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The ideas of the ancient Hindus concerning man

For relaxation it has been pleasant to collect from MÜLLER's literal translations of the Sacred Books of the East the data relative to the biological knowledge of the ancient Hindus. Some of this material has already been grouped around specific points of interest and published (1-3).

In this compilation and arrangement, I have presented selected observations on man.

In going through these records the reader will be struck as I have been, not only by the wealth of good observation, but also by the keenness with which it has been made. The absence of verbiage combined with the succinct statement with here and there a suspicion of sly humor arouses admiration for these old and all-too-neglected natural philosophers.

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Of man's creation it is written that "Pragapati created living beings. From the out-and-in breathings he created the gods, and from the downward breathings the mortal beings (1). From the lower vital airs the mortal creatures" (2). Not a haughty beginning to say the least. "Verily man is born thrice." First he is born from his mother and father. Second he is born by sacrificial offering. And third, by death he is born into the infinite (3). Hence man is spoken of as a sacrificial object, and the soul is fire, rendering the mortal immortal. Fire makes the soul (4-6). Man comes from fire and goes back to fire (7).

He is thus part of the universe (8). "The ether which is around

(1) S. B.- 11, 1, 3, 1. (2) S. B.- 6, 1, 2, 1, 11. (3) S. B.- 11, 2, 2, 5.
(4) S. B.- 1, 2, 3, 6. (5) S. B.- 7, 5, 2, 13. (6) S. B.- 2, 2, 2, 4. (7) Khand.-5,
9, 2. (8) Khand.- 1, 7, 1-5.

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has no strenght, no hold. This body is wasted, full of sickness, and frail; this heap of corruption breaks to pieces, life indeed ends in death" (41-42). "Without a cause and unknown is the life of mortals in this world. Troubled and brief and combined with pain. Both young men and grown up men, both those who are fools and those who are wise men, all fall into the power of death, all are subject to death (43). For there is not any means by which those that have been born can avoid dying; after reaching old age there is death. Of such a nature are living beings. As ripe fruits are early in danger of falling, so mortals when born are always in danger of death. Birth is attended with pain, decay is painful, disease is painful, death is painful (44). All this is perishable, as these flies, gnats, and other insects, as herbs, trees, growing and decaying. In this world I am like a frog in a dry well (46). You cannot prolong your life — you are past help when old age approaches (47). Old age against which there is no remedy" (48).

"Life drags on towards death continuously, old age carries off the vigor of a man (49). Time elapses and quickly pass the days; the pleasures of man are not permanent; they come to a man and leave him just as a bird leaves a tree devoid of fruit (50).

Birth is misery, old age is misery, and so are disease and death" (51). "Individually a man is born, individually he dies — single and alone like the horn of a rhinoceros" (52-53). Thus the wail of the ages comes down to us from the past and echoes still to-day in Cabell.

As age creeps on "the strong joints become loose, the body is furrowed with wrinkles, the black hair turns white. Man feels every pain and agony from death down to the pulling out of a hair (54). A householder sees his skin wrinkled and his hair white (55). The hair of an aging man shows signs of age, the teeth of an aging man show signs of age, but the desire to live and the desire for wealth do not decay even in the aging man (56). With the deterioration of the perception of the ear, eye, organs of smelling, tasting, touching, a man becomes aware of the decline of life, they after a time produce dotage. He is not fit for hilarity, playing, pleasure, show (57). When

(41) Svetas. - 4, 3. (42) Dhamm. - 11, 147-148. (43) Dhamm. - 5. (44) Sutta Nip. - 111, 8, 1-5. (45) Mait. - 1, 4. (46) Gaina - 1, 2, 5. (47) Utta - 4, 1. (48) Manu - 12, 80. (49) Utta. - 13, 26. (50) Utta. - 13, 31. (51) Utta. - 19, 15. (52) Sutrak. - 2, 1, 41. (53) Sutrak. - 2, 2, 70. (54) Sutrak. - 2, 1, 42 : 48. (55) Manu - 6, 2. (56) Vas. - 30, 9. (57) Gaina - 1, 2, 1.