

profane literature as far as it is noticed in the epic itself, reserving, however, for the two following chapters the Rāmāyaṇa and the philosophical systems.

The Vedas.

Allusions to Vedic literature, veda, chandas, mantra, ṛuti, are naturally common in every part of the Mahābhārata, but except in the didactic or later epic these are usually of a general character. It may be assumed that the bulk of Ṛuti or revealed works, if not all of it, was composed before the epic began. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see which portions of this hereditary literature are especially mentioned, and particularly important to observe how the epic cites from older works. Even the fact that it does cite verbatim the words of the holy texts is of historical moment when it is remembered that in other places even women and slaves are exhorted to hear the recital of the epic.¹ We find indeed in the course of the epic narrative that a woman is taught Vedic mantras,² but the mantras are from the Atharva Veda, which, without being particularly slighted, is less regarded than the older Vedas, as is shown by this incident; for no woman would have been taught Rig Veda verses, for example.

The Vedas are all mentioned by name, though the Atharva Veda is not always recognized in the formal enumeration. The order of precedence is not fixed, though its peculiar holiness, vimala, is not the reason why the Sāma Veda in the Gītā and Anuṣāsana heads the list.³ Usually the Rig Veda stands at the head and the Atharva, if mentioned, at the foot, though the order Ṛk, Yajus, Atharvan, Sāman, and even Atharvan, Sāman, Ṛk, Yajus is found; but the last order occurs only in the didactic or later epic. The four together comprise the vedaḥ caturmūrtiḥ, or fourfold Veda, which, in

¹ Compare i, 62, 22; 95, 87; iii, 85, 103; xii, 341, 116, etc.

² *Tatas tām grāhayāmāsa sa dvijah Mantragrāman . . . atharvaḥ ṛasi ṛutam* (v. l. *atharvāṅ ṛasi*), iii, 305, 20.

³ For in v, 44, 28, it has this epithet, yet stands last in the list: "Not in R. V., nor in Y. V., nor in Atharvas, nor in the spotless Sāmans."