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70-370

PHILOSOPHY OF ANCIENT INDIA

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CHICAGO

THE OPEN COURT PUBLISHING COMPANY

(LONDON: 17 JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET ST., E. C.)

1897

especially the conduct of sacrifices. For by means of sacrifices, if rightly performed, the fulfilment of all wishes might in those times be extorted from the gods. For a scientifically presented sacrifice, which might require weeks, months, and even years, the Brahman of course demanded a fair compensation. Ten thousand cattle are prescribed as fee for a certain ceremony, for another a hundred thousand, and a later authority on ritual even demands two hundred and forty thousand for the same performance. And yet this is not the climax of priestly greed, which—to use a fitting expression of Professor Weber's—indulges in veritable orgies in these texts. When one has worked his way through the endless description of a ceremony one may read at the close the remark that the whole sacrifice is of no avail unless the fee is paid to the satisfaction of the priests. And “lest perchance—to use a modern phrase—the price be forced down by competition, the market ‘beared,’ it was a rule that no one might accept a fee refused by another.” (Weber, p. 54.) The sacrificial ritual, so dry and wearisome for us—the only literary production of these intellectually barren centuries preceding the awakening of philosophical speculation—has such great historical significance for the very reason that it shows us the moral depravity of the Brahmans in the clearest light. To what extent sexual excesses were customary is seen from the fact that the priest is enjoined as an especial duty not to commit adultery

with the wife of another during a ceremony regarded as peculiarly sacred. But any one not able to observe such continence during the period of the sacred ceremony absolves himself from all guilt by an offering of curdled milk to Varuna and Mitra !

An instructive supplement to this indulgence which the Brahmans showed for their own weaknesses, is furnished by the numerous passages in the rituals in which the officiating priest is told with perfect frankness how to proceed in the sacrifice when he wishes to do this or that injury to the man who appoints and richly pays him : in what fashion he is to deviate from the prescribed method when he wishes to deprive his employer of sight, hearing, children, property, or power. The mutual confidence which existed under these circumstances is accordingly well illustrated by a ceremony, the introduction of which before a sacrifice came to be regarded as necessary, consisting in a solemn oath by which the priest and the client bound themselves to do each other no harm knowingly during the continuance of the sacred office. After such specimens as these we shall no longer be surprised by the strange ethical conceptions which the Brahmans of this period have put on record. "Murder of any one but a Brahman is not really murder," and "a judge must always decide in favor of a Brahman as against his adversary who is not a Brahman " ; such and similar things are uttered in the ritual texts with delightful coolness.