

The position of **Purohita** differed considerably from that of the ordinary priest, for the Purohita not merely might officiate at the sacrifice, but was the officiator in all the private sacrifices of his king. Hence he could, and undoubtedly sometimes did, obtain great influence over his master in matters of secular importance; and the power of the priesthood in political as opposed to domestic and religious matters, no doubt rested on the Purohita.

There is no recognition in Vedic literature of the rule later prevailing by which, after spending part of his life as a Brahmacārin, and part as a householder, the Brahmin became an ascetic¹¹⁷ (later divided into the two stages of Vānaprastha, 'forest-dweller,' and Saṃnyāsin, 'mystic'). Yājñavalkya's case¹¹⁸ shows that study of the Absolute might empty life of all its content for the sage, and drive him to abandon wife and family. In Buddhist times the same phenomenon is seen¹¹⁹ applying to other than Brahmins. The Buddhist texts are here confirmed in some degree by the Greek authorities.¹²⁰ The practice bears a certain resemblance to the habit of kings, in the Epic tradition,¹²¹ of retiring to the forest when active life is over.

From the Greek authorities¹²² it also appears—what is certainly the case in the Buddhist literature¹²³—that Brahmins practised the most diverse occupations. It is difficult to say how far this was true for the Vedic period. The analogy of the Druids¹²⁴—in some respects very close—suggests that the Brahmins may have been mainly confined to their professional tasks, including all the learned professions such as astronomy¹²⁵

¹¹⁷ See Deussen, *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, 372 et seq.

¹¹⁸ Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, ii. 4, 1; iv. 5, 1. See iii. 5, 1, for his teaching, of which his action is a logical consequence.

¹¹⁹ Fick, *Die sociale Gliederung*, 40 et seq.; Oldenberg, *Buddha*, 72 et seq.

¹²⁰ Arrian, *Indica*, xii. 8, 9; Strabo, xv. 1, 49, 60.

¹²¹ Hopkins, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 13, 179 et seq.

¹²² See Fick, *loc. cit.*

¹²³ Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, 57.

¹²⁴ Cæsar, *Bellum Gallicum*, vi. 14. The Druids did not fight, did not pay tribute, studied for many years, observed secrecy as to matters of ritual and learning, did not use writing, and had a certain belief in transmigration. Cf. Weber, *Indische Studien*, 5, 19.

¹²⁵ Hence the Brahman is the 28th **Nakṣatra**: Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa, i. 5, 3, 3; Weber, *Nakṣatra*, 2, 306, 311; *Indische Studien*, 10, 40.