

# FIRST BOOK.

## FIRST CHAPTER (ADHYAYA).

(The *Dīkṣanīya Ishti*, with the Initiatory Rites.)

### 1.

*Agni*, among the gods, has the lowest, <sup>1</sup> *Vishṇu* the highest place; between them stand all the other deities.

<sup>1</sup> Sâyaṇa, whom M. Müller follows in his translation of the first six chapters of the first book, as given in his "History of Ancient Sanscrit Literature," (pages 390-405) explains the words *avama* and *parama* by "first" and "last." To prove this meaning to be the true one, Sâyaṇa adduces the mantra (1, 4. As'val. S'r. S. 4, 2) *agnir mukham prathamam devatânâm samgatânâm uttamo Vishnur âsīt, i. e. Agni* was the first of the deities assembled, (and) *Vishṇu* the last. In the Kaushîtaki-Brâhmaṇam (7, 1) *Agni* is called *avarârdhya* (instead of *avama*), and *Vishṇu* *parârdhya* (instead of *parama*) *i. e.* belonging to the lower and higher halves (or forming the lower and higher halves). That the meaning "first" cannot be reasonably given to the word *avama*, one may learn from some passages of the Rigveda Sâṃhitâ, where *avama* and *parama* are not applied to denote rank and dignity, but only to mark place and locality. See Rigveda 1, 108, 9, 10: *avamasyâm prithivyâm, madhyamasyâm, paramasyâm uta, i. e.* in the lowest place, the middle (place), and the highest (place). *Agni*, the fire, has, among the gods, the lowest place; for he resides with man on the earth; while the other gods are either in the air, or in the sky. *Vishṇu* occupies, of all gods, the highest place; for he represents (in the Rigveda) the sun in its daily and yearly course. In its daily course it reaches the highest point in the sky, when passing the zenith on the horizon; thence *Vishṇu* is called the "highest" of the gods. Sâyaṇa understands "first" and "last" in reference to the respective order of deities in the twelve liturgies (*Shastra*) of the Soma day at the *Agnishtoma* sacrifice. For, says he, "The first of these liturgies, the so-called *Ajya-Shastra*, (see 2, 31) belongs to *Agni*, and in the last out of the twelve, in the so-called *Agnamâruta Shastra* (see 3, 32-38) there is one verse addressed to *Vishṇu*. But this argument, advanced by Sâyaṇa, proves nothing for his opinion that "*Agni* is the first, and *Vishṇu*