THE

COSMOLOGY OF THE RIGVEDA,

AN ESSAY

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1887.
5. May this hymn please Parjanya, the monarch, may he accept it favourably; may quickening rain be ours, and fruitful plants tended by the god.
6. He is the fructifying bull of the multitude of maidens (waters cf. III. 56. 3.), in him is the breath of all that moveth and standeth; may this sacrifice protect me for a thousand years—protect us ever, ye gods, with blessings.”

The principle of cosmogetic generation was, however, already in the Rigveda extended beyond the union of the light and the waters. We find mention in one hymn of a primordial substance or unit out of which the universe was developed. This is ‘the one thing’ (ékam) which we have already met with in connection with Aja, the Unborn, and which is also used synonymously with the universe in accordance with the principle which is the key to much of the later mysticism that cause and effect are identical. The poet endeavours in a strain, which precludes the philosophy of the Upanishads, to picture to himself the first state of the world, and the first signs of life and growth in it. The speculations of the Veda are, however, characterized by a marked difference of tone as compared with those of the Upanishads in the absence in them of the practical end and object of the latter, deliverance from the world.

X. 129. 1. “The non-existent was not, and the existent was not at that time; there was no air nor sky beyond; what was the covering in? and where? under shelter of what? was there water—a deep depth?
2. Death was not nor immortality then, there was no discrimination of night and day: that one thing breathed without a wind of its own self; apart from it there was nothing else at all beyond.
3. Darkness there was, hidden in darkness, in the beginning, everything here was an indiscriminate chaos; it was void covered with emptiness, all that was; that one thing was born by the power of warmth.
4. So in the beginning arose desire, which was the first seed of mind; the wise found out by thought, searching in the heart, the parentage of the existent in the non-existent.
5. Their line was stretched across; what was above? what was below? there were generators, there were mighty powers; evadā below, the presentation of offerings above.
6. Who knoweth it forsooth? who can announce

1 The latest of the many commentators on this hymn are Professor Whitney in the Journal of the American Oriental Society, vol. xi. p. cix, and Dr. Schermaan, Philosophische Hymnen aus der Rig- und Atharva-Veda-Suhhīta verglichen mit den Philosophem der älteren Upanishads, 1887.
2 Or prakṣatā may perhaps have here the sense of ‘light-giver, Illuminator,’ which would also be suitable in I. 113. 1. and I. 94. 5. We should then translate in verse 2. ‘there was no light of the day nor of the night,’ and in verse 3. ‘all this was a lightless chaos.’
it here (= III. 54. 5.)? whence it was born, whence this creation is. The gods came by the creating of it (i.e. the one thing); who then knoweth whence it is come into being?

7. Whence this creation (lit. emission) is come into being, whether it was ordained or no—he whose eye is over all in the highest heaven, he indeed knoweth it, or may be he knoweth it not."

If we accept the text as it stands, esham 'their' in verse 5 will refer to kara\(_{\text{a}}\)ya\(_{\text{h}}\), 'the wise.' 'Their line' is a beam of their light. The word \(\text{pr}\_\text{ayati}\) in the other passages where it occurs has only the meaning 'presentation of sacrifice'; if we retain this meaning and the allusion to the ancient fathers, technically, expressed by the word \(\text{sradh}\_\text{a}\),\(^1\) we obtain a natural parallel to the contrast of the preceding p\(\text{\text{\&}}\)da between \(\text{retrodh}\_\text{a}\) and mahim\(\text{\text{\&}}\)na\(\text{\text{\&}}\) in the free action or enjoyment of the fathers below and the sacrifice of the gods above. The chief difficulty which presented itself to the mind of the poet was to make a division between the upper world and the lower, to bring dualism out of unity: it is for this purpose that he introduces 'the wise,' who draw their line across, dividing heaven and earth. This solution, however, failed to satisfy him, and he gives up the problem in despair. The principle of generation, on the other hand, underlies the whole as a self-evident principle of cosmogony: desire (k\(\text{\text{\&}}\)ma, \(\text{\&}\text{pov}\)) is the first requisite of generation; it is the seed of thought; the wise find the \(\text{\&}n\_\text{\&}\)nu, 'relationship,' or 'parentage,' of the existent in the non-existent; the fathers are represented as \(\text{retrodh}\_\text{a}\), the generators. Hence the translation 'warmth' is preferable to 'asceticism' for t\(\text{\&}\)pas; the warmth explains how the process of birth became possible.\(^1\)

The hymn is remarkable for the clearness of expression of the automatic evolution of the world; the universe is represented as emanating of itself from the one thing, like a stream issuing from a fountain-head.

Lastly we come to the expressions \(\text{d\&at}\) and \(\text{s\&at}\), the 'non-existent' and the 'existent.' The word \(\text{d\&at}\) is used in the Rigveda in two senses, as an adjective with \(\text{v\&ec\&a}\) 'speech' and as the converse of \(\text{s\&at}\) as in the passage before us. In the first case the meaning is clear; it is equivalent to \(\text{as\&ay\&a}\),

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\(^1\) cf. X. 190. 1. The question as to the relation of k\(\text{\text{\&}}\)ma and t\(\text{\&}\)pas in these verses to the later t\(\text{\&}p\_\text{\&}ta and s\(\text{\&}\text{\&}m\_\text{\&}ta of the Br\(\text{\&}ham\_\text{\&}s\) is a part of the general question of the relation of the Rigveda to the Br\(\text{\&}ham\_\text{\&}s. The cosmological importance of warmth in the view of the ancient Aryas receives a full treatment in M. Emile Burnouf’s La Science des Religions, pp. 207 ff. “Trotz phénomènes ont frappé l’intelligence des Aryas, dès le temps où ils n’habitaient encore que les vallées de l’Oxus: ce sont le mouvement, la vie et la pensée. Ces trois choses, prises dans leur étendue, embrassent tous les phénomènes naturels sans exception.” He proceeds to show how wariness was regarded as the principle explaining all three forms of action.
the unreal or the false, the converse of that which is really the fact.\textsuperscript{1} When used with sāt it occurs invariably in passages of a cosmogonic character; sāt is said to be born from āsat, that is, translated into modern idiom, āsat precedes sāt or āsat becomes sāt; we are told that Indra made āsat into sāt in a trice; or āsat and sāt are mentioned as in our hymn as belonging to the first creation.\textsuperscript{2} Where the two words are coupled together by a conjunction, āsat always precedes sāt. The āsat must therefore have had in itself the potentiality of existence; it is not merely the 'non-existent,' but may almost be translated the 'not yet existing,' as bhāvat is elsewhere opposed to sāt,\textsuperscript{3} jīvamānam to jīdām, and bhāvam to bhātām. It is not colourless as our word 'nothing,' it is the negation of sāt. Thus the whole meaning expressed by these dark words is nothing more than the process of becoming, the beginning of development or creation.

The subject of this chapter is of special interest as illustrating the relation between the symbolical

\textsuperscript{1} V. 12. 4., VII. 104. 8, 12, 13. cf. āvāt IV. 5. 14.

\textsuperscript{2} X. 72. 1, 2., VI. 24. 5., X. 5. 7. The philosophic comment of Śāṅkara on verse X. 129. 1. is disproved by the expression api bhūthum āvēti nir avindau in verse 4. If we treat the hymn philosophically, we must assume a stage between these states described in verses 1 and 4 in which āsat was present, but there was as yet no sāt. The context, however, shows that the poet merely wished to shadow forth a condition in which absolutely nothing existed; and the presence of āsat is denied because it was inseparably associated with sāt.

\textsuperscript{3} J. 96. 7., A. V. VII. 1. 19.