

**CORNELL STUDIES IN
PHILOSOPHY, NO. 2; BRAHMAN:
A STUDY ON THE HISTORY OF
INDIAN PHILOSOPHY. A
DISSERTATION**

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HERVEY DEWITT GRISWOLD

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BRAHMAN:

A STUDY

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HISTORY OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

BY

HERVEY DEWITT GRISWOLD, M.A.

A DISSERTATION

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PREFACE.

TWO countries share the honor of being the birthplaces of the chief historic religions of the world, Palestine-Arabia and India. The one is the ancestral home of Judaism, Christianity, and Islâm; the other, of Brahmanism and Buddhism. Genetically, Judaism is the mother of both Christianity and Mohammedanism, as Brahmanism is the mother of Buddhism. Buddhism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism belong to the class of instituted religions, in that they go back into great creative personalities, after which they are respectively named; whereas Judaism and Brahmanism, the mother religions of the world, are properly characterized as spontaneous, since they have their origin in the tribe rather than in the individual. The one allied group of religions, namely Judaism, Christianity, and Islâm, grew up and made its earliest conquests in the region having the Mediterranean for its center. The other group, represented by Brahmanism and Buddhism, appeared and spread in India-China and the neighboring regions, the second ancient center of the world's civilization. The sacred language of Judaism is Hebrew, and the sacred language of Brahmanism, Sanskrit. Hence both linguistically and racially the western group springs from a Semitic source, while the eastern springs from an Aryan source. Thus, the history of religion has to do primarily with two geographical centers, Palestine and India; with two races, Semitic and Aryan; and with two languages, Hebrew and Sanskrit.

In this monograph I purpose to make a special study of the doctrine of Brâhman, the central conception of Indian philosophy and religion. Accordingly, it will be a study both in the history of philosophy and in the history of religion. The method will be genetic and comparative. It will be genetic, for the conception of Brâhman will be traced through the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Vedânta-Sûtras, and the Commentary of Çankarâcârya. It will be comparative, for the religious aspects of the doctrine of

Brahman will constantly be illustrated by the parallel development in Judaism and Christianity ; while the philosophical aspects of the doctrine will, at least in their main features, be set side by side with the corresponding ideas in the ancient and modern philosophy of the West.

The importance of the conception of Brahman in the history of Indian thought is indicated by the fact that the word ' Brahman ' has supplied the name to (1) a class of priests, the Brāhmanas ; (2) a department of ancient Sanskrit literature, the *Brāhmaṇas* ; (3) the Ultimate Reality of the Vedānta, Brahma ; (4) the first person of the later Hindu Trinity, Brahmā ; (5) Indian religion before the Buddhist disruption, Brahmanism, and (6) the modern theistic movement known as the Brahma Samāj.

It will, of course, be possible to deal only with the main outlines of the doctrine of Brahman. For, as Professor Flint truly says, to explain in detail the how and why of the development of the doctrine of Brahman would be to write the longest chapter in the history of Hindu civilization.¹

As regards literature, my largest indebtedness is to the works of Professor Deussen, especially to his *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie, erster Band*, which deals with the philosophy of the pre-Upanishad period, and to his *Sechzig Upanishads des Veda*. Prof. Max Mueller's *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, and Professor Thibaut's careful translation of the Vedānta-Sūtras (SBE. vols. XXXIV and XXXVIII) have also been of very great service. Col. Jacob's *Concordance to the Upanishads* is, of course, indispensable to every worker in the field of the Upanishads.

The method of transliteration used is essentially the same as that found in Professor Whitney's Sanskrit Grammar. I must plead guilty, however, of not always following it consistently. Words such as *upanishad*, *rishi*, *purusha*, *prakriti*, etc., have become anglicized, and so I have not always written them as *upaniśad*, *ṛṣi*, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. I have written *s* in the place of *visarga*.

The development of the doctrine of Brāhman (neuter as opposed to Brahmán) is indicated by three well marked stages : (a) the initial or germinal stage represented by the Rig-Veda, the

¹ *Anti-Theistic Theories*, p. 344.

Atharva-Veda and the early prose, excluding the Upanishads ; (b) the stage of creative thought represented by the Upanishads ; and (c) the stage of system building and exposition represented by the Vedānta-Sūtras, as expounded by Çankarācārya. To these a fourth stage might be added, namely, that of Indian scholasticism and theological subtlety, as illustrated by the later doctrinal treatises, *e. g.*, the *Vedānta Sāra* and the *Vedānta Paribhāṣā*. These stages, I say, are well marked, not indeed by external chronological data, which in India are almost entirely lacking, but by what has been happily called internal chronology, the chronology of language and thought. Thus even the language reveals three clearly marked stages of development, Vedic, Brāhmanic, and Classic. The absolute dates of the *Rig-Veda*, of the *Brāhmaṇas*, and of the beginnings of Classic Sanskrit in the Sūtra period, are very uncertain, and yet their respective places in the development of Sanskrit literature are sufficiently clear and definite. It is to be noted that the three stages in the development of the doctrine of Brāhman, namely, initial, creative, and systematic, correspond in general to the three periods in the history of the language, Vedic, Brāhmanic, and Classic.

It is only when we come to the Upanishads that Brāhman uniformly means the Ultimate Reality. Doubtless centuries of language and thought development elapsed before the word brāhman and the idea which was finally associated with this word came to be integrated. Two streams, then, are to be traced down from their sources until they meet and flow together ; one represented by the word 'brāhman' with its development and flow of meaning, the other consisting of the idea of the Sole Reality as it variously manifests itself in the early literature. Or, to state it differently, we have first to trace the preparation of the word for the idea, and of the idea for the word. This will involve, on the one hand, a study of the derivation and use of the word 'brahman,' and, on the other, some account of the course of Vedic thought as it gradually moved towards a unitary conception of things.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.

- Ait. Ār.....*Aitareya Āraṇyaka*.
 Ait. Br.....*Aitareya Brāhmana*.
 Altind. Gram...Altindische Grammatik—Wackernagel, 1896.
 Apocal. Ioh.....Apocalypse of John.
 Av.....Avesta.
 AV.....Atharva-Veda.
Brh Up.....*Brhadāraṇyaka Upanishad*.
 Buddha.....Buddha: His Life, His Doctrine, His Order. Oldenberg (Eng. Trans. by Hoey, Lond., 1882).
 Comp. Gram....Comparative Grammar of the Indo-Germanic Languages—Brugmann. (Eng. Trans.).
 Çat. Br.....*Çatapatha Brāhmana*.
 Çvet. Up.....Çvetāçvatara Upanishad.
 Chānd. Up.....Chāndogya Upanishad.
 Essays.....Essays on the Religion and Philosophy of the Hindus—H. T. Colebrooke (Leipzig, 1858).
 Evang. Ioh.....Gospel of John.
 Geschichte.....Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie.
 IE.....Indo-European.
 Kaush. Up.....Kaushitaki Upanishad.
 Kultur.....Indiens Literatur and Kultur—Schroeder.
 Mac.....Maccabees.
 Mait. Up.....*Maitrāyaṇa Upanishad*.
 Manuel.....Manuel de la Langue de l'Avesta—De Harlez (Paris 1882).
 N. T.....New Testament.
 OST.....Original Sanskrit Texts.
 O. T.....Old Testament.
 Ps.....Psalm.
 RV.....Rig-Veda.
 Roots.....The Roots, Verb-forms and primary derivatives of the Sanskrit Language—Whitney.
 SBE.....Sacred Books of the East.
 Six Systems....The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy—Max Müller.
 Taitt. Up.....Taittirya Upanishad.
Taitt. Samh...*Taittirya Saṁhitā*.
 Upanishads.....Sechzig Upanishads des Veda.
Vāj. Saṁh....*Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā*.
 Veda.....Die Religion des Veda—Oldenberg.
 Vedānta.....Das System des Vedānta—Deussen.
 LDMG.....Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft.