

630. हवाल *havāl* (condition) is a corruption of the Arabic plural احوال.
631. बहार *bahār* (spring) is the Persian بهار.
634. सफर *saphar* (journey) is the Arabic سفر.
636. बाज *bāj* (a hawk) is the Persian باز.
645. आब *āb* (distinction) is the Persian آب.
647. अतर *atar* (scent) is a corrupt form of the Arabic عطر *itr*.
654. अहसान *ahsān* (generosity, benefit) is a vulgarized form of the Arabic إحسان *ihsān*.
660. बंद *band* (an embankment) is the Persian بند.
663. बलख *Balakh* (the city of Balkh) is the Persian بلخ.
685. कबूल *kabūl* (acceptance) is the Arabic قبول.
694. बहस *bahas* (discussion) is a corrupted form of the Arabic بحث *bahs*.
697. दरबार *darbār* (court) is the Persian دربار.
706. फते *phate* (victory) is a vulgar form of the Arabic فتح *fath*.
707. हुकुम *hukum* (order) is a vulgar form of the Arabic حکم *hukm*.

R. P. DEWHURST, I.C.S.

TWO NOTES ON VEDIC RELIGION

In his recent treatise on *The Scapegoat* Sir James Frazer has made use, in support of his thesis of the fundamental character of early religion, of certain Vedic evidence. It is of interest to examine the use made of the material, in order to determine whether or not it can be regarded as valid, and whether the Vedic religion thus receives further elucidation.

The main thesis of Sir James Frazer in *The Scapegoat*¹ is that on the one hand it was customary to kill the human

¹ pp. 224-8.

or animal god in order to save his divine life from being weakened by the inroads of age, on the other it was customary to have a general expulsion of evils and sins once a year, and that by a combination of these two uses the dying god was employed as a scapegoat. After illustrating these ideas, the author examines in detail the sacrifices of the Mexicans,¹ which he considers as illustrating in special completeness the doctrine of deicide as a process of maintaining the life of the world, and finds in it the theory that death is a portal through which gods and men alike must pass to escape decrepitude and to attain the vigour of eternal youth. "The conception," he concludes,² "may be said to culminate in the Brahmanical doctrine that in the daily sacrifice the body of the Creator is broken anew for the salvation of the world." This conception is more precisely developed³ by reference to the R̥gvedic⁴ theory of the origin of the world from the dismemberment of Puruṣa by the gods, and to the Brahminical theory⁵ of the repetition in the ritual of the mystic sacrifice of Prajāpati by which the world is continually anew created. The world is renewed by the sacrifice, and the priest who performs the sacrifice identifies himself in the act with the creator and by his act of sacrifice keeps up uninterrupted the revolution of time and matter.

The use made of the Brahminical theory of sacrifice is extremely ingenious and effective, but it remains to inquire whether it is legitimate. It must be remembered that in this theory we have no simple and naive statement of facts of ritual, but a very elaborate and artificial figment. The Puruṣa hymn of the *R̥gveda* is one of the latest of that collection, as *inter alia* is shown by its mention of the four castes⁶ as such, while they are unknown

¹ pp. 275-305.

² p. vi.

³ pp. 410-11.

⁴ x, 90.

⁵ See Eggeling, SBE. xliii, pp. xiv-xxiv. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* goes further in speculation than the *Taittiriya Samhitā*; see my translation of the latter text, pp. cxxvi seqq.

⁶ See Macdonell & Keith, *Vedic Index*, ii, 247-8.

to the collection as a whole. It is essentially one of the philosophic or speculative, not religious hymns of the *Samhitā*, and the speculation which it contains is not elsewhere found in the *Samhitā*, a fact which renders it extremely probable that it cannot claim to have been one of the generally current views of the process of creation. But the speculation which it embodies undoubtedly reappears in a much developed and improved form in the doctrine of the Brahmin schools, and in special of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, summarized above.

This doctrine, however, cannot be treated as representing primitive belief. The Brahmins devoted the whole of their energies to the examination of the nature of the sacrifice, and their speculative activity took a wide range and resulted in many theories.¹ They thus developed the doctrine of the substitution² of the animal or cereal offering for the human, which, they argued, was the more primitive, and, again, they enunciated the doctrine of the efficacy of the sacrifice in the maintenance of the world. Their views on these topics are purely speculative, just as are those of Sir James Frazer, and they must not be treated as anything but conjectural explanations of what the priests found prescribed in a traditional ritual, much of which they themselves did not, it is certain,³ understand.

Now if the ritual itself, which the *Brāhmaṇas* explain, provided for the slaughter of a man and treated his dismemberment in the rite as the central fact of the sacrifice, then we would be tempted to see in the *Brāhmaṇa* explanations a clear exposition of the meaning of the sacrifice as it presented itself to the performers of the rite. It would even then not be possible to exclude the possibility that priestly theory might engender ritual,

¹ See Lévi, *La doctrine du sacrifice* (Paris, 1898).

² See e.g. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, i, 2. 3. 6. seqq. ; *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, vi, 8.

³ e.g. the case of Makha, *Vedic Index*, ii, 116.

and that a sacrifice may not be really primitive, but at any rate the coincidence of ritual and theory would deserve careful examination. But in this ritual the speculation is based not on the slaying of a man, but on the building of a fire altar, the Agnicayana, which is formed so as to represent a bird or human shape, Prajāpati. It is essentially the formation of the altar that constitutes the creation of Prajāpati and the universe, of which the altar is the microcosm. This point is the more important in that the ritual does include the use of the heads of a man and four other victims,¹ which are required to make firm the foundation of the altar. It is, indeed, natural to suggest that the use of a human head is a relic of a formal human sacrifice, even although in the ritual as it is handed down the actual slaying of a man for the purpose is not normally contemplated. But admitting that a human life was used, it was not used for the purpose of slaying a decaying deity. The explanation of its use is the much more simple practice of burying a human being in the foundations of a building to secure a guardian of it.² That practice is of immemorial antiquity and of regular occurrence in India, and its rationale is intelligible enough. But in the slaughter of the victim in these cases there is no element to show that any divine character was assigned to the victim, still less that he was regarded as a prototype of Prajāpati. The head was that of some enemy slain in battle, or of some person killed by lightning or destroyed in some other manner indicating his slight value, and the real parallel to Prajāpati, the sacrificer, so far from offering himself up secures as the result of the sacrifice life lasting a full hundred years. There is no trace here of the conception of dying to live, or of a dying god. It cannot be too clearly realized that the dismemberment of Prajāpati is not his destruction.

¹ See Eggeling, SBE. xliv, pp. xxxviii-ix.

² See Keith, JRAS. 1907, pp. 943-4; Jackson, 1908, p. 533.

Prajāpati is a permanent prius, and the dismemberment is merely a change of form of what is inexhaustible. Thus the seeming parallelism of the rite to the cases of the dying god who again comes to life is purely imaginary. To the sacrificer death is not the portal to life, but the sacrifice is a means of prolonging his life indefinitely until its full term of 100 years. The human offering as a method of attaining immortality is not even suggested. The attainment of that end is due to the fire piling in the form of Prajāpati, and that consists in the arrangement of diverse bricks in various shapes and orders, and the depositing of a golden man as a symbol of Prajāpati. There is no evidence of this image being a substitute for a real victim.

In point of fact the conception of the dying god and his resurrection is not Vedic; for whatever cause that religion offers no real parallel to the Adonis-Attis-Osiris or even the Demeter-Persephone religious conception.¹ That a god should be actually sacrificed by men is clearly foreign to Vedic religious conceptions, and it is most improbable that the theosophic speculation of the origin of the universe from the sacrifice of Puruṣa is due in any way to the existence of a practice of slaying an embodiment of the god. On the contrary, it was surely one of the easiest conceptions for a body of sacrificing priests to arrive at, that the origin of the world, which their philosophy sought to trace to one source, was to be found in an action by the creator analogous to the action of sacrifice, and that the sacrifice should be performed on himself followed essentially from his solitude before creation took effect. So natural an explanation must surely have preference over one which assumes the existence of a state of religious belief of which there is no other evidence in Vedic religion.

The second point in which Sir J. Frazer appeals to Vedic authority is on the question of the 12 nights

¹ Cf. Keith, JRAS. 1907, pp. 929-49.

occurring about Christmas on which in Europe licence has often been permitted. He sees¹ in them the period intended to equate a year of lunar months (six of 29, six of 30 days = 354) to an ordinary year (365 or 366 days), and he finds that their unfixed condition as intercalary days tended to the reversal of all established morality. The days did not fit into the ordinary year, and though necessary were yet unaccountable, a theory which is a little difficult to follow, since if days were deliberately interpolated as is assumed, those who interpolated them can hardly have been ignorant of their nature. In them he finds a period of relaxation of moral rules after the winter solstice, when mock kings were allowed to reign, and this hypothesis he carries to a further point by arguing that the practice of interpolating a month every five years, which with Zimmer² he finds in the *Rgveda*,³ was in large measure⁴ due to the desire to eliminate the 12 days of misrule, although the 12 day reckoning would admittedly have been far more simple, convenient, and appropriate, instead of allowing 5 years to elapse before the year could be brought into order by the addition of a month.

As far as India goes this ingenuity is thrown away. The 12 days found in the *Rgveda*⁵ are the period when the Rbhus rested in the home of the sun-god, and the Rbhus, it is argued, are the 3 seasons, and therefore the 12 days fall at the end of the seasons, at the winter solstice. This is all pure and most improbable guess-work, and receives no countenance from sober scholarship⁶ or common-sense. Further, the year of 354 days is totally

¹ *The Scapegoat*, pp. 324-5.

² *Altindisches Leben*, pp. 365-70.

³ i, 164. 48; iii, 55. 18.

⁴ *Op. cit.* p. 343.

⁵ iv, 33. See Zimmer, *op. cit.* pp. 365-7; Hillebrandt, *Rituallitteratur*, pp. 5 seqq.

⁶ See Oldenberg, *Religion des Veda*, p. 237; Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 133; Whitney, *JAOS.* xvi, p. xciv.

unknown to the *Rgveda*, and only appears in the Sūtras.¹ Therefore, to suppose that the period of 12 days was used as an intercalation is absolutely unjustified. Finally, the use of an intercalary month every five years is also unknown to the *Rgveda*² or to any early text. In all probability when intercalation was begun it took the form of rough attempts to secure coincidence of the lunar and solar years by the intercalation of a month here and there, and not by adding 12 days, which implies a certain accuracy of approximation to a knowledge of the lunar and solar years of 354 and 366 days respectively, of which neither is known to early India.

A. BERRIEDALE KEITH.

THE SATURNALIA AND THE MAHAVRATA

Sir J. Frazer, in an interesting discussion in *The Scapegoat*,³ has argued that the Roman Saturnalia was originally a festival held in February or March, at which in primitive times in ancient Italy it was the universal practice, wherever the worship of Saturn prevailed, to choose a man who played the part and enjoyed all the traditional privileges of Saturn for a season and then died, whether by his own or another's hand, in the character of the good god who gave his life for the world. The hypothesis is interesting; if accepted it establishes an historical connexion between the Saturnalia and the modern Carnival, and links the Saturnalia with the festivals of Kronos in Greece which show some faint traces of human sacrifice.

The evidence, however, when carefully sifted, indicates that the attempt to explain the Saturnalia on the theory of the dying god is not one which can be accepted. The date is a most serious difficulty which Sir J. Frazer's

¹ *Vedic Index*, ii, 413.

² *Vedic Index*, ii, 412.

³ pp. 306-12.