

SACRED LITERATURE

CHAPTER I

THE SACRED LITERATURE OF BRAHMANISM.

The Vedas.

THE Sacred or revealed Canon of Brahmanism consists of the Four Vedas, each of which comprises a collection of mantras or hymns, one or more brahmanas in prose, and one or more upanishads.

The Vedas are named according to the traditional purpose of their Sanhitas (poetical sections):—

- i. The Rig Veda, the veda of the hymns, for the reciter at the sacrifice.
- ii. The Sama Veda, the veda for the singer at the Soma offering.
- iii. The Yagur Veda, the veda for the sacrificer.
- iv. The Atharva Veda, the veda of the Atharvans.

As a whole the Vedas constituted the literature of a highly elaborated faith and ritual. But in their several parts they represent the stages of a long religious evolution, during which the secular became sacred and finally sacerdotal. The primitive and the philosophical lie side by side. There has never been such a religion as the theological resultant of these books would yield. Nor has Aryan society ever worn all the features they reflect.

The Rig Veda Sanhita.

The Rig Veda is the oldest collection. Its antiquity and its reflections of historical conditions render it peculiarly valuable.