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Volume 4: The Philosophical Systems of the Hindoos

William Ward

Excerpt

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A VIEW
OF THE
HISTORY, LITERATURE, AND RELIGION
OF
THE HINDOOS.

PART III.
Literature.

CHAP. I.—SECT. I.

OF THE HINDOO PHILOSOPHERS, AND THEIR OPINIONS.

Swayūmbhoovă, or Mūnoo.

THIS sage is known in the pooranūs as the son of Brūmha, and one of the progenitors of mankind. He is also complimented as the preserver of the védus at the time of the Hindoo deluge, and as having given an abstract of the contents of these books in the work known by his name, and translated by Sir William Jones. It does not appear improbable, that during the life of Mūnoo, certain works were written, perhaps from tradition, which, after many additions, were called the *védū* or *shrootee*, “that which has been heard.” Perhaps Mūnoo himself, and Ulūrkū and Markūndéyū,^a are to be considered as the compilers, from tradition, of what then existed of these books; for, we are not to suppose that the védūs were all compiled at one period.

^a See page 3, vol. iii.

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SECT. II.—*Kūpilū*.

This sage, the grandson of Mūnoo, was the founder of the Sankhyū sect, the author of the original aphorisms to which the sect appeals, and is mentioned in several works as the most eminent of all the ascetics, knowing things past, present, and to come, and, in fact, as able to accomplish whatever he wished.^b The Shrēē-bhagūvītū speaks of him as an incarnation of Vishnoo, and declares, that his appearance on earth was to lead mankind to future happiness, by teaching the doctrines of that school of philosophy of which he was the founder. The Pūdmū pooranū says, that his father, Kūrmūdū, was one of the progenitors of mankind; that his mother, Dēvū-hootēē, was the daughter of Swayūmbhoovū; that Kūpilū was born at Pooskūrū, and lived at Gūnga-sagūrū, and that he was of a dark complexion, and wore yellow garments.—The Kūpilū sūnghita is ascribed to his pen.

Kūpilū's opinions appear to approach very near to Bouddhism: he taught, that God exists in a state wholly distinct from the universe, as the water on the leaf of the water-lily; or, to speak more plainly, that his nature and existence are inscrutable; that he has nothing to do with creatures, nor they with him. In some parts of his writings, he denies the divine existence altogether; and, indeed, one of his aphorisms is, "There is no God." He called the universe the work of nature, as being possessed of the three qualities which give rise to divine wisdom, to activity, and to stupidity. He declared, that nature was undefinable, uncreated, destitute of life, and liable to dissolution. In reply to the question, how that which is

^b He is said to have reduced to ashes the 60,000 sons of king Sagūrū.

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destitute of life can give rise to creatures, he referred to the spider's web, spun from its own bowels, to the fall of inanimate bodies, to the production of milk in the udder of the cow, &c. He considered nature as the root or origin of the universe, because every thing proceeded from it, or was to be traced to it; and that beyond it nothing was discoverable. Nature, he said, was indescribable, because none of the senses could comprehend it, and yet, that it was one, under different forms; as time, space, &c. are one, though they have many divisions; that there was in nature a property which he called Greatness, from which arose pride, or consciousness of separate existence, or appropriation;^c from the latter quality, spring water, fire, air, and space, or the primary atoms: and he described these elements combined as forming a pattern, or archetype, from which the visible universe was formed.^d Pride, the primary elements, and the eleven organs, he taught, were not essential properties, but modifications of nature.

After defining the powers of the human mind, and the members of the body, he spoke of an undefined power, inherent in the different parts of the human system, and necessary to their effective use, which he called an emanation from nature. He considered man as composed of matter and spirit, and affirmed, that the active power enjoys or suffers, but remains wholly separate from the passive power, as a mere spectator of its operations, or as a

^c The bramhūns explain this, as the desire to increase, or to become great, or to possess.

^d "Intelligible numbers," said Pythagoras, "are those which subsisted in the divine mind before all things, from which every thing hath received its form, and which always remain immutably the same. It is the model, or archetype, after which the world, in all its parts, is framed."

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person blind. He compared the passive to a lump of inanimate matter, and yet affirmed that nature was the source of life.

Kūpilū further taught, that we derive our proofs of the truth of facts from the senses, from inference, and from testimony, or revelation; that we know nothing of God but by inference. He made no distinction between the soul and the animal spirit, but declared, that when the soul became united to matter, it was absorbed in animal cares and pleasures.^e He said, happiness arises from the quality leading to truth; that the quality giving rise to activity or restlessness, inclines the person to seek his happiness among the objects of sense, and produces sorrow, and from that leading to darkness, insensibility. The first quality led to emancipation; the second, to temporary happiness in the heavens of the gods, and the third, to misery. Exemption from future birth can be obtained only by a person's entirely freeing himself from all attachment to sensible objects.^f Space, he taught, arose from sound; air, from sound and contact; fire, from sound, contact, and colour; water, from sound, contact,

^e "Plato appears to have taught, that the soul of man is derived by emanation from God; but that this emanation was not immediate, but through the intervention of the soul of the world, which was itself debased by some material admixture; and consequently, that the human soul, receding farther from the first intelligence, is inferior in perfection to the soul of the world. The relation which the human soul, in its original constitution, bears to matter, Plato appears to have considered as the source of moral evil. Since the soul of the world, by partaking of matter, has within itself the seeds of evil, he inferred, that this must be the case still more with respect to the soul of man."

^f The Stoics taught, that "the sum of a man's duty with respect to himself, is, to subdue his passions; and that in proportion as we approach towards a state of apathy, we advance towards perfection."

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colour, and flavour; earth, from sound, contact, colour, flavour, and odour.

SECT. III.—*Goutūmū.*

This is the founder of the Noiyayikū sect. From the Ramayānū, and the pooranūs, we learn, that he was born at Himalūyū, about the time of Ramū, that is, at the commencement of the tréta yoogū; that his father's name was Dēērgḥū-tūma; that he married Ūhūlya, the daughter of Brūmha, and afterwards cursed her for criminal conversation with Indrū, the king of the gods; that his dress was that of a very austere ascetic, and that all his hair had fallen from his body, through age, and exposure to the elements. His son, Shūtanūndū, was priest to Jū-nūkū, king of Mit'hila, the father of Sēēta. From this account, we see what little reliance can be placed on the pooranūs: these works assure us, that Goutūmū, though he lived in the second, or silver age, married a daughter of Brūmha; but they meet the objection arising from this anachronism, by affirming, that all the sages live through the four yoogūs. According to the same authority, Goutūmū lived as an ascetic, first, at Prūyagū; next in a forest at Mit'hila, and that, after the repudiation of his wife, he retired to mount Himalūyū. His chief disciples were Kanayānū and Jabalee; to the former of whom is attributed a chapter of the rig védū, which goes by his name; and the latter was a student with Goutūmū at the time Ramū retired from the court of his father, and became an ascetic; he was sent by Goutūmū to forbid Ramū's embracing such a life.

Goutūmū wrote a work called Nayū, the aphorisms of which are still preserved, though not much studied.

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He also wrote the law treatise which bears his name. He was followed by Vatsyayānū, who wrote a comment on the *Nayū*. At the close of the *dwapūrū yoogū*, *Galūvū* wrote a comment on both these writers, and, during the time of the *Bouddhū* kings, *Oodūyūnācharyū* is said to have collected into a small treatise what had been before written. After the death of the last writer, *Bachūspūtee-mishrū* wrote a comment on the works of his predecessors; and, two or three generations afterwards, *Gūngéshū* wrote the *Tūttwū-chintā-mūnee*, the work which is read now by the *pūndits* of this school throughout Bengal. Numerous comments have been written on the work of *Gūngéshū*, but in Bengal that of *Shiromūnee*, the scholar of *Vasoo-dévū-sarvū-bhoumū*, of *Nūdēēya*, is almost exclusively studied.[‡] *Shiromūnee* also enjoyed the instructions of *Pūkshū-dhūrū-mishrū*, a learned man of *Jūnūkū-poorū*. The famous *Choitūnyū* was his fellow student at *Nūdēēya*. Many comments have been written on the work of *Shiromūnee*, but those of *Jūgūdēeshū* and *Gū-dadhūrū* are chiefly consulted by students in Bengal.

Goutūmū taught, that God is the Great or Excellent Spirit, whose nature has been defined, in various ways, by the philosophers of the different schools; that evidence of the truth of things is to be obtained by proofs discernible by the senses, by inference, by comparison, and by sensible signs, or words; and these modes of proof he applied to things; the qualities of things; work, or motion; kinds; divisions, or parts; and absence. In *things*,

[‡] I ought to mention another comment scarcely less popular, that of *Mū-t'hoora-nat'hū*, one of *Shiromūnee's* scholars; and a small compilation by *Vishwū-nat'hū-sikdhamū*, given as the substance, or outlines of the *Noiyayikū* philosophy. This small work has likewise met with a commentator, whose name I have not heard.

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he comprised matter,^h water,^h light,^h air, space, time, regions, animal spirit, the Great Spirit, and mind. Under the head *light*, he introduced eleven subdivisions; under that respecting *air*, nine; under *space*, six; under the two next heads, five each; and under the two last, eight. He taught, that God is capable of unity; of separation; of being multiplied; of assigned dimensions; that he is possessed of wisdom, desire, and thought. The capacities and feelings which he ascribed to the animal spirit, were, wisdom, joy, sorrow, desire, envy, anxiety, numerical increase, definition, separation, union, disjunction, vice, and virtue. To the understanding he ascribed the capacity of discerning first and second causes, and the final end of things; the property of unity and numerical increase, definition, separation, union, disjunction, and velocity. Under the head of *qualities*, he included colours; tastes, six; sorts; kinds, two; scents, touch, numbers, measures, distance, union, separation, bulk, wisdom, joy, sorrow, desire, envy, carefulness, heaviness, liquidness, affection, natural order, merit, demerit, sound. By *work* or *motion*, he understood, ascending, descending, desiring, stretching, going. Of *sorts*, he made two divisions, the great and the small. Under the head *divisions*, or *parts*, he made no separate distinctions. Under *absence*, he placed four divisions, as distance, the absence of previous existence, destruction, non-existence. Under the head of wisdom, he made three divisions: certain knowledge, uncertain, and error: these he again subdivided. He likewise taught his disciples, that space, time, region, kind, the human soul, the Great Spirit, and primary atoms, were eternal.ⁱ He divided sounds into two kinds, that of

^h Under each of these three heads he made fourteen subdivisions.

ⁱ "All bodies," says "Epicurus, consist of parts, of which they are composed, and into which they may be resolved; and these parts are either sim-

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the voice, and all other sounds; and taught, that significant sounds, as gutturals and palatals, proceed from those parts which receive a stroke in the act of pronunciation. He also described sound in its formation, continuance, and extinction; and declared that all sounds are to be ascribed to air. Respecting colours, he opposed those who maintain, that they are derived from the process through which things of various colours pass, as an earthen pot becomes red in burning, &c. He further taught, that, the primary atoms excepted, all material things were open to the senses; that material things were destroyed in three ways: first, by water, during the night of Brūmha; secondly, by pestilence, famine, war, and other extraordinary methods; thirdly, when all sentient beings obtain absorption in Brūmhū. In this manner, Goutūmū proceeded through the divisions already mentioned, with their subdivisions, defining the nature of things according to the logical rules he prescribed to himself.

On the subject of creation, Goutūmū taught, that God, being possessed of eight qualities, or dispositions existing eternally within himself, manifested himself as a body of light;^k and that from hence the primary atoms issued; that the creator next gave existence to Hirūnyū-gūrbhū, the first form or pattern of things, and, having formed

ple principles, or may be resolved into such. These first principles, or simple atoms, are divisible by no force, and therefore must be immutable."

^k "With respect to God, Pythagoras appears to have taught, that in substance he is similar to light." "According to Zoroaster, the human soul is a particle of divine light, which will return to its source, and partake of its immortality: and matter is the last or most distant emanation from the first source of being, which, on account of its distance from the fountain of light, becomes opaque and inert, and whilst it remains in this state is the cause of evil; but, being gradually refined, it will at length return to the fountain whence it flowed."

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vice and virtue, directed this imagined being to create things agreeably to this model.¹ After this, Hirünyü-gürbhü, in union with these qualities, taking the primary atoms, formed the universe; and Brümha uttered the védüs. According to the divine appointment, men are born subject to time, place, vice and virtue.

He directed the person who wishes for supreme happiness, first, to seek wisdom, by rejecting what is doubtful; by ascertaining what is capable of proof, and what is certain, particularly respecting divine objects; what belongs to the senses; to comparison; to the reason of things; to proofs from the nature of things; to the inseparable nature of things; to that which is not doubtful; to that which contains difficulties; to that which is capable of dispute; to that in the proofs of which there are faults; to make himself master of what is unanswerable; to ascertain the distinctions of things; and to learn how to expose errors. He must then extinguish in himself all sorrow, [the causes of] birth, vice, and false wisdom; he must listen to discourses on God, and fix them indelibly in his mind; and in this manner he will obtain emancipation, consisting in the eternal extinction of all sorrow.

SECT. IV.—*Pütänjülc.*

The Roodrü-jamülü, the Vrihünnüdee-késhwürü, and the Püdmü-pooranü, supply some information respecting

¹ “God, that he might form a perfect world, followed that eternal pattern, which remains immutable.” “By ideas, Plato appears to have meant patterns, or archetypes, subsisting by themselves, as real beings, in the Divine Reason, as in their original and eternal region, and issuing thence to give form to sensible things, and to become objects of contemplation and science to rational beings. It is the doctrine of the Timæus, that the Reason of

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this sage, to whom the Patñjölü school of philosophy owes its origin, and who wrote a work on the civil and canon law. He is said to have been born in Ilavritü-vürshü, where his father Ūngira and his mother Sütēē resided, and that immediately on his birth he made known things past, present, and future. He married Loloopa, whom he found on the north of Sooméeroo, in the hollow of a vütü tree, and is said to have lived as a mendicant to a great age. Being insulted by the inhabitants of Bhogü-bhandarü, while engaged in religious austerities, he reduced them to ashes by fire from his mouth.

He taught, that the Divine Spirit and the soul of man were distinct; that the former was free from passion, but not the latter; that God was possessed of form, or was to be seen by the yogēē; that he is placable, glorious, the creator, preserver, and the regenerator of all things; that the universe first arose from his will or command, and that he infused into the system a power of perpetual progression; that the truth of things was discoverable by the senses, by experience, comparison, and revelation; that some material things were unchangeable, and others changeable; and that the latter pass through six changes, as birth, increase, &c.; that every thing arose from five elements, fire, water, &c.; that knowledge is of five sorts, certain, uncertain, &c.; that there are five kinds of men: those who are governed by their passions, the wrathful, the benevolent, the pious, and those who are freed from worldly attachments; that emancipation is to be obtained by yogü, that is, by perfect abstraction of mind.^m

God comprehends exemplars of all things, and that this Reason is one of the primary causes of things." "The exemplar," says Seneca, "is not the efficient cause of nature, but an instrument necessary to the cause."

^m Pythagoras taught that "in the pursuit of wisdom, the utmost care must be taken to raise the mind above the dominion of the passions, and the