

INDIAN WISDOM

OR

EXAMPLES

OF THE

RELIGIOUS, PHILOSOPHICAL, AND ETHICAL
DOCTRINES OF THE HINDŪS:

WITH A BRIEF HISTORY

OF THE CHIEF DEPARTMENTS OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE,

AND SOME ACCOUNT OF THE

PAST AND PRESENT CONDITION OF INDIA,
MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL.

BY

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That thou hast trod—the path by which each race of men,
 In long succession, and our fathers, too, have passed.
 Soul of the dead ! depart ; fear not to take the road—
 The ancient road—by which thy ancestors have gone ;
 Ascend to meet the god—to meet thy happy fathers,
 Who dwell in bliss with him. Fear not to pass the guards—
 The four-eyed brindled dogs—that watch for the departed.
 Return unto thy home, O soul ! Thy sin and shame
 Leave thou behind on earth ; assume a shining form—
 Thy ancient shape—refined and from all taint set free.

Let me now endeavour, by slightly amplified translations, to convey some idea of two of the most remarkable hymns in the Rig-veda. The first (Maṇḍala X. 129), which may be compared with some parts of the 38th chap. of Job, attempts to describe the mystery of creation thus :

In the beginning there was neither nought nor aught,
 Then there was neither sky nor atmosphere above.
 What then enshrouded all this teeming universe ?
 In the receptacle of what was it contained ?
 Was it enveloped in the gulf profound of water ?
 Then was there neither death nor immortality,
 Then was there neither day, nor night, nor light, nor darkness,
 Only the Existent One breathed calmly, self-contained.
 Nought else than him there was—nought else above, beyond.
 Then first came darkness hid in darkness, gloom in gloom.
 Next all was water, all a chaos indiscreet,
 In which the One lay void, shrouded in nothingness.
 Then turning inwards he by self-developed force
 Of inner fervour and intense abstraction, grew.
 And now in him Desire, the primal germ of mind,
 Arose, which learned men, profoundly searching, say
 Is the first subtle bond, connecting Entity
 With Nullity. This ray that kindled dormant life,
 Where was it then ? before ? or was it found above ?
 Were there parturient powers and latent qualities,
 And fecund principles beneath, and active forces
 That energized aloft ? Who knows ? Who can declare ?
 How and from what has sprung this Universe ? the gods
 Themselves are subsequent to its development.
 Who, then, can penetrate the secret of its rise ?

Whether 'twas framed or not, made or not made ; he only
 Who in the highest heaven sits, the omniscient lord,
 Assuredly knows all, or haply knows he not.

The next example is from the first Maṇḍala of the Rig-veda (121). Like the preceding, it furnishes a good argument for those who maintain that the purer faith of the Hindūs is properly monotheistic :

What god shall we adore with sacrifice ?¹
 Him let us praise, the golden child that rose
 In the beginning, who was born the lord—
 The one sole lord of all that is—who made
 The earth, and formed the sky, who giveth life,
 Who giveth strength, whose bidding gods revere,
 Whose hiding-place is immortality,
 Whose shadow, death ; who by his might is king
 Of all the breathing, sleeping, waking world—
 Who governs men and beasts, whose majesty
 These snowy hills, this ocean with its rivers
 Declare ; of whom these spreading regions form
 The arms ; by whom the firmament is strong,
 Earth firmly planted, and the highest heavens
 Supported, and the clouds that fill the air
 Distributed and measured out ; to whom
 Both earth and heaven, established by his will,
 Look up with trembling mind ; in whom revealed
 The rising sun shines forth above the world.
 Where'er let loose in space, the mighty waters
 Have gone, depositing a fruitful seed
 And generating fire, there *he* arose,
 Who is the breath and life of all the gods,
 Whose mighty glance looks round the vast expanse
 Of watery vapour—source of energy,
 Cause of the sacrifice—the only God
 Above the gods. May he not injure us !
 He the Creator of the earth—the righteous
 Creator of the sky, Creator too
 Of oceans bright, and far-extending waters.

¹ In the text this question is repeated at the end of every verse. A literal translation will be found in Muir's Sanskrit Texts, vol. iv. p. 16.