the Upanishads. The active Vedic Aryan had looked “outward, and not in.” His Hindu descendants were quietists, to whom life seemed not well worth living. What wonder that they should look inward, and not out? Hermit-life fosters the habits of meditation and introspection, and these led naturally to theosophic speculation. And hence we find in the later Brahmanas passages of speculative content appropriate for the use of these *ύλόβιοι*, or Forest-hermits, and called Aranyakas (*i. e.* “Forest-treatises”) and Upanishads. The more important of these passages have been treated as separate works and dignified with separate names; but it must be remembered that the older Upanishads are in fact integral portions of the Brahmanas. Ten or a dozen of these Upanishads¹ have become famous classics of the Indian literature,

¹ In the same general style as the genuine Upanishads, have been written others which would swell the number to one or two hundred. The most important old Upanishads are the Brhad Aranyaka Upanishad, or Upanishad of the Great Forest Treatise, the Chandogya Upanishad, and the Katha Upanishad. The first two have just been edited and translated by the master hand

and are constantly cited as authoritative texts of holy scripture by the writers of the later systematic philosophical treatises.

Of the date of the older Upanishads we judge chiefly by the general aspect of their contents as compared with what precedes and what follows in the development of Indian thought. And by this criterion they must be referred to about the same epoch as the rise of Buddhism and Jainism, — say about five hundred years before Christ.

There is no abrupt break in the course of development from the old Brahman religion to that of the Upanishads. The men who saw a new light felt that they were “not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” Saint Paul says of himself, “Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews.” So these old Brahman prophets: they wore the sacred cord, — a symbol no less significant than circumcision; they were born to an intense pride of family and clan; they were, as “touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” But they felt that something must be added to the works of the law; and this something was not, as in the Christian antithesis, faith, but rather knowledge.

Ramatirtha’s introduction to the Maitri Upanishad is interesting as the attempt of an Indian schoolman “to establish,” as he says, “the connection between the earlier (or Brahmana) and the later (or Upanishad) portions of the Veda,” that is, to reconcile the ancient ritualism with the new gnosis. “Although,” says Ramatirtha, “in the preceding portion of the Veda, consisting of four books, many ceremonies, morning and evening oblations, and so forth, have been enjoined, and described as producing their higher or lower fruit, still these do not result in the attainment of man’s highest object; for they all aim at fruit which is to be *produced*, and whatever can be produced

of Böhlingk. But a good critical text of all the old Upanishads, conveniently assembled in one volume, with a philologically accurate translation and various useful appendices, is still one of the pressing needs of Indology.

is transient, according to the law, 'Whatever is capable of being made is temporal.' For thus saith the scripture" — and the schoolman quotes from the famous controversy between Yajnavalkya and the wise woman Gargi, recounted in the *Bṛhad Aranyaka* — "for thus saith the scripture: 'Whosoever in this world, without the knowledge of the imperishable, maketh oblations, giveth alms, and practiseth austerities, even for many thousand years,—for him it all comes to an end.'"

Now the *Upanishad*, resumes *Ramatirtha*, intends to show to the man who desires an object which is in its own nature eternal, the means for the accomplishment of his object. One whose internal organ is filled with the impressions of countless objects which have been experienced in the endless succession of past births, is led by his subjection to these impressions to continued activity; his mind is still set on external objects, and it is impossible to turn him back suddenly from his external pursuits. The *Brahmana*, therefore, at first teaches him outward ceremonies only as a means of preparation for the struggle for a loftier aim. These ceremonies, performed without any desire for selfish results, are intended to distract the mind from worldly pursuits; to develop passionlessness and self-restraint, and extinguish all desire save that for final emancipation; to effect a clear discrimination between things temporal and things eternal; to prepare a man for the knowledge of the real nature of the individual soul, and so lead him to the knowledge of the Supreme Soul, in which knowledge abideth perfect peace. — Thus far *Ramatirtha*.

By historical development, as we have seen, ritualism had no such purpose as this. Indeed, even the *Upanishads* themselves, in their earliest portions, cannot claim so lofty a purpose; for we find, as the rewards for a certain mystical knowledge, a full term of life (reckoned at one hundred years), abundance of children and of cattle and of fame.

It may help us to understand the beginnings of Hindu pantheism if we devote here a few moments to a brief sketch of the life of the Brahmins. Megasthenes, the ambassador of Seleukos Nikator at the court of Sandrakottos about 300 B. C., observes that even from the time of conception in the womb they are under the care of wise men.

And indeed there are holy rites for every stage of the Brahman's existence, from before his birth till after death. The most important of all the twelve sacraments are his investiture with the sacred cord at the hands of his Veda-teacher, and his marriage.

The investiture is the symbol of his spiritual regeneration, and hence those who receive it are called the twice-born. The ceremony is described at length in the books. We may picture to ourselves the teacher. He is an aged Brahman. His youth has been passed in hearing the sacred word, and he is in possession of supernatural power before which great and lowly alike tremble; for the curse of a wrathful Brahman never fails. Solemnly, with the laying on of hands, he addresses the novice with words from the Rigveda. And in response the student performs the first act of his spiritually new life: he places in utter silence a piece of wood upon the sacred fire. Then, taught by the elder, he pronounces line by line the Savitri, which for some strange reason has come to be the most celebrated and oft-repeated of all the ten thousand stanzas of the Rigveda, —

Of Savitar, the heavenly,
That longed-for glory may we win!
And may himself inspire our prayers.

Then the teacher lays his hand with the fingers upwards upon the student's heart with the words, —

In subjection to me thy heart I put.
Let thy thinking follow my thinking.
In my word rejoice thou with all thy soul.

Such is his introduction to the first order, the order of student. Truly, if this is a spiritual re-birth, what is it to be spiritually still-born? "Let thy thinking follow my thinking." Herein lies the fatal weakness of the system.

The girdle is tied around him. He takes his staff, and no

matter how rich or how powerful his family, he starts out to beg his food. Modestly and courteously, with refinement of etiquette, he begs it morning and evening. Morning and evening he tends the sacred fire. Under the vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience he devotes himself to the study of the Veda. The course for learning the four Vedas is forty-eight years, or the half of that, or the quarter, "or" — as the books quaintly say — "until he has learned them ; for life is uncertain."

A Brahman is born laden with three debts, says an ancient book. He owes Veda-study to the sages ; to the gods he owes sacrifices ; and to the spirits of the blessed dead, a son. The first he pays in his long years of pupilage ; to absolve the second and third he must needs be a householder. And accordingly marriage is a duty, and is the most important of all the sacraments except investiture ; for without a son he has no one to keep up the cultus of his departed ancestors, — a most direful misfortune.

Having passed through the orders of student and householder, the Brahman becomes a forest-hermit. In this order he is clad in a dress made of bark or skin, feeds on wild roots and fruits, is chaste, meek, cleanly, and silent save when he recites the Veda. The hermit differs from the ascetic in that the hermit *may* take his wife and children and one sacred fire with him to the forest, build a hut, and maintain his fire and the morning and evening oblation ; and also in that he seeks for heaven.

The last and highest of the four orders was that of the ascetic, or, as he was otherwise called, the pious mendicant, the beggar, or the wanderer. He sought for something higher than heaven, — for the path that leads to the cessation of re-births. Without a house, without a home, without a fire, clean-shaven, naked, or wearing at most a clout or an old rag or a cast-off garment, chaste, silent save with great ascetics and teachers of the Upanishads, begging, or receiving in his

alms-bowl what is given without his asking, and only just enough to sustain life, harming no sentient being, sleeping by night at the root of a tree, he should wander, wander about, caring neither for this world nor for heaven.

The life of these ascetics made a striking impression upon Alexander the Great and his Greek invaders. Full of curiosity, the youthful world-conqueror sent Onesikritos to talk with the sages. And as one of them saw him coming with mantle and hat and boots, he laughed at him, and bade him strip himself and lie naked on the stones to listen, if he would hear his teaching. The ascetic, reproved by a companion for discourtesy to the Greek, proceeds to show him that the best doctrine is that which removes not only sorrow but also joy, from the soul.

Megasthenes, too, tells us of these sombre sages. "They converse very much about death. They believe that this life is as it were only a completion of one's conception in the womb, and that death for the wise man is in reality a birth to the only true and happy life. Therefore they exercise themselves with much preparation to be ready to die. They teach that nothing which happens to a man is good or evil in itself; for otherwise, some would not grieve and others rejoice at the same occurrence, as they do, led by dream-like illusions; nor would the same occurrence which makes a man grieve at one time make the same man rejoice at another. In many things they agree with the Greeks; for they affirm that the world is created and perishable, and that it has the shape of a sphere, and that the god who created and rules it pervades it completely. And concerning seed, the soul, and much else, they make statements in accord with those of the Greeks, but weaving into them also, like Plato himself, fables about the immortality of the soul and the like."

Such were the men, the struggles of whose inner life are reflected in the Upanishads. The doctrines of these treatises

cannot be combined into a coherent philosophical system : they are too disconnected, contradictory, and disorderly. Indeed, as M. Barth says, they are addressed more to man as man than to man as thinker. Vigorous and great and noble thoughts pervade them, but they are thoughts over-run with a parasitic growth of fantastic allegory. They are fairly to be called religious rather than philosophical, because their speculations never lose sight of their one great practical end,—the liberation of the soul. “Were the soul fixed upon the Supreme Spirit so as it is fixed upon the things of sense, who would not be loosed from his bonds?” says the Maitri. And the same Upanishad goes on to describe the soul in bondage : —

The results of its works in a former existence are no more to be stayed than the waves of a mighty river. The coming of death can no more be kept back than can the tide of the ocean. The unilluminated soul is crippled, as it were, by the fetters of good and evil consequences with which it is bound ; bereft of liberty like a prisoner in his cell ; beset by many a fear, like one who stands before his judge ; intoxicated with delusions like one intoxicated with wine ; driven hither and yonder by sin like one possessed ; bitten by the things of sense like one bitten by a huge serpent ; blinded by passion like the darkness of midnight ; full of illusion like magic ; full of false apparitions like a dream ; pithless as the inside of the stem of a banana-tree ; changing its dress every moment like an actor ; falsely fair as a painted wall.

How shall the soul be loosed from this bondage ? Our deeds —

“ Follow us from afar,
And what we have been makes us what we are.”

How shall it be rescued from the eddying vortex of transmigration in which it is whirled about by its deeds ? The answer of the Upanishads is, “ By the recognition of its true nature.” By its true nature it is absolutely iden-

tical with the supreme and all-pervading Spirit of the Universe.

There is, in an ancient Vedic hymn used in the ritual of cremation and burial, a verse addressed to the departed: "Let thine eye go to the sun; thy breath to the wind." It is perhaps the oldest text involving the idea of the microcosm and macrocosm. Each element in man comes from some element in nature with which it has most affinity, and there-to it returns at dissolution. These affinities are worked out with much detail in the Upanishad: "In case the dead man's voice goes to the fire, his breath to the wind, his eye to the sun, his mind to the moon, his hearing to space, his body to the earth, the hair of his body to the plants, the hair of his head to the trees, and his blood to the waters, what becomes then of the man?" The affinity of the eye and the sun is universally palpable. Thus Plato says: "Most like to the sun, methinks, is the eye, of all the organs of sense." Not less so is that of the breath and the wind.

Now no less than five of the old Upanishads contain a "Dialogue of the Vital Powers," which has a curious likeness to the old Roman fable of the "Belly and the Members," and is not without interest in this connection. It is as follows:—

The vital powers strove among themselves for the pre-eminence, saying each, I am better than the rest, I am better than the rest. The vital powers went unto Father Prajapati and spake: Exalted one! which of us is the best? He answered them: That one at whose departure the body seems to feel the worst, that is the best one of you.

The voice departed. After it had been away for a year, it came back and said: How have ye been able to live without me?— Like mutes that speak not, breathing with the breath, seeing with the eye, hearing with the ear, thinking with the mind. Thus lived we.— So the voice entered in again.

The eye departed. After it had been away for a year, it came back and said: How have ye been able to live without me?— Like the blind that see not, breathing with the breath, speaking with the voice,

hearing with the ear, thinking with the mind. Thus lived we. — So the eye entered in again.

The ear departed. After it had been away for a year, it came back and said: How have ye been able to live without me? — Like the deaf that hear not, breathing with the breath, speaking with the voice, seeing with the eye, thinking with the mind. Thus lived we. — So the ear entered in again.

The mind departed. After it had been away for a year, it came back and said: How have ye been able to live without me? — Like fools without mind, breathing with the breath, speaking with the voice, seeing with the eye, hearing with the ear. Thus lived we. — So the mind entered in again.

Now as the breath was on the point of departing, — just as a proud steed from the Indus would pull and tear the pegs of his tether, so it pulled and tore the other vital powers. Together spake they all to the breath and said: Exalted one! Thou art the best of us. Without thee we cannot live.¹ Depart not.

This fable appears to contain in its oldest and simplest form the recognition of the supremacy of the vital principle called breath, *prāṇa*, or *ātman*, upon which even the organ of thought or the *manas* depends. The *ātman* is the central point in the human personality, — the vague, hidden, underlying power which is the necessary condition of all human activity.

I have said that symbolism and mystery were run mad in the Brahmanas. The sacrifice is a symbol of man, — in short, it is man. The morning oblation is a type of the first twenty-four years of his life, because it is offered with the accompaniment of the Savitri, a stanza of the Rigveda which consists of twenty-four syllables. The midday oblation corresponds to the next forty-four years of his life, for it is offered with a *trishṭubh*, or stanza of forty-four syllables. The evening oblation answers to the next forty-eight years

¹ And therefore, it is added, the senses are called neither voices nor eyes nor ears nor minds, but *prāṇās* (literally "breaths": I have rendered it by "vital powers"), for the breath pervades them all.

of his life, because offered with a *jayatī*, or stanza of forty-eight syllables. And this precious wisdom, the knowledge of this symbolism, has a magic, a god-compelling power. Mahidasa Aitareya, who had this knowledge, lived one hundred and sixteen years; and he who fathoms it shall live one hundred and sixteen years.

Or again: The light within a man is a symbol of — in short it *is* — the light which lightens beyond the heaven, on the summit of everything, on the summit of all, in the highest world, above which there are no higher worlds. When one feels warmth in touching the body, then one sees this light. When one, covering his ears, notices as it were a gentle noise or humming like that of a burning fire, then one hears it. One should worship it as the seen and the heard. Him men shall gladly see, and of him men shall hear who hath this knowledge.

For the Vedic period it was sufficient to seek the elemental counterpart of the breath of life in the wind that bloweth. For the Hindu mystic this was not enough. His dreamy speculations have invested the Atman, the vital breath, with potencies and attributes which pervade the whole being of man. Granted that it must have a counterpart in the macrocosm, and the first great step of Hindu pantheism is taken. For that counterpart must hold the same relation to the universe that the Atman does to man. It can be nought else than the principle which informs the universe with life, which — as they told Megasthenes — pervades it completely.

In this atmosphere of mystic symbolism everything is not only that which it *is*, but also that which it *signifies*. So lost is the Brahman in these esoteric vagaries that to him the line of demarcation between *is* and *signifies* becomes almost wholly obliterated. If the Atman in man is the type and symbol of the supreme Atman, then it *is* that supreme Atman, and pantheism is an accomplished fact.

But we may not suppose that the sages of the Upanishads conceived the doctrine of the absolute identity of the soul with the All-Soul so rigorously as it appears in the system of the Vedanta. On the contrary, many of the earliest texts about the Supreme Atman present a naïvely anthropomorphic picture of him. He is more like a primeval titanic man than a god. "In the beginning was the Atman. He looked around and saw nought else than himself. He feared. Then he thought: Since there exists nought else than myself, of what am I afraid? Then vanished his fear." But we need not wonder at the grossness of their attempts to describe the indescribable. Rather must we sympathize with the simple pathos of their search after the unsearchable, of the questions that *will out*, whether they be answerable or not.

"Teach me, exalted one. With these words Narada presented himself reverently before Sanatkumara. He answered: Present thyself before me with that which thou knowest already. Then will I teach thee further. Narada said: I study, exalted one, the Rigveda, the Yajurveda, the Samaveda, the Atharvaveda as the fourth and the Itihasa and Purana as the fifth Veda; further, the Veda of the Vedas, the Pitrya Raçi, the Daiva Nidhi, the Vakovakya, the Ekayana, the lore of the gods, of the priests, of the ghosts, of the warriors, of the stars, of the serpents, and of the genii. This, exalted one, I study.

"Nevertheless, exalted one, I know only the sacred texts, not the Spirit. For I have heard from men like the exalted one that he who knoweth the Spirit crosseth over the stream of sorrow. Yet do I sorrow, exalted one. So let the exalted one bring me across to the farther bank of the stream of sorrow."—One may almost fancy one's self in the study-chamber of Faust.

And here, on the other hand, is a pendant to the picture. Çvetaketu was of the stock of Aruni. To him spake his father: Çvetaketu, take up thy life as a student. No one

in our family, for lack of sacred study, is ever a Brahman in name only. — So at twelve years of age he betook him to the teacher. At twenty-four he had been over all the Vedas, and returned home conceited, puffed up, and thinking himself learned. To him spake his father: Since thou, my son, art so conceited and puffed up, and thinkest thyself so learned, thou hast doubtless asked and got the teaching by which the unheard becomes heard, the unthought becomes thought, the unknown becomes known. — Of what sort is that teaching, reverend sir? — And his father proceeds to expound the hidden doctrines.

Such are the questions. And the answers are given in allegories which illustrate one aspect and another of the Atman. The all-pervasiveness of the yet invisible Atman is thus illustrated to Çvetaketu by his father: Put this salt into water, and present thyself before me to-morrow morning. The son did so. Then spake his father: Bring me the lump of salt which thou didst put last evening in the water. He felt for it, but found it not; it seemed to have vanished. Sip from this side of the vessel. How is it? — It tastes salt. — Sip from the middle. How is it? — Salt. — Sip from yonder side. How is it? — Salt. — Here thou seest not the reality, and yet it is therein.

Or again: This my spirit or self within my heart is smaller than a grain of rice, or a barley-corn, or a grain of mustard-seed; smaller than a grain of millet, or even than a husked grain of millet. It is greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than heaven, greater than all the worlds. In it all works, all wishes, all odors and savors are comprehended; it embraces the universe; it speaks not; it is indifferent. This is my spirit within my heart; it is Brahman. Thereunto, when I go hence, shall I attain. Thus said the sage Çandilya.

“Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself,” we read in Isaiah. And time and again we see these ancient sages

answering their young questioners in similar tones. “ This is the spirit of whom they say, ‘ *Not, Not.*’ As incomprehensible, it is not comprehended. As indestructible, it is not destroyed.”

The great practical aim of all this teaching is, as was said before, to lead to the realization of the true unity of the soul and the Supreme Soul, — and this by exterminating in the soul all desires and activity, root and branch. Although the soul may still, for a little while, keep on acting, it is only as when the wheel of the potter keeps on revolving after the workman has ceased to turn it. As water runs over the leaf of a lotus without wetting it, so these acts no longer affect the soul. It is liberated; and death can only do away what no longer exists for the emancipated soul, the last false semblance of a difference between it and the Supreme.

The doctrine of the absolute unity finds perhaps its most striking expression in Sanskrit in the Katha Upanishad; but nowhere, neither in Sanskrit nor in English, has it been presented with more vigor, truthfulness, and beauty of form than by Emerson in his famous lines paraphrasing the Sanskrit passage. They are conceived as if uttered by the All-pervading Spirit: —

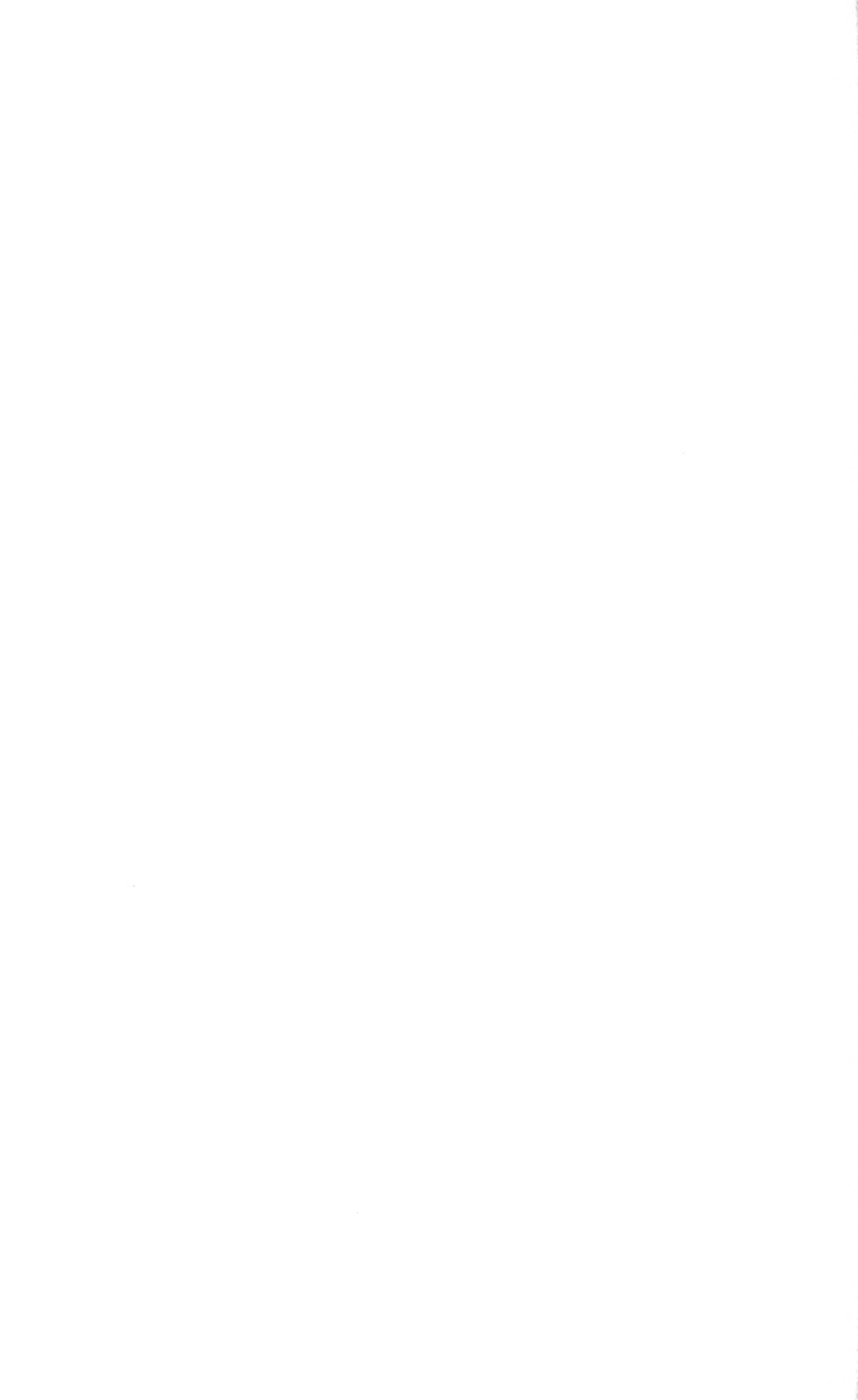
If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near,
Shadow and sunlight are the same,
The vanished gods to me appear,
And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The strong gods pine for my abode,
And pine in vain the sacred Seven ;
But thou, meek lover of the good !
Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.

What a prospect, dark and void, — this Supreme Spirit,
before whom all human endeavor, all noble ambition, all
hope, all love, is blighted! What a contrast, a relief, when
we turn from this to the teachings of the gentle Nazarene !

















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