SECTION III. (Continued.)
CHAPTER XII.
The Shākhās of the Vedas.

The Shākhās, 'branches,' or appendices of the Veda.—The Krṣṇa and Shukla, or 'black' and 'white,' sub-divisions of Scripture.—The Shākhās as links between them.—Light-atoms and dark-atoms.—The number of Shākhās of each Veda.—The Yajurveda-shāstra.—The completion of Scripture proper.

Each of these four, Veda, Brāhmaṇa, Upaniṣad and Upaniṣad, has two divisions known as the Krṣṇa or black and the Shukla or white. The black comes first in order. It corresponds to the U. The next in order, i.e., the white, corresponds to A. The Krṣṇa-Veda expounds तामस or darkness; the Shukla, प्रकाशा or light.

The distinction of these two, light and darkness, is well-known. It is true that in reality there is no distinction or separateness between them, (for not only can neither be defined without reference to the other, but the words and facts are purely comparative also, so that what is light to one is dark to another, and vice versa); still, the duality is also a practical and unavoidably necessary fact. Each has an actual existence
from the standpoint of the other, though the reality is that which transcends them both.

All over Samsāra we have this dual and joint rule of light and darkness; the former dwelling in the A and the latter in the U, while M is beyond them both.

The result is that we have a Black Rk and a White Rk, a Black Yajuh and a White Yajuh, and so on with the Sāma, the Atharva, the Brāhmaṇas, the Upaniṣads and the Upa-veṇas.

The dark-aspect and the light-aspect of each tātvika or element are described respectively in the black and the white sub-divisions. The formation of atoms follows the same order; such and such atoms are concerned with light, such with darkness.

Now the Shākhās deal with the relation between the two (the dark-atoms and the light atoms, or the Black-Veṇas and the White-Veṇas generally?); indeed the idea of the Negation, the nexus, governs their treatment of everything, and they expound the combinations and dissociations of each atom of the whole of sāmsāra; as that such and such a dark-atom is related to such and such a light-atom, such and such light or dark-atoms are employed or required in such and such circumstances, etc.

Dark-atoms, or ‘darkness-atoms,’ have the function of nairbalya, absence of force, weakness, disappearance of energy; light-atoms, on the other hand, possess prābalya, presence of force, strength, they produce or evolve energy. Cognition corresponds to light-atoms, action to darkness. Because desire is inherent and immanent in all these, therefore it is not counted separately here.

To acquire definite knowledge of these matters the Black and White divisions of the Veṇas should be studied together with the Shākhās.1

The Rk has four Shākhās appended to its white, and as many to its black, division. In all these the element of cognition is dealt with.

The Yajuh has similarly eight Shākhās, four for each of its two divisions, all dealing with action.

1 The wording employed throughout this small chapter, in the original, leaves it wholly doubtful as to what exactly is the relation between the Veṇas, the Kṛṣṇa and Shukla, and the Shākhās, and whether they are all separated from each other or not. At one time, the words are, ‘the Black Branches and the White Branches’; at another, ‘the Black and the White and the Shākhās’, implying three sets instead of two. The general impression left by the whole is that they are three sets; i.e., to say, the Veṇa proper is as the trunk of the tree, Black and White are two main branches, and Shākhās are minor branches springing from each of these two; not that Kṛṣṇa plus Shukla is equal to Veṇa-
The Sūma has ten Śākhās, ‘by the measure of the figure ten’ (?); otherwise indeed its branches are beyond count, for it deals with desire, which is endless and includes everything. In the popular saying, that the Sūma has a thousand branches, the word thousand signifies this same countlessness only.

The Atharva has also eight Śākhās, half belonging to each division.1

These branches constitute what is called the Yoniṭra-Shāstra, that whereby the world-process proper or that all the Śākhās of Krṣṇa added together are Krṣṇa, and so on.

1 In the current Mahā-Bhāṣya of Paṭaṇjali, and in some of the ‘minor’ Upaniṣhads, the statement occurs, with slight variations, that: The Rk is twenty-one-fold, the Yajuk one hundred and one-fold, the Sūma a thousand-fold, and the Atharva nine-fold. But what it exactly means, (1) recensions, different versions of different schools, or (2) chapters, sections, divisions, parts, or (3) separate appendices, as here, the modern Paṇḍit cannot say. So far as ‘black’ and ‘white’ sub-divisions are concerned, only in respect of one Veda, the Yajuk, is such a distinction current now; and the two are regarded as two different recensions of what is in substance, and very largely in words also, the same. They are also spoken of as the two Śākhās of the Yajuk, the ‘of’ indicating identity, as in ‘the city of Benares’.

is yanṭratye, ‘bound together,’ ‘determined,’ ‘compelled,’ or ‘constrained (as by yantra, figure, scheme, diagram, machine).’

Yantra, binding together, organisation, is possible only as regards sāmāna groups; and groups are of atoms only, atoms of light and atoms of darkness. The allocation and functioning, or radiation and expansion, of these is described in these Śākhās. They tell us what and how many atoms of each kind are present and active in any place. As a fact we see the functioning of both in the world. In some places light preponderates, in others darkness; in still others both are equal. In some places there is an excess of energy, in others a deficiency; in still others an evenness and balance of power. In this fashion arise endless varieties of objects. The description of these belongs to the Śākhās.1

1 What is the meaning of these atoms of light and atoms of darkness? We can catch but the vaguest glimpses of the possibilities of knowledge and its application contained in this Yoniṭra-Shāstra, ‘material science,’ i.e., physical plus superphysical science, in the fullest sense of the term. There is a theory under discussion in modern times, which speaks of two kinds of atoms, ‘holes in ether’ and ‘vortex rings of ether’; one in which or through which energy ‘sinks’ and disappears and another through which or from which it evolves and ‘wells’ forth. Theosophical literature speaks of laya centres, ‘critical
Hence the injunction that the Veda should be studied with, 'the Shākhās, with the Krṣṇa', states 'or points of transformation from one condition to another. Where everything is dual, positive and negative, why should not atoms be dual also, corresponding to positive and negative? If electricity is material, as is surmised by some, may not negative electricity consist of a stream of one kind of atoms, electrons, ions or however else they are named, and positive electricity of a stream of the opposite kind? (That an atom is divided into two halves, one positive and one negative, and that its stability is due to the presence of these opposite conditions which attract each other, is one of the many theories as to the nature of the atom put forward by the modern scientist. But the text seems to indicate much more than this, and is much the same as the theory respecting atoms that are 'wells' or 'founts' of energy and atoms that are 'sinks' of energy, i.e., in which energy disappears. These two kinds of atoms have also been called 'male' and 'female' atoms. A.B. See Occult Chemistry). It is said in the text that the light atoms correspond to A, the Self; and the dark atoms to U, the Not-Self; in The Science of Peace and in various foot-notes and the text here occasionally, it has been suggested that of every pair of planes, the subtler and inner corresponds to the Self and the denser and outer to the Not-Self, the atoms of the two may be opposed in quality to each other. It has been said, in theosophical literature, that all these planes within with the Shukla and Samvyata (?). Otherwise it is useless. It is true that these branches or planes are arranged as an endless chain of alternate worlds of causes and worlds of effects; this implies another aspect of the same thing.

Psychically, with reference to such a statement in the text as that the Rk dealing with cognition has two sets of appendices, belonging respectively to its two divisions of black and white, we may conjecture that the error-division of cognition would deal with dark-atoms and the truth-division of it with light-atoms. So under desire, love appears as bright smiles and hate as dark frowns, and shades of love and hate have corresponding shades of color associated with them, as pale with fear, red with shame, green with envy, rosy with love, black with rage, and so on. So under action, well-directed and successful industry produces vigor and 'glowing' health, and the opposite, 'black' depression and fatigue and exhaustion, anaemic lividity, and so on. The Yoga-Sutras speak of actions of three colors.

Yet, again, with reference to the statement in the text, that cognition corresponds to light and action to darkness, we may remember that cognition is acquisition, is the storing up of energy, the building up of healthy organic tissue, whereas action is expenditure, the discharge or setting free of energy, the disintegration of tissue into toxins.

1The word Samvyata is difficult to understand. In ordinary modern Sanskrit it means 'enveloped.'
appendices are part of and not separate from the Vedas, yet they are generally regarded as pākhyāna, supplementary expositions, whence the need for the injunction.

The authors of these Shākhās are, as before the subordinates of Mahā-Viṣṇu, viz., Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Śiva, and their subordinate executive.

After the formulation of these Shākhās is the whole of the sāṃśāra framed and carried out, from the brahmaṇa up to all that is reckoned within a samsāra (in the technical sense of the world-system of a Mahā-Viṣṇu, and not in the general sense of the World-process). And in accordance with the methods laid down here does the progressed jīva become the creator of new samsāras. And this is its attainment to the condition of Para-Brahman.

Such is the universal Brahma-Vidyā, the Science of Brahman, embodied in the Veṣa, composed of light and darkness, without acquiring which the high estate of Brahman may not be achieved, nor the supreme bliss of a transcending peace attained. To gain that lofty peace this highest science, this all-comprehending knowledge, must be gathered, and for the gathering thereof the brahma-charya stage of life has been ordained and set apart.

Yet far beyond the reaching and the teaching Of all the Vedas, Mantra, Samhitā, And Brāhmaṇa and Upaniṣhāt too, And Krishna, Shakta, Śākhas, soars the Self, Eternal Consciousness apart from all; Not by conjunctions of minutest atoms, Nor by disjunctions of them is It gained; Nor mineral, nor plant, nor animal, Nor human, nor divine, nor other lives And lines of evolution, subtle, gross, Stretching unendingly, behind, beyond, May compass or exhaust Its Plenitude, Infinite, Universal, All-Pervading, Formless, and yet all forms at once in One.