

Seeing the great difficulties, nay, impossibility of attaining to anything like a real understanding of the sacrificial art from all the numerous books I had collected, I made the greatest efforts to obtain oral information from some of those few Brahmans who are known by the name of Shrotriyas, or Shrâutis, and who alone are the preservers of the sacrificial mysteries as they descended from the remotest times. The task was no easy one, and no European scholar in this country before me ever succeeded in it. This is not to be wondered at; for the proper knowledge of the ritual is everywhere in India now rapidly dying out, and in many parts, chiefly in those under British rule, it has already died out. Besides, the communication of these mysteries to foreigners is regarded by old devout Brahmans (and they alone have the knowledge) as such a monstrous profanation of their sacred creed, and fraught with the most serious consequences to their position, that they can only, after long efforts, and under payment of very handsome sums, be prevailed upon to give information. Notwithstanding, at length I succeeded in procuring the assistance of a Shrâuti, who not only had performed the small sacrifices, such as the Dars'apûrnamâsa Ishti, but who had even officiated as one of the Hotars, or Udgâtars, at several Soma sacrifices, which are now very rarely brought. In order to obtain a thorough understanding of the whole course of an Ishti, and a Soma sacrifice, I induced him (about 18 months ago) to show me in some secluded place in my premises, the prin-