

man with the conviction of his own insignificance, his physical weakness, and the ephemeral nature of his existence; he is, on the other hand, cheered and invigorated by the consciousness of having been enabled, by the application and development of intellect, to investigate very many important points in reference to the laws of Nature and the sidereal arrangement of the universe.

Although not only the propagation of light, but also a special form of its diminished intensity, the resisting medium acting on the periods of revolution of Encke's comet, and the evaporation of many of the large tails of comets, seem to prove that the regions of space which separate cosmical bodies are not void,* but filled with some kind of matter; we must not omit to draw attention to the fact that, among the now current but indefinite expressions of "the air of heaven," "cosmical (non-luminous) matter," and "ether," the latter, which has been transmitted to us from the earliest antiquity of Southern and Western Asia, has not always expressed the same idea. Among the natural philosophers of India, ether (*âkâ'sa*) was regarded as belonging to the *pantschatâ*, or five elements, and was supposed to be a fluid of infinite subtlety, pervading the whole universe, and constituting the medium of exciting life as well as of propagating sound.† Etymologically considered, *âkâ'sa* signifies, according to Bopp, "luminous or shining, and bears, therefore, in its fundamental signification, the same relation to the 'ether' of the Greeks as *shining* does to *burning*."

In the dogmas of the Ionic philosophy of Anaxagoras and Empedocles, this ether (*αιθήρ*) differed wholly from the actual (denser) vapor-charged air (*ἀήρ*) which surrounds the

* Aristotle (*Phys. Auscult.*, iv., 6-10, p. 213-217, Bekker) proves, in opposition to Leucippus and Democritus, that there is no *unfilled* space—no *vacuum* in the universe.

† *Âkâ'sa* signifies, according to Wilson's Sanscrit Dictionary, "the subtle and ethereal fluid supposed to fill and pervade the universe, and to be the peculiar vehicle of life and sound." "The word *âkâ'sa* (luminous, shining) is derived from the root *kâ's* (to shine), to which is added the preposition *â*. The quintuple of all the elements is called *pantschatâ*, or *pantschatra*, and the dead are, singularly enough, designated as those who have been resolved into the five elements (*prâpta pantschatra*). Such is the interpretation given in the text of Amarakosha, Amarasinha's Dictionary."—(Bopp.) Colebrooke's admirable treatise on the Sânkhya Philosophy treats of these five elements; see *Transact. of the Asiat. Soc.*, vol. i., Lond., 1827, p. 31. Strabo refers, according to Megasthenes (xv., § 59, p. 713, Cas.), to the all-forming fifth element of the Indians, without, however, naming it.