

great advances in the arts and institutions of civilization, in trade, and in science. Here also priestly families and warrior-families attained to such importance as to assert their independence of the people, and so bring about the strongly marked class-distinctions that grew into the rigid system of caste. And here, with the waxing power of the priesthood, the old Vedic religion was converted into an infinitely complex system of sacrifices and ceremonies. To this period belongs the belief in metempsychosis—a dreadful and universal reality to the Hindu mind. With the growing tendency of the Hindu character towards introspection comes the system of hermit-life and the asceticism which are so prominent in the Hindu Middle Age, and which in turn led naturally to the habit of theosophic speculation. The sultry air of Ganges-land has relaxed both the physical and the mental fibre of the Hindu, and he has become a Quietist.

§ 91. The Hindu character has been transformed almost beyond recognition. The change is wonderful. It would be also incomprehensible, but for the literature of the Brāhmaṇas.¹ As a whole and by themselves, they are puerile, arid, inane. But as the sole and faithful reflex of an immensely important phase in the development of an ethnic type, they have a great interest—an interest heightened by the fact that the annals of human evolution hardly present another type whose history can be studied through so many centuries in unbroken continuity.

§ 92. The sacerdotal class, ever magnifying its office, has invested the sacrifice with a most exaggerated importance and sanctity. The sacrifice has become the central point of the Brahman's life and thought. About it he has spun a flimsy web of mystery, and in each of its events he sees a hidden symbolism.² 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.³ What we deem the realities of life are as pale shadows. The sacrifice and its events are the real facts, and to fathom their mysteries⁴ is omnipotence and salvation.

§ 93. It must not be forgotten that the phases of development represented by the Mantras and Brāhmaṇas are not separated by hard and fast lines. The oldest Yajus texts are of the transition type. They are called Sāmhitaś, and contain indeed Mantras in abundance; but the Mantras are mingled with prose passages which are the first Brāhmaṇas. Descriptions of the sacrificial ceremonies, attributions to them of hidden meanings, accounts of their origin, legends to illustrate their efficacy—such are the contents of the older Brāhmaṇas. Conscious philosophic speculation plays a subordinate part: its beginnings we can trace to the RV. Sāmhitaś;⁵ but the great mass of it is contained in the later Brāhmaṇa literature.

§ 94. In this, the later Brāhmaṇa period, the descriptions of the ritual are relegated to systematic treatises (§ 95); and the theosophic and philosophic passages become more lengthy and important, and receive—as containing material appropriate for the meditations of the ὕλοβιοι or Forest-hermits—the special names of Āraṇyakas⁶ or ‘Forest-treatises’ and Upaniṣads.⁷ Some of the best of these have

¹ Characterized by Eggeling, SBE, xii. p. ix f, esp. p. xxii-xxv. Enumerated by Kaegi, note 14 a.

² See Oldenberg, *Buddha*, 19(20) f.

³ A point of prime importance in reading the endless identifications of the Brāhmaṇas.

⁴ Hence the constant refrain, *ya evaṃ veda*—cf. 97¹N.

⁵ See selection lxiii. and x.

⁶ See Deussen, *System des Vedānta*, p. 8; Müller, ASL. 313f; or Kaegi, note 16.

⁷ Upaniṣad: lit. ‘a sitting at the feet of another,’ and then ‘the hidden doctrine taught at such a session.’