

the most sacred performance. No Parsi priest is allowed to perform it, if he does not very frequently undergo the great purification ceremony, called the Barashnom of nine nights. In the same way every Brahman has, as often as he brings a Soma sacrifice, to undergo the Dîkshâ (see 1, 3 ; 4, 26). One such ceremony is even not considered sufficient. For the sacrifice has, besides the Dîkshâ, to undergo the Pravargya, which is a similar preparation for the great Soma day. Even the animal sacrifice must precede the solemn Soma festival ; for it is of minor importance. The animal is instead of the sacrificer himself. The animal when sacrificed in the fire, goes to the gods, and so does the sacrificer in the shape of the animal (see page 80 of the translation). The animal sacrifice is vicarious. Being thus received among the gods, the sacrificer is deemed worthy to enjoy the divine beverage, the Soma, and participate in the heavenly king, who is Soma. The drinking of the Soma juice makes him a new man ; though a new celestial body had been prepared for him at the Pravargya ceremony, the enjoyment of the Soma beverage transforms him again ; for the nectar of the gods flows for the first time in his veins, purifying and sanctifying him. This last birth to the complete enjoyment of all divine rights is symbolically indicated in the rites of the morning libation (see 32, 35 ; 38 ; 3, 2).

The principal features of this Agnishtoma sacrifice must be very ancient. For we discover them almost complete with the Parsis. They also do not prepare