

despised. This dislike is found as early as the Yajurveda Saṃhitā,⁷ where the Aśvins are condemned because of their having to do with the practice of medicine (*bheṣaja*), on the ground that it brings them too much among men, an allusion to the caste dislike of promiscuous contact.

The Rigveda⁸ contains a hymn in which a physician celebrates his plants and their healing powers. Moreover, wonderful cures are referred to as performed by the Aśvins: the healing of the lame⁹ and of the blind;¹⁰ the rejuvenation of the aged Cyavana¹¹ and of Puramdhi's husband;¹² the giving of an iron leg (*jaṅghā āyāsi*) to Viśpalā,¹³ a deed only more wonderful if we assume that Viśpalā was a mare, as has been suggested by Pischel.¹⁴ It would in all probability be a mistake to assume¹⁵ that the Vedic Indians had any surgical skill: they no doubt applied simples to wounds,¹⁶ but both their medicine and their surgery must have been most primitive. All that the Atharvaveda shows in regard to medicine is the use of herbs combined with spells,¹⁷ and of water (*cf. Jalāṣa*), remedies Indo-European in character, but not of much scientific value. On the other hand, the knowledge of anatomy shown (see *Śarīra*), though betraying grave inaccuracies, is not altogether insignificant; but that was due no doubt mainly to the practice of dissecting animals at the sacrifice.

There is some evidence in the Rigveda¹⁸ that the practice of medicine was already a profession; this is supported by the inclusion of a physician in the list of victims at the Puruṣamedha ('human sacrifice') in the Yajurveda.¹⁹ According to

⁷ Taittirīya Saṃhitā, vi. 4, 9, 3. *Cf.* Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā, iv. 6, 2; Sata-patha Brāhmaṇa, iv. 1, 5, 14; Bloomfield, *op. cit.*, xxxix, xl.

⁸ x. 97.

⁹ Rv. i. 112, 8; x. 39, 3, etc.

¹⁰ *Cf.* the case of Rjāśva, Rv. i. 116, 17.

¹¹ Rv. x. 39, 4.

¹² i. 116, 13.

¹³ Rv. i. 116, 15, etc.

¹⁴ *Vedische Studien*, i, 172 *et seq.*; 305.

¹⁵ As Zimmer, *Altindisches Leben*, 398, is inclined to do.

¹⁶ *Cf.* Rv. ix. 112, 1.

¹⁷ So it is said in the Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa, xii. 9, 10: *bheṣajam vā Atharvaṇāni*, 'the Atharvan hymns are medicine'; xvi. 10, 10; and *cf. ibid.*, xxiii. 16, 7; Kāthaka Saṃhitā, xi. 5 and 2. Bhīṣaj.

¹⁸ ix. 112, where a profession must be meant. *Ibid.*, 3, refers to the fees of the physician. *Cf.* also x. 97, 4, 8.

¹⁹ Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā, xxx. 10; Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, iii. 4, 4, 1.