

to each of them. These laws are conceived with no humane or sentimental scruples on the part of their authors. On the contrary, the offences committed by Brāhmins against other castes are treated with remarkable clemency, whilst the punishments inflicted for trespasses on the rights of higher classes are the more severe and inhuman the lower the offender stands in the social scale. The three first castes, however unequal to each other in privilege and social standing, are yet united by a common bond of sacramental rites (*sanskāras*), traditionally connected from ancient times with certain incidents and stages in the life of the Aryan Hindū, as conception, birth, name-giving, the first taking out of the child to see the sun, the first feeding with boiled rice, the rites of tonsure and hair cutting, the youth's investiture with the sacrificial thread, and his return home on completing his studies, marriage, funeral, &c. The modes of observing these family rites are laid down in a class of writings called *Grihya-sūtras*, or domestic rules. The most important of these observances is the *upanayana*, or rite of conducting the boy to a spiritual teacher. Connected with this act is the investiture with the sacred cord, ordinarily worn over the left shoulder and under the right arm, and varying in material according to the class of the wearer. This ceremony being the preliminary act to the youth's initiation into the study of the Veda, the management of the consecrated fire and the knowledge of the rites of purification, including the *sāvitrī*, a solemn invocation to *savitri*, the sun, which has to be repeated every morning and evening before the rise and after the setting of that luminary, is supposed to constitute the second or spiritual birth of the Aryan. It is from their participation in this rite that the three upper classes are called the twice-born. The ceremony is enjoined to take place some time between the eighth and sixteenth year of age in the case of a Brāhmin, between the eleventh and twenty-second year of a Kshatriya, and between the twelfth and twenty-fourth year of a Vaiśya. He who has not been invested with the mark of his class within this time is for ever excluded from uttering the sacred *sāvitrī* and becomes an outcast, unless he is absolved from his sin by a council of Brāhmins, and after due performance of a purificatory rite resumes the badge of his caste. With one not duly initiated no righteous man is allowed to associate or to enter into connections of affinity. The duty of the Śūdra is to serve the twice-born classes, and above all the Brāhmins. He is excluded from all sacred knowledge, and if he performs sacrificial ceremonies he must do so without using holy mantras. No Brāhmin must recite a Vedic text where a man of the servile caste might overhear him, nor must he even teach him the laws of expiating sin. The occupations of the Vaiśya are those connected with trade, the cultivation of the land and the breeding of cattle; while those of a Kshatriya consist in ruling and defending the people, administering justice, and the duties of military profession generally. Both share with the Brāhmin the privilege of reading the Veda, but only so far as it is taught and explained to them by their spiritual preceptor. To the Brāhmin belongs the right of teaching and expounding the sacred texts, and also that of interpreting and determining the law and the rules of caste. Only in exceptional cases, when no teacher of the sacerdotal class is within reach, the twice-born youth, rather than forego spiritual instruction altogether, may reside in the house of a non-Brāhminical preceptor; but it is specially enjoined that a pupil, who seeks the path to heaven, should not fail, as soon as circumstances permit, to resort to a Brāhmin well versed in the Vedas and their appendages.

Notwithstanding the barriers placed between the four castes, the practice of intermarrying appears to have been too prevalent in early times to have admitted of measures

of so stringent a nature as to wholly repress it. To marry a woman of a higher caste, and especially of a caste not immediately above one's own, is, however, decidedly prohibited, the offspring resulting from such a union being excluded from the performance of the *śrāddha* or obsequies to the ancestors, and thereby rendered incapable of inheriting any portion of the parents' property. On the other hand, men are at liberty, according to the rules of Manu, to marry a girl of any or each of the castes below their own, provided they have besides a wife belonging to their own class, for only such a one should perform the duties of personal attendance and religious observance devolving upon a married woman. As regards the children born from unequal marriages of this description, they have the rights and duties of the twice-born, if their mother belong to a twice-born caste; otherwise they, like the offspring of the former class of intermarriages, share the lot of the Śūdras, and are excluded from the investiture and the *sāvitrī*. For this last reason the marriage of a twice-born man with a Śūdra woman is altogether discountenanced by some of the later law books. At the time of the code of Manu the intermixture of the classes had already produced a considerable number of intermediate or mixed castes, which were carefully catalogued, and each of which had a specific occupation assigned to it as its hereditary profession. The self-exaltation of the first class was not, it would seem, altogether due to priestly arrogance and ambition; but, like a prominent feature of the post-Vedic belief, the transmigration of souls, it was, if not the necessary, yet at least a natural consequence of the pantheistic doctrine. To the Brāhminical speculator who saw in the numberless individual existences of animate nature but so many manifestations of the one eternal soul, to union with which they were all bound to tend as their final goal of supreme bliss, the greater or less imperfection of the material forms in which they were embodied naturally presented a continuous scale of spiritual units from the lowest degradation up to the absolute purity and perfection of the supreme spirit. To prevent one's sinking yet lower, and by degrees to raise one's self in this universal gradation, or, if possible, to attain the ultimate goal immediately from any state of corporeal existence, there was but one way,—subjection of the senses, purity of life, and knowledge of the deity. "He" (thus ends the code of Manu) "who in his own soul perceives the supreme soul in all beings and acquires equanimity toward them all, attains the highest state of bliss." Was it not natural then that the men who, if true to their sacred duties, were habitually engaged in what was most conducive to these spiritual attainments, that the Brāhminical class early learnt to look upon themselves, even as a matter of faith, as being foremost among the human species in this universal race for final beatitude? The life marked out for them by that stern theory of class duties which they themselves had worked out, and which, no doubt, must have been practised in early times at least in some degree, was by no means one of ease and amenity. It was, on the contrary, singularly calculated to promote that complete mortification of the instincts of animal nature which they considered as indispensable to the final deliverance from the revolution of bodily and personal existence.

The pious Brāhmin, longing to attain the *summum bonum* on the dissolution of his frail body, was enjoined to pass through a succession of four orders or stages of life, viz., those of *brahmachārin*, or religious student; *grihastha* (or *gṛhamedhin*), or householder; *vanavāsīn* (or *vānaprastha*), or anchorite; and *sannyāsīn* (or *bhikṣu*), or religious mendicant. Theoretically this course of life was open and even recommended to every twice-born man, his distinctive class-occupations being in that case restricted to the second station, or that of married life. Practically however those

belonging to the Kshatriya and Vaiśya castes were, no doubt, contented, with few exceptions, to go through a term of studentship in order to obtain a certain amount of religious instruction before entering into the married state, and plying their professional duties. In the case of the sacerdotal class, the practice probably was all but universal in early times; but gradually a more and more limited proportion seem to have carried their religious zeal to the length of self-mortification involved in the two final stages. On the youth having been invested with the sign of his caste, he was to reside for some time in the house of some religious teacher, well read in the Veda, to be instructed in the knowledge of the scriptures and the scientific treatises attached to them, in the social duties of his caste, and in the complicated system of purificatory and sacrificial rites. According to the number of Vedas he intended to study, the duration of this period of instruction was to be, probably in the case of Brāhminical students chiefly, of from twelve to forty-eight years; during which time the virtues of modesty, duty, temperance, and self-control were to be firmly implanted in the youth's mind by his unremitting observance of the most minute rules of conduct. During all this time the Brāhmin student had to subsist entirely on food obtained by begging from house to house; and his behaviour towards the preceptor and his family was to be that prompted by respectful attachment and implicit obedience. In the case of girls no investiture takes place, but for them the nuptial ceremony is considered as an equivalent for that rite. On quitting the teacher's abode, the young man returns to his family and takes a wife. To die without leaving legitimate offspring, and especially a son, to perform the periodical rite of obsequies, consisting of offerings of water and cakes, to himself and his ancestors, is considered a great misfortune by the orthodox Hindū. There are three sacred "debts" which a man has to discharge in life, viz., that which is due to the gods, and of which he acquits himself by daily worship and sacrificial rites; that due to the *rishis*, or ancient sages and inspired seers of the Vedic texts, discharged by the daily study of the scripture; and the "final debt" which he owes to his *manes*, and of which he relieves himself by leaving a son. To these three some authorities add a fourth, viz., the debt owing to humankind, which demands his continually practising kindness and hospitality. Hence the necessity of the man's entering into the married state. When the bridegroom leads the bride from her father's house to his own home, the fire which has been used for the marriage ceremony accompanies the couple to serve them as their *gārhapatya*, or domestic fire. It has to be kept up perpetually, day and night, either by themselves or their children, or, if the man be a teacher, by his pupils. If it should at any time become extinguished by neglect or otherwise, the guilt incurred thereby must be atoned for by an act of expiation. The domestic fire serves the family for preparing their food, for making the five necessary daily and other occasional offerings, and for performing the sacramental rites above alluded to. No food should ever be eaten that has not been duly consecrated by a portion of it being offered to the gods, the beings, and the *manes*. These three daily offerings are also called by the collective name of *vaiśvadeva*, or sacrifice to all the deities. The remaining two are the offering to Brahmā, i.e., the daily lecture of the scriptures, accompanied by certain rites, and that to men, consisting in the entertainment of guests. The domestic observances, many of which must be considered as ancient Aryan family customs, surrounded by the Hindūs with a certain amount of adventitious ceremonial, were generally performed by the householder himself, with the assistance of his wife. There is, however, another class of sacrificial ceremonies of a more pretentious

and expensive kind, called *śrauta* rites, or rites based on *śruti*, or revelation, the performance of which, though not indispensable, were yet considered obligatory under certain circumstances. They formed a very powerful weapon in the hands of the priesthood, and were one of the chief sources of their subsistence. Owing to the complicated nature of these sacrifices, and the great amount of ritualistic formulas and texts muttered or recited during their performance, they required the employment of a number of professional Brāhmins, frequently as many as sixteen, who had to be well rewarded for their services. However great the religious merit accruing from these sacrificial rites, they were obviously a kind of luxury which only rich people could afford to indulge in. They constituted, as it were, a tax, voluntary perhaps, yet none the less compulsory, levied by the priesthood on the wealthy laity. It is true that the priest who refuses to accept any reward for officiating at a sacrifice is highly eulogized by the Brāhminical writers; but such cases of disinterested zeal seem to have occurred but rarely. The manuals of Vaidik ritual generally enumerate three classes of *śrauta* rites, viz., *ishtis*, or oblations of milk, curds, clarified butter (*ghee*), rice, grain, &c., animal offerings, and libations of *soma*. The *soma*, an intoxicating drink prepared from the juice of the *Asclepias acida* (a kind of milk-weed, sometimes called the moon-plant), must have played an important part in the ancient worship, at least as early as the Indo-Persian period. It is continually alluded to both in the *Zend Avesta* and the *Rigveda*. In the latter work the hymns of a whole book, besides others, are addressed to it, either in the shape of a mighty god, or in its original form, as a kind of ambrosia endowed with wonderfully exhilarating powers. In post-Vedic mythology *Soma* has become identified with the lunar deity, to whom it seems to have had some relation from the beginning. Among the Vaidik rites the *soma*-sacrifices are the most solemn and complicated, and those to which the greatest efficacy is ascribed in remitting sin, conferring offspring and even immortality. They require the attendance of sixteen priests, and are divided into three groups, according as the actual pressing and offering of the *soma* occupies only one day, or between one and twelve, or more than twelve days. The performance of all *śrauta* sacrifices requires two other fires besides that used for domestic rites. The act of first placing the fires in their respective receptacles, after due consecration of the ground, constitutes the essential part of the first *ishṭi*, the *agnyādāna*, which the householder should have performed by four Brāhmins immediately after his wedding. To the same class of sacrificial ceremonies belong those performed on the days of the new and full moon, the oblation at the commencement of the three seasons, the offering of first-fruits and other periodical rites. Besides these regular sacrifices, the *śrauta* ceremonial includes a number of most solemn rites which, on account of the objects for which they are instituted and the enormous expenditure they involve, could only be performed on rare occasions and by powerful princes. Of these the most important are the *rājasūya*, or inauguration ceremony of a monarch laying claim to supreme rule, and the *asvamedha*, or horse sacrifice, a rite of great antiquity, enjoined by the Brāhminical ritual to kings desirous of attaining universal sovereignty. The efficacy ascribed to this ceremony in later times was so great that the performance of a hundred such sacrifices was considered to deprive Indra of his position as chief of the immortals.

When the householder is advanced in years, "when he perceives his skin become wrinkled and his hair grey, when he sees the son of his son," the time is said to have come for him to enter the third stage of life. He should now disengage himself from all family ties,—except that his wife may accompany him, if she chooses,—and repair



to a lonely wood, taking with him his sacred fires and the implements required for the daily and periodical offerings. Clad in a deer's skin, in a single piece of cloth, or in a bark garment, with his hair and nails uncut, the hermit is to subsist exclusively on food growing wild in the forest, such as roots, fruit, green herbs, and wild rice and grain. He must not accept gifts from any one, except of what may be absolutely necessary to maintain him; but with his own little hoard he should, on the contrary, honour, to the best of his ability, those who visit his hermitage. His time must be spent in reading the metaphysical treatises of the Veda, in making oblations, and in undergoing various kinds of privation and austerities, with a view to mortifying his passions and producing in his mind an entire indifference to worldly objects. Having by these means succeeded in overcoming all sensual affections and desires, and in acquiring perfect equanimity towards everything around him, the hermit has fitted himself for the final and most exalted order, that of devotee or religious mendicant. As such he has no further need of either mortifications or religious observances; but "with the sacrificial fires repositing in his mind," he may devote the remainder of his days to meditating on the divinity. Taking up his abode at the foot of a tree in total solitude, "with no companion but his own soul," clad in a coarse garment, he should carefully avoid injuring any creature or giving offence to any human being that may happen to come near him. Once a day, in the evening, "when the charcoal fire is extinguished and the smoke no longer issues from the fire-places, when the pestle is at rest, when the people have taken their meals and the dishes are removed," he should go near the habitations of men, in order to beg what little food may suffice to sustain his feeble frame. Ever pure of mind he should thus bide his time, "as a servant expects his wages," wishing neither for death nor for life, until at last his soul is freed from its fetters and absorbed in the eternal spirit, the impersonal self-existent Brahṁā.

The neuter term *brāhmā* is met with in the *Rigveda* both in the abstract sense of "devotion, worship," and in the concrete one of "prayer, hymn." Closely connected with it is found the masculine term *brahmā*, "a worshipper, a priest." The popular belief in the efficacy of invocation constituted a prominent feature of the Vedic symbolism, which the traditional and professional activity of the poet and minister of worship did, no doubt, much to keep up and foster. In the theosophical speculations of the later Vedic poets this mystic power of devotion found its fullest expression in the recognition of the *brāhmā* as the highest cosmical principle, and its identification with the pantheistic conception of an all-pervading self-existent essence, the primary source of the universe. Whether this identification was originally due to some extent to the influence of class-interest possibly aided by the coincidence of name, or whether it was solely the product of a highly-wrought religious imagination, it is difficult to decide. Certain it is, however, that the term *brāhmā* began to be used about the same time as the abstract designation of priestly function and the Brāhmanical order in general; in the same way as the word *kshatra* came to denote the aggregate of functions and individuals of the military class.

The tendency towards a comprehension of the unity of divine essence had resulted in some minds, as has been remarked before, in a kind of monotheistic notion of the origin of the universe. In the literature of the Brāhmana period we meet with this conception as a common element of speculation; and so far from its being considered incompatible with the existence of a universal spirit, *Prajāpati*, the personal creator of the world, is generally allowed a prominent place in the pantheistic theories. Yet the state of theological speculation, reflected in these writings, is one

of transition. The general drift of thought is essentially pantheistic, but it is far from being reduced to a regular system, and the ancient form of belief still enters largely into it. The attributes of *Prajāpati*, in the same way, have in them elements of a purely polytheistic nature, and some of the attempts at reconciling this new-fangled deity with the traditional belief are somewhat awkward. An ancient classification of the gods represented them as being thirty-three in number, eleven in each of the three worlds or regions of nature. These regions being associated each with the name of one principal deity, this division gave rise at a later time to the notion of a kind of triple divine government, consisting of *Agni* (fire), *Indra* (sky) or *Vāyu* (wind), and *Sūrya* (sun), as presiding respectively over the gods on earth, in the atmosphere, and in the sky. Of this Vedic triad mention is frequently made in the Brāhmana writings. On the other hand the term *prajāpati* (lord of creatures), which in the *Rigveda* occurs as an epithet of the sun, is also once in the *Atharvaveda* applied jointly to *Indra* and *Agni*. In the Brāhmanas *Prajāpati* is several times mentioned as the thirty-fourth god; whilst in one passage he is called the fourth god, and made to rule over the three worlds. More frequently, however, the writings of this period represent him as the maker of the world and the father or creator of the gods. It is clear from this discordance of opinion on so important a point of doctrine, that at this time no authoritative system of belief had been agreed upon by the theologians. Yet there are unmistakable signs of a strong tendency towards constructing one, and it is possible that in yielding to it the Brāhmanas may have been partly prompted by political considerations. The definite settlement of the caste system and the Brāhmanical supremacy must probably be assigned to somewhere about the close of the Brāhmana period. Division in their own ranks was hardly favourable to the aspirations of the priests, at such a time; and the want of a distinct formula of belief adapted to the general drift of theological speculation, to which they could all rally, was probably felt the more acutely, the more determined a resistance the military class was likely to oppose to their claims. Side by side with the conception of the Brāhmā, the universal spiritual principle, with which speculative thought had already become deeply imbued, the notion of a supreme personal being, the author of the material creation, had come to be considered by many as a necessary complement of the pantheistic doctrine. But, owing perhaps to his polytheistic associations and the attributive nature of his name, the person of *Prajāpati* seems to have been thought but insufficiently adapted to represent this abstract idea. The expedient resorted to for solving the difficulty was as ingenious as it was characteristic of the Brāhmanical aspirations. In the same way as the abstract denomination of sacerdotalism, the neuter *brāhmā*, had come to express the divine essence, so the old designation of the individual priest, the masculine term *brahmā*, was raised to denote the supreme personal deity which was to take the place and attributes of the *Prajāpati* of the Brāhmanas and Upanishads. By this means the very name of the god expressed the essential oneness of his nature with that of the divine spirit as whose manifestation he was to be considered. Even in the later Vedic writings *Brahmā* is but rarely mentioned; and in some of these passages he is expressly identified with *Prajāpati*. It is in the institutes of *Manu*, where, as we have seen, the system of castes is propounded in its complete development, that his definite place is assigned to him in the cosmogony. According to this work, the universe, before undiscerned, was made discernible in the beginning by the sole, self-existent spirit (*brahmā*). He, then, having willed to produce from his own substance various creatures, created the

waters by meditation, and having placed in them a productive seed which developed into a golden egg, he was born in that egg as the male Brahṁā, the forefather (and creator) of all beings. The theory of Brahṁā being born from a golden egg is a mere adaptation of the Vedic conception of *Hiranyagarbha* ("gold-embryo"), who is represented as the supreme god in a hymn of the tenth book of the *Rigveda*.

However the new dogma may have answered the purposes of speculative minds, it was not one in which the people generally were likely to have been much concerned; an abstract, colourless deity like Brahṁā could awake no sympathies in the hearts of those accustomed to worship gods of flesh and blood. Indeed, ever since the primitive symbolical worship of nature had undergone a process of disintegration under the influence of metaphysical speculation, the real belief of the great body of the people had probably become more and more distinct from that of the priesthood. In different localities the principal share of their affection may have been bestowed on one or another of the old gods who was thereby raised to the dignity of chief deity; or new forms and objects of belief may have sprung up with the intellectual growth of the people. In some cases even the worship of the indigenous population may not have remained without exercising some influence in modifying the belief of the Aryan race. In this way a number of local deities would grow up, more or less distinct in name and characteristics from the gods of the Vedic pantheon. There is, indeed, sufficient evidence to show that, at a time when, after centuries of theological speculations, some little insight into the life and thought of the people is afforded by the literature handed down to us, such a diversity of worship did exist. Under these circumstances the policy which seems to have suggested itself to the priesthood, anxious to retain a firm hold on the minds of the people, was to recognize and incorporate into their system some of the most prominent objects of popular devotion, and thereby to establish a kind of catholic creed for the whole community subject to the Brāhmanical law. At the time of the original composition of the great epics two such deities, *Siva* or *Mahādeva* ("the great god") and *Vishnu*, seem to have been already admitted into the Brāhmanical system, where they have ever since retained their place; and from the manner in which they are represented in those works, it would, indeed, appear that both, and especially the former, enjoyed an extensive worship. As several synonyms are attributed to each of them, it is not improbable that in some of these we have to recognize special names under which the people in different localities worshipped these gods, or deities of a similar nature which, by the agency of popular poetry, or in some other way, came to be combined with them. The places assigned to them in the pantheistic system were co-ordinate with that of Brahṁā; the three deities, *Brahmā*, *Vishnu*, and *Siva* were to represent a triple impersonation of the divinity, as manifesting itself respectively in the creation, preservation, and destruction of the universe. *Siva* does not occur in the Vedic hymns as the name of a god, but only as an adjective in the sense of "kind, auspicious." One of his synonyms, however, is the name of a Vedic deity, the attributes and nature of which show a good deal of similarity to the post-Vedic god. This is *Rudra*, the god of the roaring storm, usually portrayed, in accordance with the element he represents, as a fierce, destructive deity, "terrible as a wild beast," whose fearful arrows cause death and disease to men and cattle. He is also called *kapardin* ("wearing his hair spirally braided like a shell"), a word which in later times became one of the synonyms of *Siva*. The *Atharvaveda* mentions

several other names of the same god, some of which appear even placed together, as in one passage *Bhava*, *Sarva*, *Rudra*, and *Paśupati*. Possibly some of them were the names under which one and the same deity was already worshipped in different parts of Northern India. This was certainly the case in later times, since it is expressly stated in one of the later works of the Brāhmana period, that *Sarva* was used by the Eastern people and *Bhava* by a Western tribe. It is also worthy of note that in this work (the *Satapatha-brāhmana*), composed at a time when the Vedic triad of *Agni*, *Indra-Vāyu*, and *Sūrya* was still recognized, attempts are made to identify this god of many names with *Agni*; and that in one passage in the *Mahābhārata* it is stated that the Brāhmanas said that *Agni* was *Siva*. Although this identification can scarcely be correct, it seems to point to the fact that, in adapting their speculations to the actual state of popular worship, the Brāhmanas kept the older triad distinctly in view, and by means of it endeavoured to bring their new structure into harmony with the ancient Vedic belief. It is in his character as destroyer that *Siva* holds his place in the triad, and that he must, no doubt, be identified with the Vedic *Rudra*. Another very important function appears, however, to have been early assigned to him, on which much more stress is laid in his modern worship—that of destroyer being more especially exhibited in his consort—viz., the character of a generative power, symbolized in the phallic emblem (*linga*) and in the sacred bull (*Nandi*), the favourite attendant of the god. This feature being entirely alien from the nature of the Vedic god, it has been conjectured with some plausibility, that the *linga*-worship was originally prevalent among the non-Aryan population, and was thence introduced into the worship of *Siva*. On the other hand, there can, we think, be little doubt that *Siva*, in his generative faculty, is the representative of another Vedic god whose nature and attributes go far to account for this particular feature of the modern deity, viz., *Pūshan*. This god, originally, no doubt, a solar deity, is frequently invoked, as the lord of nourishment, to bestow food, wealth, and other blessings. He is once, jointly with *Soma*, called the progenitor of heaven and earth, and is connected with the marriage ceremony, where he is asked to lead the bride to the bridegroom and make her prosperous (*Sivatamā*). Moreover, he has the epithet *kapardin* (spirally braided), as have *Rudra* and the later *Siva*, and is called *Paśupa*, or guardian of cattle, whence the latter derives his name *Paśupati*. But he is also a strong, powerful, and even fierce and destructive god, who, with his goad or golden spear, smites the foes of his worshipper, and thus in this respect offers at least some points of similarity to *Rudra*, which may have favoured the fusion of the two gods. *Vishnu* occupies already a place in the Vedic mythology, though by no means one of such prominence as would entitle him to that degree of exaltation implied in his character as one of the three hypostases of the divinity. Moreover, although in his general nature, as a benevolent, genial being, the Vedic god corresponds on the whole to the later *Vishnu*, the preserver of the world, the latter exhibits many important features for which we look in vain in his prototype, and which were most likely the results of sectarian worship or of an amalgamation with local deities. In one or two of them, such as his names *Vāsudeva* and *Vaikuntha*, an attempt may again be traced to identify *Vishnu* with *Indra*, who, as we have seen, was one of the Vedic triad of gods. The characteristic feature of the elder *Vishnu* is his measuring the world with his three strides, which are explained as denoting either the three stations of the sun at the time of rising, culminating, and setting, or the triple manifestation of the luminous element, as the fire on earth, the lightning in the atmosphere, and the sun in the