

Archaic Greece and the Veda

1) Introduction

Many studies by classicists (=scholars of Greek) have since the 1960s (and some before) drawn attention to affinities between the archaic Greek culture and Near Eastern (NE hereafter¹) ones in religion, mythology, poetry and arts and crafts: eg P Walcot (1966), M L West (1966, 1978, 1988, 1997a, 1997b etc), W Burkert (1977, 1987, 1992 etc), C Penglase (1994), orientalist S Dalley (1998) and many others. Except West, who invariably refers to early Indic sources as well, most of the others seem to be unaware of any affinities between the Greek and Indic cultures and play down the fact that the Greeks who came in waves onto the shores of the Aegean (from about the middle of the third millennium down to about 1200 BC) were undoubtedly people who spoke an Indo-European (IE hereafter¹) language and therefore most probably brought with them a large amount of inherited forms pertaining to all aspects of life. A fair proportion of these forms (only few names of deities in the Mycenaean extant documents) appear in the archaic texts (Homer and Hesiod) and survive as established elements in the Greek civilization of later periods. The above-mentioned classicists are certainly right in establishing Greek parallels with, and borrowings from, the NE traditions, but they are just as certainly wrong to ignore the Greek affinities with the Vedic culture and with that of other IE peoples, and ascribe – as they do – such elements also to NE influences. No doubt many elements in the Greek culture² derive from, or at any rate were common with, those of the Near East. Contacts between Minoan Crete and Syria and Egypt or other NE countries are in clear evidence from about the late 3rd millennium (Hood 2000) and exchanges of goods, patterns and techniques early in the second (Warren 2000: 26-8); there may have been religious influences from Egypt c 1900 (Carinci 2000: 32-4) and certainly soon after the Egyptian hippopotamus-goddess Taweret was adopted in Crete with minor transformations in the extant iconography (Weingarten 2000: 114-5, 118); undoubtedly there are similarities in cult much earlier between Minoans and Anatolians (Çatal Hüyük) due to contacts, exchanges, perhaps even migrations from Anatolia (Dietrich 1974: chapters 1, 2). Such contacts, exchanges and transmissions continued in the Mycenaean and subsequent periods so that S Dalley can say “There was not simply one ‘orientalizing’ period, there were several” (1998: 86)³. However, Dalley is quite probably wrong in suggesting that the art of bird-augury (as attested in a

¹ Abbreviations for languages used are: Av=Avestan; E=English; Gk=Greek; Gmc=Germanic; L=Latin; Lth=Lithuanian; Ltv=Latvian; Mcn=Mycenaean; S=Sanskrit; Sl=Slavonic; V=Vedic

For economy of space are used abbreviations for some texts and books given in the Bibliography in full. Thus B with number stands for Burkert 1992 and page-number throughout; MM for Dalley 1991; GM for Graves 1960. AV is *Atharvaveda* and RV *R̥gveda*; AB and ŚB are *Aitareya* and *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇas*; B Up and ChUp are *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya* Upanishads; TS is *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, MB is *Mahābhārata* and Ra *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Apart from the usual signs < ‘derived from’ and > ‘producing’ for convenience I use the sign z in the sense ‘is cognate, connected with’.

IE= Indo-European; NE= Near Eastern; PIE=Proto-Indo-European.

² This will hereafter indicate the archaic period, that is 8th and 7th centuries, otherwise the era will be specified as post-archaic, classical or Hellenistic. The dates given are of course BC.

³ The term ‘orientalizing’ is something of a misnomer. It does not really mean that Greek culture acquired ‘oriental’ features (except in Hellenistic times, ie after 300). Greeks borrowed much material from the Near East but in almost all instances transformed this into distinctly Greek forms. As Plato(?) wrote in *Epinomis* 987 D-E, “The Greeks render more beautiful whatever they obtain from foreigners”.

Greek inscription of the 6th century) derives from Mesopotamia (1998: 100) – the two texts quoted from Greece and Mesopotamia being quite different, anyway.⁴ This kind of divination is amply attested in the very earliest Vedic culture and west of Greece, among the Celts (MacCulloch 1948: 55-6). Now, while it is possible that this art of divination spread from Mesopotamia westward to Greece and Gaul, it is equally possible that the Celts, Greeks and IndoAryans inherited this practice from the ProtoIndoEuropean (PIE hereafter) phase.

In this paper I trace parallels between the Greek culture and the Vedic tradition, referring to other IE peoples and using philological considerations wherever possible. Wherever we find Greek-Vedic parallels, these are very probably inherited forms, since it is unlikely that Greeks and IndoAryans had, after the dispersal of the IE peoples in the 3rd or 4th millennium or before, contacts of any great significance. The area of Mythology has been extensively explored since the 19th century of our Era by Max Müller, Cox, Fisko, Oldenberg, Hillebrandt, et al (for a useful brief summary see Arora 1981: 177 and n 1) and of course by many more scholars in the 20th century (Dumézil, Polomé, Puhvel, et al). I do not think that the exploration of Comparative Mythology has been exhausted, nor that a full and correct evaluation of the relationship between the different IE traditions has been established despite the various tripartite, structuralist and other approaches to this subject – and I hope to show the reason for this in the course of this discussion. I shall not examine mythological themes and motifs like the Deluge or the Four Ages (in India) or Five (in Greece), nor cognations like *Zeus/Dyaus*, *Ouranos/Varuṇa* etc, that have been repeatedly discussed. However, in addition to circumstantial mythological motifs, I shall examine parallels in

⁴ The Greek text: “If (a particular bird) flying from right to left disappears from view, (the omen is) favourable ... If, flying from left to right, it disappears in a straight course, unfavourable.” The Mesopotamian text: “If many eagles keep flying over a city, the city will be besieged”.

social practices, rituals and magic, in the broadest sense of the term.⁵ For instance, Cheiron's school on mount Pelion where many heroes like Achilles received their education sounds very much like an old Druidic or Vedic school (today known as 'ashram' <¹ *āśrama*) where the tradition was oral; very different were the NE traditions of education and learning where writing was predominant and the teaching, apart from the master-apprentice relationship in Egypt (Aldred 1984: 192-5) and elsewhere, was conducted in schools that were royal establishments or connected to temples (Saggs 1989: 100, 105).

⁵ Indic sources used here will be mainly the hymns of the *R̥gveda* and *Atharvaveda* and to a lesser extent the Brāhmaṇas, Upanishads and the Nirukta; on few occasions I have recourse to the Sūtras and the epics, *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* (*MB* and *Ra* hereafter).

The mainstream academic opinion on the dates of ancient Indian texts is that after the Aryans entered NorthWestern India c 1500, they composed the RV c 1200-1000 (or even later), the AV c 1000, the Brāhmaṇas and Upanishads c 800-600, the Sūtras 600 BC and after and the epics (in their present form) right down to c 300 CE. In the last decade of the 20th century some Sankritists in the West have raised questions and objections to the mainstream view. Prof Aklujkar (British Columbia, Canada) does not consider the dates incontestable and states "only *relative* chronology has been well argued for" (1996: 66 and n 14); see also Feuerstein et al 1995, passim; Frawley (Director of the Vedic Institute, Santa Fe) 1992: 25-7. Having accepted and taught the mainstream theory for some 20 years, I too abandoned it in view of the mounting evidence against it. I presented the full evidence in 'The R̥gveda and Indo-Europeans' (1999), positing 3100 BC as the completion of the RV. Only a brief summary can be given here.

The IndoAryans are indigenous to the Seven-river region in what is today North Pakistan and N-West India, since there is no evidence whatever for any intrusion into the area prior to c 500 BC. (Allchins 1997: 191, 222; Shaffer and Lichtenstein 1995: 135). The RV was complete but for minor passages by 3100 when the Harappan culture begins to arise. The Brāhmaṇas and Sūtras know of town-life, large buildings, fixed altars, bricks, cotton, rice and silver – elements present in the Harappan culture but unknown in the RV. Moreover, many hymns in the RV (especially II, 41; VI, 61; VII, 95) praise the Sarasvatī river which flows mightily from the mountains to the Indian ocean, but c 2000 had become a minor stream lost in the desert, hundreds of miles before reaching the ocean. In addition, linguistic and literary evidence shows that Vedic is far older than any other IE branch, including Hittite or Avestan.

Consequently I take it that RV was composed in the 4th millennium at least, the Brāhmaṇas and Upanishads early in the 3rd and some of the Sūtra texts c 2500 BC. The Rāma legend is older than the great war of the *Mahābhārata*. The core of both must have been in circulation in epic narrative in the 3rd millennium (Rāma tales much earlier) but was expanded by the bards with much additional material reaching the subsequent enormous length early in the Christian Era.

Of great significance are two articles by American historian of science A Seidenberg wherein he argues that Egyptian, Babylonian and Greek Mathematics derive from the Indic *Śulbasūtras* of Āpastamba and Baudhāyana, or a work like that, dated at c 2000 BC as lower limit, thus furnishing totally independent evidence: in these he took account of the work of Neugebauer, Cantor et al (see Bibliography). Seidenberg wrote of this original work: "its mathematics was very much like what we see in the *Sulvasutras* [*śulbasūtras*]. In the first place, it was associated with ritual. Second, there was no dichotomy between number and magnitude ... In geometry it knew the Theorem of Pythagoras and how to convert a rectangle into a square. It knew the isosceles trapezoid and how to compute its area ... [and] some number theory centered on the existence of Pythagorean triplets ... [and how] to compute a square root. ... The arithmetical tendencies here encountered [ie in the *Śulbasūtras*] were expanded and in connection with observations on the rectangle led to Babylonian mathematics. A contrary tendency, namely, a concern for exactness of thought ... together with a recognition that arithmetic methods are not exact, led to Pythagorean mathematics. (1978: 329)

II) Oral tradition (and literacy).

In my view the most important feature shared by the Indoaryans and the Greeks, ie the Mycenaean and subsequent IE-speaking entrants, is the oral tradition. The Minoan civilization (non-IE) was literate but its few written documents have not been deciphered as yet. Literacy was present also in the Mycenaean period, though limited to palaces and temples, and the language was IE, as revealed by the decipherment of Linear B (Ventris & Chadwick 1973). There followed 300 years of non-literacy after the destruction of the Mycenaean centres of culture from the 12th to the early 8th century (Taylour 1983: 41), usually termed 'Dark Age' and then literacy re-emerged with the adoption by the Greeks of the Phoenician alphabet and its transformation with the introduction of written symbols for vowels and separate symbols for consonants. But it is doubtful whether the protoGreeks who first established themselves on the shores of the Aegean c 1900 were literate. The later writing is syllabic, resembling other NE types. It is safe to assume that they brought no writing with them and eventually, in the 16th or 15th century, adopted the Cypriot-Minoan mode of writing.

It is very difficult to know exactly what the protoGreeks brought with them from the PIE stock. The clay tablets discovered at Knossos and other spots on Crete and at Pylos, Mycenae and other places on the mainland (=Mycenaean Documents) are mainly inventories, containing no literature and very little information about religion. However, among sporadic references to votive offerings, some names of deities stand out, easily recognizable as IE. Thus we find **Zeus** (V *dyaus*, Ht *ḌSiu-s*, Rm *Ju[s]-piter*, Gmc *Tīwaz*); **Areimene** (V *Aryaman*, Clt *Ariomanus* in Gaul and *Eremon* in Ireland); **Iqej-a/-o**, names for a Horse-god/-goddess (Dietrich 1974: 176, n 246; Chadwick 1976: 93) connected obviously with V *Ašvin* and Clt *Epona*, a horse-deity in Gaul; **Erinus** is obviously connected with Demeter Erinys of Arcadia, rather than the dreadful Furies (Burkert 1977: 85), and with V *Saranyū* ⁶; a goddess **Dīwija** z S *divija* 'skyborn' or S *divya* 'celestial'; Burkert gives also *Alle Götter* 'All gods' (1977: 83) which is Mcn *pa-si te-oi* (Ventris & Chadwick, p 310) and clearly V *visve-devāh* 'all gods'. Thus we have some evidence that the Mycenaean preserved elements of their IE heritage and this through oral tradition. This tradition continued during the subsequent centuries of non-literacy; for, apart from Zeus and Erinys, the names of Hera and Athena, and several other deities re-emerged in the poetry of Homer and Hesiod in the late 8th century. (For continuity and innovation in archaic Greek religion see Dietrich 1974: 246ff and Burkert 1977: 99ff.)

In the 12th century, it is thought, the Dorian tribes, another IE-speaking people, swept through northern Greece, spread and eventually some of them reached and settled in the Peloponnese (Taylour 1983: 16, 162). No writing is attested anywhere in Greece until c 800 and, when written records appeared in the 8th century, only few of the older Mycenaean cultural elements survived in the beginnings of what is regarded as the Greek civilization, culminating in the brilliance of the classical period.

It may be thought that with the advent of writing the oral tradition ceased, but this is not so. Many examples are attested down to classical times pertaining to 'esoteric' knowledge, through the teacher-disciple and father-son relationship, in religion and priestly functions, healing,

⁶ The *saranyu/erinus* cognation is rejected by KEWA III, 442 (as also in Frisk 1954 ff). However, since KEWA accepts the S/Gk cognations – *sama/amo-then*, *sarva/holo-/hulo-*, *sarpami/herpō*, *si-sarmi/hallomai* and *iallō* and *sarpis/elpos-elphos* (all in vol III), there can be no reason, phonetic or semantic, for the rejection of *saranyu/erinus*; non-initial S *-a-* often appears as *-i-* in Gk as in *dadāmi/didōmi*.

divination, and the like (B 43ff). At the time of Euripides, when literacy was widespread (Murray 1993: 100), one of the characters in *Melanippe the Wise* says “How sky and earth separated is not my tale but one from my mother” (frag 484⁷) thus showing that cosmogonic or theogonic accounts still passed from one generation to the next by word of mouth. P Kingsley again stresses how oral transmission in esoteric cults like the Pythagoreans and others persisted into Hellenistic and even Roman times (1995: 322ff).

Now while classicists like Burkert link this oral transmission with diviners, healers and the like in NE cultures (B,¹ 44-5), this is a preeminent feature of early IE as well. It is attested among the Celts, as Caesar writes in *De Bello Gallico* VI, 13: “[The Druids] are concerned with divine worship... sacrifices... ritual... Numerous young men gather round them for the sake of instruction holding them in great honour”; in ch VI, 14 he adds, “In the schools of the Druids they learn by heart a great number of verses, and therefore some persons remain twenty years under training. And they do not think it proper to commit these utterances to writing, although in almost all other matters... they make use of Greek letters”. The Germanic and Baltic peoples also must have had an oral tradition, even though it is not so clearly attested, or so retentive, otherwise they would not have preserved respectively the deities *Fjorgyn* and *Perkunas*, which z Sl *Perun* (and variants) and V *Parjanya*; much of the IE common lexical stock; and IE legends, like Thor’s confrontation with the serpent Midgard in the ocean (Gmc) and the songs about *Dieva Deli* (Ltv; or *Dievo Sūnelai* Lth) ‘the [Sky-] god’s sons’ and the Sun’s daughter (*Saules meita* Ltv or *Saules dukterys* Lth) this Baltic legend corresponding in part to the Greek *Dioskouroi* ‘sons of Zeus’ and Vedic *Aśvinau* who accompany *Sūryā* ‘Sungod’s daughter’ (or *Uṣas*). It should be noted here that there is no direct parallel between the Greek and Baltic legends beyond ‘skygod’s lads’. The Greek legend has two pairs of twins, Castor (one *Dioskouros*) and Klytaemnestra (Agamemnon’s wife), and Polydeukes (second *Dioskouros*) and beautiful Helen (of Troy, ie Menelaos’s wife) while the two *Dioskouroi* are expert horsemen and rescue people from shipwrecks (“Hymn to *Dioskouroi*’ in *Loeb*, 460-2; *GMI*, 245-50); the Baltic legend has sometimes one, sometimes two or many, Skygod’s sons who woo the Sun’s daughter and save her from drowning (Ward, 414-5; Puhvel 228-9). The link between Greek and Baltic is furnished by the Vedic lore about the *Aśvin* horsemen (one set of twins of *Saranyū* and *Vivasvat* in *RV* X, 17, 1-2 & *Nirukta* XII, 10) who are healers and rescuers (often from shipwreck) and thus are connected with *Dioskouroi*, and who accompany the Sungod’s daughter *Sūryā* (and in *RV* VI, 60, 2, rescue abducted *Uṣas*, who is sometimes identified with *Sūryā*), and thus are connected with the Baltic heroes. Although, the Slavs and the Romans had no myth of the Divine Twins, they must have had a similar mode of oral transmission.

In the Vedic culture the oral tradition is very marked. The Vedic texts preserved much more of the PIE stock of legendry than any other IE branch. In fact no major mythological feature appears in two or more IE branches to the exclusion of the Vedic one, while, on the contrary, feature after feature appears in the Vedic lore in common with one or two other branches to the exclusion of the rest (disregarding the affinities of Vedic and Avestan since these two traditions formed a distinct branch). Thus the motif of the sacrificial dismemberment of primordial Man *Puruṣa* and the resultant cosmogony (*RV* X, 10) has a parallel in the dismemberment of giant *Ymir* (z *V yama*) in the Norse tradition but nowhere else; the name of Vedic Firegod *Agni* appears only as the Hittite *Agnis* and the Slavic *Ogon* (and variants) and nowhere else; the name of V artificers *Rbhu* is most probably cognate with Gk *Orpheus* and Gmc *Elf* but has no mythological connection in the other branches; the same holds for V *Vāstoṣ-pati* and Gk *Hestia* and Rm *Vesta*; and so on. Thus the Vedic corpus seems to be a much more reliable source for PIE mythology

7 For fragmentary works of Euripides see T B L Webster’s *The Tragedies of Euripides*, London 1967.

than any other IE branch. This is all the more remarkable when one considers that the Vedic texts were transmitted for many centuries through a well organised oral tradition.

The systematic oral transmission of its voluminous sacred lore (and sacrificial ritual) is a most impressive characteristic of the Vedic tradition. The priestly caste of the brahmins guarded well the knowledge of their *śruti* (apocalyptic scriptures like the *Rgveda*). It was the sacred duty of certain families to transmit this knowledge from one generation to the next (Winternitz 1981: vol I, 29-32, 51-2). When the disciples reached maturity and the teacher felt they could now proceed on their own he instructed them "learn and teach" (*Ch Up* ¹ IV, 9, 3 & VI, 14, 2; *T Up* I, 9, 1ff). The teacher-disciple and inter-family father-son relationship is exemplified in the Upanishads: "A father may declare this [teaching about] Brahman to the eldest son or to a worthy pupil" (*Ch Up* III, 11, 5); later on (VI, 8ff) Uddalaka is presented instructing his son Śvetaketu. Already, in the *RV* itself we read of the families of Bhṛguṣ, Aṅgirasas, Vasiṣṭhas et al, who preserved and transmitted the sacred knowledge.

III) Epic Poetry

1. "Greek literature is a Near Eastern literature" wrote West in the introduction of his edition of Hesiod's *Theogony* (1997: 31). The statement is probably exaggerated for effect, but other scholars express a similar view in more moderate terms (B 88ff; Dalley 1998: 101-3). Undoubtedly, many incidents and features from NE poetry are embedded in the Homeric epics (and other poems of the archaic period). Here, I present only a few of them to indicate this particular debt: in *Iliad* 15, 187ff Poseidon describes how the world was divided among the three sons of Rhea, the three high gods, Zeus, Hades and Poseidon himself, *by lots*, a procedure otherwise unknown in the Greek texts but present early on in the Babylonian epic *Atrahasis* (*MM* p9); Penelope's prayer after her son Telemachus's departure in *Odyssey* 4, 759ff, could well derive from a similar incident in the Mesopotamian epic *Gilgamesh* (Tablet III: *MM* p 65), where the hero's mother Ninsun offers a prayer after her son's departure; also in *Gilgamesh* we find that sometimes the action of a new day begins with the first light of dawn (Tablet VIII, *MM* pp 91, 95) and this is employed by Homer in the *Odyssey* (opening of rhapsodies 2, 5 etc); there are several more cases. However, apart from very few incidents, like Penelope's prayer which seems to have something non-Greek about it (B 1992: 99-100), it should be and has been noted that most such borrowings (like also the Phoenician alphabet mentioned above) are usually transformed by the Greeks into terms of their own culture (see n 3, above).

Despite all such borrowings, Greek epic poetry has its roots in the PIE tradition as is evidenced by some basic features it has in common with the poetry of the *Rgveda*, even though the latter is not an epic. It is difficult to understand what scholars mean when they write of "Indo-European heroic tradition", since apart from Homer's works there are no other IE epics until very much later. The Hittites or Anatolians (also IE) left us much material in verse and prose, the earliest of which was written down 8 or 9 centuries before Homer's poems; but most of this derives and is almost indistinguishable from other NE literature. The Romans produced poetry several centuries after the Greeks and mostly imitated them. For the other IE branches, Germanic, Celtic, Slavonic and Baltic, we find no written material until after many centuries of the Christian Era. Consequently the only comparisons that can be made in this context are with the *RV* hymns. We therefore ignore studies on (hypothetical) IE epics or "IE poetics". Besides, features common to, say, Greek and Germanic heroic poetry are found also in the medieval Turkic *Alpamysh* or the ancient NE *Gilgamesh*.

2. In the Homeric epic we find, broadly speaking, *three types of stock epithet* (the examples are mostly from *Iliad* 1): a) Vague adjectives like *dios* 'divine, bright', used of anyone, or *diogenēs* 'nobly born' of many heroes; these are employed mainly for filling the metrical line. Others are *amumōn* 'fault-less', *megathumos* 'big-hearted' and *hippodamos* 'horse-taming' – all used indiscriminately of Trojans and Achaeans; *potnia* 'reverend' used of Hera and elder women and *kallisphuros* 'with beautiful ankles' of any beautiful lady; and so on. b) The second type of epithet is used specifically of a central figure and denotes a distinct feature but could apply to many others: eg Hera 'of white hands' *leukōlenos*; Athena 'of grey/blue eyes' *glaukōpis*; Dawn 'of rosy-fingers' *rhododaktulos*; Achaeans 'of fine greeves' *euknēmis*; etc. c) The third type is used exclusively of a particular deity or warrior and denotes a feature that designates a specific attribute or function not found in another figure: eg *hekēbolos* 'aim-attainer/far-shooting' is exclusive to Apollo; *asteropētēs* 'who throws the bolt' and *nephelēgereta* 'cloud-gatherer' are exclusive to Zeus; *polumētis* 'of many counsels' and *polumēchanos* 'of many devices' are used of Odysseus; the epithet *pōdas ōkus* 'fleet of foot' is used mainly of Achilles; though *ōku-* and *tachu-* are used of others too.

All three categories are found in the Ṛgveda – even though it is a collection of hymns to gods and not an epic: a) *daivya* 'bright, divine' of Savitr (I, 35, 5) and Rudra (II, 33, 7); *ugra* 'mighty, fierce' of Rudra (II, 33, 9) and of a man of power (X, 34, 8); *ṛtavan* 'holy, observing order' of Divine Waters (II, 35, 8) and of Mitra and Varuṇa (VII, 61, 2); *citraśravas* 'of brilliant fame' of the Firegod Agni (I, 1, 5) and of Mitra (III, 59, 4). b) *somapā* 'soma-drinker' is exclusive to Indra (eg II, 12, 13), but it could be used of any other god; Rudra is called *jalāṣa* 'cooling', but so could be the Moongod Soma, the Raingod Parjanya and others; Agni alone is described as *jātavedas* 'who knows all things manifest' but so could be Varuṇa or the Sungod who see all things. c) Agni is *grhapati* 'lord of the house' (I, 45, 1) since a fire is always lit, and *daivya hotṛ* 'heavenly priest' (III, 7, 8 and 9); *vajrin* 'he of the bolt' (VII, 49, 1) is an epithet exclusive to Indra; Viṣṇu is famous as *urugaya* 'far-going' and *urukrama* 'wide-striding' (I, 154, 3, 5, 6); and so on. That Greek epic had a rich inheritance of epithets is made even clearer by its common lexical stock with Vedic: S *śravas/śruta* z Gk *kleos/kluto-* 'fame(-d)'; S *uru-* z Gk *eu-* 'wide-'; S *āsū* z Gk *ōku-* 'swift'; S *divya/daivya* z Gk *dios* 'divine, celestial, bright'; S *patnī* Gk *potnia* 'reverend lady'. (For additional "verbal as well as conceptual parallels," West, 1988: 154-6; also Kirk ed, *The Iliad, a Commentary* 1985-93, vol 3, p 117, on 'glory' and 'undying'.)

3. The *similes* in the N/E epics are not numerous but varied as in "His face was like that of a long-distance traveller" (*Gilgamesh*, MM53) or "To go on to the battlefield is as good as a festival for young men" (*Erra and Ishum*, MM287) and "splendour like the stars of heaven" (ibid, 290). The *RV* contains a large variety of similes: simple ones as in "[Rudra] kills like a terrifying beast" (II, 33, 11); a humorous comparison in "[Frogs] like brahmins at the overnight Soma-sacrifice, speaking around as it were a full lake" (VII, 103, 7); lyrical and elegiac in "As a mother covers her son with a robe, so shroud thou, o Earth, this [dead] man" (X, 18, 11); elliptic and pregnant in "As a cunning gambler carries off the stakes, so the goddess [Dawn] wears away a mortal's lifespan" (I, 92, 10); and one almost Homeric – "Like the rays of the sun that make men hasten, exhilarate, then send to sleep, so flow forth together [Soma's] swift effusions ..." (IX, 69, 6). The Greeks may have retained similes (and idioms) from the PIE phase but even if parallels could be established between Greek and Vedic (or Avestan) these could equally well be due to independent development, since the movements during the centuries after the dispersal and the settlement in new environments would naturally produce new usages. So in this area, what is of importance is the continued use of similes, not so much verbal and conceptual parallels which may be fortuitous.

4. An additional aspect of style is that the *RV* Hymns are composed in various fairly *strict metres* (Anuṣṭubh, Jagatī, Triṣṭubh, etc), as the Greek epic line has its own strict metre (the hexameter with its iambic, trochaic, dactylic and other variants), whereas the Mesopotamian epic has only one metrical feature, that of the accent usually resting on the penultimate syllable of the line (Heidel 1965: 15-6). Moreover, we find in the Hymns alliteration and assonance: ... *prasasré apsú; sá pīyūṣam dhayati pūrvasūnām* ‘he has stretched forth in the water; he sucks the new milk of them that first have given birth’ (II, 35, 5); *tvām agne vājasātamaṁ viprā vardhanti sūṣṭutam* ‘Wise singers exalt you, Agni, well-praised, best giver of gain!’ (V, 13, 5); *sá dumdudhe saṣṭūr indreṇa devair dūrād dáviyo ápa sedha śatrūm* ‘O drum, along with Indra and the gods, do drive our foes to farthest distance’ (VI, 47, 29). Thus it is as though the metrical line foreshadows Greek poetry and the alliteration foreshadows the alliterative poetry of the Celtic (Irish) and of the Germanic peoples. In Greece alliteration appears fully developed in Pindar’s poetry (early 5th century) but traces of it are found in the epics, early lyrics and some epigraphic material; the development of all poetic devices in Greece was very rapid. The riddle is another feature common to the Hymns and Celtic and Germanic poetry: eg *tigmám éko bibharti hásta áyudham, śúcir ugró jálāṣabheṣajah// ... trīṅy-éka urugāyó vi cakrame yátra devāso madanti //* (RV VIII, 29, 5 and 7): ‘One, bright, fierce, with cooling remedies, carries in his hand a sharp weapon’ (5) where the “cooling remedies” signal Rudra; ‘One far-going, has made three strides to where the gods rejoice’ (7) where “far-going” and “three strides” signal Viṣṇu.

Many more details of form, style and specific poetic devices will be found in C Watkins 2001 (1995) *passim*. Watkins’s study is invaluable for any student of IE comparative literature, but, unfortunately it contains many parallels that are not parallels and many that are universal (or independent developments) and not specifically IE inherited forms (21-2, 25, 31, 38, 53, 99, etc, etc). It also takes for granted the notion common among comparativists that all traditions, Vedic, Hittite, Greek, Celtic, Slavic, etc, stand on the same footing, even though the Hittite one is heavily influenced by the NE cultures (this is admitted on p 52), while Celtic and, moreso, Slavic literary traditions, which are of late attestation, may well carry elements diffused from Greece and Rome – a point outside the framework of our present discussion. Nonetheless, Watkins does state: “The language of India from its earliest documentation in the Rig-veda has raised the art of the phonetic figure to what many would consider its highest form” (p 109).

Note. Earlier, in section II, we saw that the legend of the Aśvins in the *RV* provides information that connects the Greek *Dioskouroi* and Lithuanian *Dievo Sūnelai*. Here we see that the *RV* can be said to anticipate both Greek poetic metre and Germanic alliterative poetry: it alone preserves what most probably were common original elements in the PIE but got separated in the other branches.

5. There are in addition several *incidents* in Homer which have parallels in the Veda and can thus be regarded as PIE inherited forms, despite similarities in NE texts. We examine only three of them here.

In *Iliad* 15, 34-42, Hera swears the oath to the river Styx, which is regarded as the most severe and weighty oath by the gods (as it is also in Hesiod’s *Theogony* 401ff). In this instance it has cosmic dimensions being accompanied by Heaven and Earth, and Burkert links it with a parallel in Aramaic (1992: 93-4). However, this is also a distant relative of the oath to Varuṇa and cosmic waters as found in *Atharvaveda* XIX, 14, 8-9. As Keith observes, “Mitra is primarily the Lord of the contract ... [and] Varuṇa of the oath ... as in the case of the Styx in Greek religion (1989: I, 103-4).

Rhapsody 21 of the *Iliad* is concerned with Achilles’s fighting with various Trojans by the

river Scamander, in it and with the river-deity itself. This too has been linked with river battles in NE texts (B 119) but the incident may well derive from the battle scene in RV VII, 19 (and 33, 3-6) where king Sudās was hemmed in at the river Puruṣṇi by the confederation of the 10 kings and won with the help of his hierophant, the great sage Vasiṣṭha, and the intervention of Indra (cf the intervention of Hera and Hephaestus in ll 328-77 in the Greek text). As usual the Hymns give no details but the slaughter and the gory corpses are suggested in brief touches. (Detailed descriptions of battles, chariots, corpses and flowing blood will be found in the Indian epics, especially the second day of the war in the Bhiṣma Parvan, book VI of *MB*.)

The third incident is the flight of Artemis and Apollo from the battlefield, one compelled by Poseidon, the other by Hera, while their mother Leto is driven off by Hermes (*Iliad* 15, 435-503). This is reminiscent of RV IV, 28, 2 and 30, 4, where Indra attacks the Dawn and the Sun crushes their chariot and causes them to flee. The echoes are faint, admittedly, but Apollo is also *Phoibos* which is (Avestan *baḡa* and) *V bhaga* who is clearly an aspect of the Sungod, while Artemis may be linked with *Uṣas* as I suggest further down, sect V,1.⁸

An additional feature in the *Iliad* is the mode whereby some heroes reflect on things, ie “they speak to their own ‘great-hearted *thumos*’ or to their ‘heart’”. This too Burkert (B 116) connects with NE prototypes; but, of course, we find a similar formulation in the *RV* – speaking with one’s self/spirit (*tanu*: VII, 86, 2).

There are several other incidents in Homer (and Hesiod) that can be linked with the Vedic texts but enough has been said on this. I am not suggesting that Greek archaic texts, or even the points discussed above, have not been influenced by NE traditions, but I am claiming that, whatever non-IE influences have affected these Greek narratives, they have many affinities with the Veda and that therefore their IE heritage cannot be denied.

IV) Divination

Divination was practised extensively in ancient India as is obvious in the Brāhmaṇas. Not only the flight of birds but also the direction of cows’ movements in the Soma sacrifice served as omens for the sacrificer’s fortune (*ŚB* IV, 5, 8, 11); an omen was also taken to be the clarity or otherwise of the fire. The *RV* hymns II, 42 and 43 already mention birds of omen. In II, 42 the *kapiṅjala* (a kind of heath-cock) is begged to be auspicious (*sumāṅgala*): it is so, if it calls from the right or south (*dakṣiṇataḥ*) of the house, from the region of the Ancestors – then no thief or evil-wisher will do harm. Here we have the bird’s call from the south or right, as in the Greek text mentioned in n4 it is the bird’s flight from right to left. VIII, 47, 15 regards as a bad omen a dream of making a garland or neckband. Many other phenomena serve as omens – one’s shadow appearing upside down in water or in a mirror; meteors and lightning; the scream of a jackal or the neighing of a horse; and so on. However, it must be emphasized that *the inspection of entrails*,

⁸ Dr Bhattacharji links Artemis with Durgā, yet on the same page she links Athena with Durgā (1988: 164). From the viewpoint that all deities are manifestations of the Absolute, this constant identification of different deities with different deities obviously does not matter. But when we compare and contrast so as to discover precise correspondences, such a method is not satisfactory. Many of Dr B’s references to other mythologies (especially Greek) are wrong: eg “Demeter the mother-goddess of the Minoans [sic!] was called Demeter Erinyes [sic!]” (p 86); for the Arcadian Demeter Erinyes, see section II, above. Throughout the book there is the underlying notion of the conflict between invading Aryans and Dravidian natives (pp 10, 45, 90, 160, 163, 178, etc). It is a pity corrections were not made for the 1988 edition (by which time Archaeology had made it clear that there had been no invading hordes). Otherwise it is an immensely useful study of the historical development of Vedic mythology.

including *hepatoscopy* (B, 46-53) is not evidenced even in late literature.

Burkert mentions also divination and prophesying by ecstatic (or raging) women (B, 80ff). This phenomenon is not at all attested in the *Rgveda*. The *Vedic Index* gives two references for female magicians *yātudhanī*, I, 191, 8 and X, 118, 8, but in both the word means 'female fiend, demonness': in the first passage the sun is to destroy these fiends of night; in the second, Agni will burn them up. The same applies to its references to the *Atharvaveda*. (Of course, there *may* have been some women who practised some kind of witchcraft: see V, 2, below.) Women were present in rites and in philosophical gatherings, as shown by the intrepid Gargī who challenges the sage Yājñavalkya in *BUp* III, 8, 1ff, but, according to the texts, there were no seeresses nor priestesses.

Both priestesses and haruspication are attested in the early Celtic culture. Citing Pomponius Mela, MacCulloch refers to 9 'priestesses' *antistitēs* on an island off Brittany "who lived in perpetual virginity", wielded power over sea and wind through spells, healed incurable illnesses, predicted the future to sailors and could assume animal forms (1948: 76). This account is clearly exaggerated fantasy but there is evidence of 'druidesses' *bandrui* or *ban-filid* (Kendrick 1994: 96-7). Tacitus writes that the Celts in Gaul consulted their deities through human entrails (*Annals* XIV, 30). Among the Nordic people, also, goddess Freyja had a divination rite performed by a seeress *vǫlva* who fell into a trance or ecstasy (Davidson 1981: 117). The Balts too had priestesses (Puhvel 1989: 224-5).

So the Greeks might have brought such practices with them to the shores of the Aegean. On the other hand, it is possible that this custom spread from the Near East westward and to the north.

V) *Magic and Purification*

The Greeks, like other peoples, believed in demons, ghouls and ghosts and that these could enter and possess the human organism causing mental and physical illness, even death; also that these could be manipulated by means of magical rites, to guard against them or direct them against enemies. A large aspect of the Greek religion consisted in securing protection against these demonic forces or in purification.

1. *Demons and spirits of the dead*. In his well-documented study (1992), Burkert discusses extensively demons attacking and causing disease (pp 59, 65), guilt-spirits torturing murderers (56-7) and ghosts of the unappeased dead possessing men (pp 65-6). All these he links with Mesopotamian parallels, but they are all found also in great abundance in the Veda.

Attacks of demons causing disease are well attested throughout the Vedic tradition. The *Atharvaveda* especially is full of such cases. *Takman* for instance, "god of yellow hue ... son of Varuṇa" (*AVI*, 25, 2-3) causes much trouble being the demon of fever: he attacks in autumn and the rainy season (V, 22, 3) like burning fire (VI, 20, 1) and is invoked in a brief spell – one of many – to enter into a frog (VII, 116, 2). There are *rakṣasas*, demons that assume various forms, like dog or ape (VI, 37, 11) or deformed human shapes (VII, 6, 13), and *piśācas*, that assume insect forms and the like: they attack a man (or an animal), enter and cause bodily or mental disorder (IV, 37, 11; V, 29, 5-9) and may finally bring death; they also infest human dwellings and whole villages (IV, 36, 8; etc). Such fiends are found in action in the *RV* too – I, 133, 5; VII, 104, 10; etc.

The Mesopotamian or Vedic "carnivorous demons" do not, of course, cover exactly the case of the Erinyes who pursue Orestes "as beasts of prey, 'dogs' who want to suck his blood" (B, 59). The Veda, however, provides such canine figures. First there are Rudra's dogs that howl and swallow unchewed their prey (*AVXI*, 2, 30). Then there is *Saramā* which pursues and finds the

thieves of cattle and then Indra recovers the animals (*RV* X, 108); Saramā is not expressly said to be a bitch in the *RV* but is so taken by subsequent texts (*Nirukta* XI, 25). However, the Veda has two more dogs, those of *Yama*, the guardian of the dead in heaven (*RV* X, 14, 10-12). Descendants of *Saramā* (with the epithet *Sārameya*) they are called *Śabala* (? z Gk *Kerberos*) 'brindled' and *Śyāma* 'black', and guard the path of the dead to *Yama*'s abode. "It is possible that they were conceived as going among men, and taking to the abode of death [in heaven] the souls of the dead" (Keith 1989: II, 406). Be it noted that some think *Saramā* z *Hermēs* (so SGD, but KEWA III, 442-3 thinks it improbable). *Saramā* is Indra's and the gods' (in *Nirukta* XI, 25) messenger, as *Hermes* is of *Zeus*; she finds the stolen cattle while *Hermes* does the stealing of cattle; her offspring *Sārameya* guide on the path of the dead, as later *Hermes* is *psuchopompos*, escort of the dead to *Hades*. (Here *Burkert* sees only the influence of NE gods' messengers in 1977: 244).

The guilt of murder, which attaches to *Achilles* in *Aithiopsis* and to *Orestes* (B, 56), is fully recognised in the Veda as well; even the slaying (by *Indra*) of a demon like *Vṛtra* brings the taint of bloodshed. The killer becomes an outcast to be avoided, as is *Orestes* (B, 60), and is haunted by his deed (*Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* XIX, 4, 10). The *Sūtra* texts, which come somewhat later, have the murderer carry the skull of his victim and wear the skin of an ass or dog, thus at once lessening his guilt by this declaration of his crime and warning others to stay away from the unclean person (*Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* I, 9, 24, 11-13).

Then there are the ghosts of unappeased dead causing "all manner of illnesses on the living" and here *Burkert* cites numerous cases from Greek texts (pp 65-6). Possession by ghosts is, of course, common in post-Vedic late texts but it is unknown as such in the early texts. However, some spirits of the dead, ghosts that are guilt-ridden souls perhaps undergoing some punishment, do wander among and pester the living (*RV* X, 15, 2; *AV* XIII, 3, 9). In Vedic texts, possession itself is an action of demons and ghouls only, as we saw earlier in this section.

2. *Protection*. Many and various means for protection against these demonic forces (and for purification) were used by the Greeks: spells, votive offerings, amulets of all kinds, even effigies, today's "voodoo doll" (B, 60-1, 65-7, 82, 87, 110). It should not come as a surprise that all such means, with some variants here and there, are amply presented in the Veda. The *Atharvaveda* (and much of the *Sūtra* literature) abounds in various protective, expulsive, offensive and retaliatory means: spells (V, 31, 1; etc; in 3a, below, the verses from *RV* are another such incantation); amulets of all kinds (I, 16, 3; etc, etc); use of plants (IV, 7; VIII, 7, 3; etc) and ointments of all kinds which are sometimes genuine medicinal remedies (IV, 9, 8; etc); carrying round of fire (VIII, 64, 1); and of course water for all occasions. Another feature in these practices is the making of effigies (out of wax and other substances) which are melted, buried or pierced through. These are made by women also and one description is in *AV* X, 1, 1-3, which also has incantations for protection; they are placed in wells or cemetaries (V, 31, 8). More details are found in the *Sūtra* texts (Keith, II, 389).

Burkert (pp 53-5) mentions two types of foundation deposits during the construction or consecration of a house, temple or other building, both in the Near East and Greece: one type consists of precious metals and/or stones, guardian figures and tablets with inscriptions; the other consists of animal sacrifice and libations. The first type, essentially an extension of the second, is unknown in the Vedic tradition. A beautiful Hymn (*AV* III, 12) describes the consecration of a house invoking gods *Savitṛ* 'Sun', *Vāyu* 'Wind', *Indra*, *Bṛhaspati* 'Lord of prayer, priest of gods', the *Maruts* 'gods of rain and medicine' (also warrior comrades of *Indra*), and *Bhaga* 'Bestower of fortune'. Offerings are made of milk, corn, jars of purified butter and curdled milk, honey and water. In later texts, the *Sūtra*-literature, a black cow or a white goat may be offered and in this *Keith* finds a similarity to "the black cock killed at the foundation of a new house in

Greece" (II, 363).

3. *Purification.* Of all purificatory practices in archaic Greece, here we shall concentrate on the cathartic ritual which releases murderers from their blood guilt, although other cathartic practices are employed in circumstances of plague or other forms of pollution.

a) The purification ritual whereby a murderer like Orestes gets cleansed consists in having the blood of a slaughtered piglet running down and over the culprit and then the blood being washed off with running water (B 56-7). *This procedure is unknown in the Vedic tradition.* Such a blood-bath is never used and the animals sacrificed in rituals are horse, ox, sheep and more usually goat (Keith, I, 279 and n 5). Instead of blood, the Vedic people invariably used running water which removed all sin such as lying, cursing and any crime of violence: "O Waters (*āpah*), carry off whatever sin is in me, whatever crime I have done, whatever curse or lie" (*RV* I, 23, 22, repeated in X, 9, 7).

b) "Anything left over from the purification must be carefully disposed of", writes Burkert, as much in Greece as in Mesopotamia (B, 62). The same is true in the Vedic tradition: all remnants of the rite must be burnt thoroughly and whatever is left must be buried secretly (*ŚB* III, 8, 5, 9ff); then all get washed and the last vestiges of uncleanness float away with the running water.

c) Another Mesopotamian/Greek parallel for purification is the "young [man] holding ... a tamarisk, rod of purification" and "Branchos the Apollonian seer" frees the Milesians of the plague by sprinkling them "with laurel branches" while they "spoke the responses" (B, 61). In the Veda we find the use of the plant *Apāmārga* 'which drives away' (*AV* IV, 7; etc) as well as of other plants (*AV* VIII, 7, 3ff; etc) against diseases, evil dreams and the like. Water and incantations are used simultaneously.

d) Of the other details mentioned by Burkert in relation to purification, of interest is Apollo and Karmanor, the priest who purified the god on Crete after he had slain the Delphic dragon (B, 63).

Apollo's adventure and slaying of Typhaon's dragon-fostermother at Delphi (*Hymn to Apollo* 349-86) is really a repeat of Zeus's slaying of Earth's dragon-offspring Typhoeus (*Theog* 820-68). The name *Apollōn* is of uncertain derivation but his epithet *Phoibos* sounds cognate with (Avestan *baya* and) S *Bhaga* 'Bestower of fortune', a Vedic deity that is clearly an aspect of the Sungod: the S/Gk correspondences *bh/ph* and *g/b* are quite normal. However it is Indra the Thunder-and-Storm-god, with a solar aspect also, who kills the demon-dragon *Vṛtra*; Indra is also the 'bolt-bearer' *vajrin* and so related to Zeus; mention is also made of *Vṛtra*'s dragon-mother (*RV* I, 32, 9). The Vedic and the two Greek myths are obviously one and the same in origin. Connected with this is the Teutonic myth of Thor, who wields the hammer *Mjōlnir* and slays the serpent *Midgard* that encircles the world (as *Vṛtra* encompasses – *āśayāna* – the Waters), but is himself killed in the process (*Edda*, 46-7 and 54).

The Apollo myth has the element of water with the presence of the stream *Telphusa*, as *Midgard* lives in the ocean and *Vṛtra* covers and wallows in the Waters; thus it is closer to the Vedic tale than the Zeus mythologem. Moreover, Indra, like Apollo, feels guilt after slaying *Vṛtra* and rushes off distraught (*RV* I, 32) – whereas Zeus has no blood-guilt. Indra's guilt and expiation is mentioned in later texts and is developed with epic exuberance in the *Mahābhārata* (V, 13 and XII, 272) where Indra gets purified with the performance of a horse-sacrifice. (For additional Apollo-Indra affinities see VI, 2, below.)

Burkert feels that the name *Karmanor* "does not seem to be Greek" (B, 63). We are not told who officiated in Indra's horse-sacrifice. *Karmanor* sounds like S *śramaṇa* 'a wandering ascetic' or, more probably, like *-śarman* 'refuge, delight', which often forms the last element of a

brahmin's name (eg the common *Viṣṇu-śarman*) – the S/Gk correspondence *s/k* being frequent, as in *śrad-/krad-* and *śrutakluto-*.

VI) Three deities.

1. *Artemis*. Most of our information about Artemis comes from later sources. The archaic texts and iconography give little information.

Earlier (in III, 5) I suggested this goddess may be connected with the Dawngoddess Uṣas after citing the incident where she and her brother flee from the battlefield. In the two Homeric Hymns to Artemis (Loeb 434-5 and 452-3), Artemis has certain traits that cannot be directly related to Uṣas, eg hunting with hounds and “destroying the race of wild beasts”. Other features can be related to Uṣas, even Artemis's chief aspect as Moongoddess can be envisaged to derive from Dawn, elder sister of Night; then she delights in arrow-shooting, she causes an outcry among beasts and trembling on land and sea, and loves music, singing and dancing.

In *RV* VI, 64, 3 Uṣas is likened to a heroic archer/thrower *ástā* and a swift warrior *vólhā* against foes and darkness. She is not a huntress at all, but sets birds and beasts astir early (I, 49, 3; IV, 51, 5), while in the Mycenaean documents “Artemis (*atimite* [Dat.], *atemito* [Gen.]) was not obviously associated with animals” (Dietrich 1974: 172, n 218). She shares some features with the Artemis of the two Homeric Hymns: sister of Bhaga (z Gk *Phoibos*) in *RV* I, 123, 5, golden-hued, she has a glittering chariot (III, 61, 2), is likened to a dancer (I, 92, 4) and sings (I, 113, 4; I, 123, 5). In *RV* IV, 28, 2 and 30, 4, Indra attacks the Dawn and the Sun and crushes their chariot and they flee: this is faintly reminiscent of Apollo and Artemis fleeing from the battlefield, one compelled by Poseidon the other by Hera, and with them Leto compelled by Hermes (*Il* 15, 435-503). One might even link the name *Artemis* with the Mitanni theophoric names *Artatama* and *Artamanya* (Puhvel 1989: 99) and many Iranian names and nouns with *arta-* as their first element. This initial component *arta-* is connected with Vedic *ṛta* ‘cosmic order’, which Uṣas is repeatedly said to follow. (Cf *V ṛj-* z Gk *arg-ēs* and *V ṛṣ-* z Gk *ars-ēn*; the *-r-* was lost in the Mcn *Atimi-* ?) Admittedly, these are very tenuous threads.

2. *Apollo*. In section IV, 3 above, we noted certain close parallels between Apollo and Indra. Since the two names are so very different it would be difficult to identify him with Indra. On the other hand, Zeus bears a name that is cognate with *V dyaus* but, unlike Dyaus, he is a very active king of heaven sharing common features with Varuṇa and Indra. It is therefore worth noting that Apollo has a few more affinities with Indra.⁹

Apollo's birth in the Homeric *Hymn To Apollo* (ll 115-9) resembles very much the account(s) of Indra's birth in the *Rgveda*. The presence of Eileithyia, goddess of child birth, in the Greek hymn may be of NE derivation, since this motif is not present in the *Rgveda*; but it could also come from Greek poetic inspiration since a midwife's presence at a difficult birth is not an unnatural phenomenon anywhere. Like Leto, Indra's mother had a difficult deliverance: she carried the child in her womb for 1000 months and he came out from her side (*RV* IV, 18, 1-4). Then, as soon as born, Indra illuminated the sky (III, 44, 4) as Apollo leapt into the light (119). Indra displayed his warrior's prowess at once (III, 51, 8), drank the divine Soma, put on his garment and filled with his presence the two world-halves (IV, 18, 3-5) – as Apollo got washed and clothed, was given nectar and ambrosia, then burst out of his golden bands, asked for a bow

⁹ Dr Bhattacharji connects Apollo with Vivasvat (p 243) and Kṛṣṇa (p 303) and Gk *Python* with S *Pūtanā* (p 304) whereas she had linked Gk *Puthon* (=Python) with *Budhmya* (p 150)! She does at least mention briefly the parallel of Apollo and Indra slaying the dragon-serpent (p 259).

and lyre and strode forth, and the whole island of Delos blossomed with gold (120-35). The amazement of the goddesses at Apollo's swift emergence and development (Il 119, 135) and the gods' alarm as he enters into the palace of Zeus (Il 2-3) are paralleled by the Vedic description that Heaven and Earth trembled in awe at Indra's coming forth (I, 61, 14). The details are not absolutely exact equivalents, but then again they are not found in the description of any other deity in Greek, Near Eastern or Vedic texts.

3. *Aphrodite*. Not only modern scholars, but ancient writers like Herodotos (I, 105 & 131) see the origin of this Greek goddess in the Near East and (modern scholars) connect her with Sumerian *Inanna*, who became Akkadian *Ishtar*, Semitic Ashtorith and Astarte. However, there are enough indications to show that in part Aphrodite derives from a goddess of the Vedic tradition. First let us examine her parentage.

a) Most of us think of Aphrodite as born out of sea-foam while some may know that she rose from Ouranos's severed genitals that floated on the seafoam (Hesiod's *Theogony*, 188 ff). However, in *Iliad* 5, 369ff, Aphrodite's mother is *Diōnē* who lives on Olympus, and her father Zeus; in 20, 105, Apollo tells Aeneas, son of Trojan king Priam, that his mother Aphrodite is the daughter of Zeus. This means that the goddess had a normal birth born of a female, divine or mortal, with whom Zeus had coupled – and not out of Ouranos's bloodied genitals in the seafoam long before Zeus came into existence. Dione does not appear anywhere else in Homer's epics, but she is attested in the cult of Zeus at Dodona. (Kerényi 1982: 68; Burkert 1992: 98 and n 8), while the Mycenaeans had goddess *Diwija*, who may be related. Furthermore, Dione is mentioned by name alone in a long list of deities (Zeus, Hera, Apollo, Athena, Leto, et al) in *Theogony* 17, and again in 353 as one of the *Ōkeaninai* 'Ocean's daughters' – but it is not clear if it is one and the same Dione. She is also mentioned as one of the "best" goddesses present at Apollo's birth together with Rhea and others except Hera (*Hymn to Apollo*, 92-5). Now, in the context of all these high deities, Dione could hardly be the humbler Oceanid, unless she bore Aphrodite to Zeus. So either there are two Diones, one on Olympus and the other in the ocean, or the Oceanid, having born Aphrodite to Zeus, was, like Leto, taken up to Olympus by him – though Homer and Hesiod say nothing about this!

Be that as it may, Hesiod gives a totally different account for Aphrodite's birth. Clearly we have two different versions of the goddess's origin.

Here the *Rgveda* is of no help. Apart from Dawngoddess Uṣas and Rivergoddess Sarasvati who are endowed with distinct features, no other female deity appears in the hymns having individual personality. Skygod Dyaus, who in the context of our discussion may be regarded as the equivalent of Zeus, has no consort and is invariably mentioned with Mothergoddess Earth, *Pr̥thivī* or *Kṣam* or *Bhūmi*; Indra has a consort *Indrāṇī* and Varuṇa *Varuṇaṇī* and Rudra (in the Sūtras) *Rudrāṇī*. We find the (secondary, marginal) cognates *diva/divan* 'sky, day' and *divya* 'divine' but no **divāni*. Keith wrote, "the pale figure of Dione, beside Zeus, suggests that the process which produced *Indrāṇī* and her fellows was already working in the Indo-European period" (I, 61). So *Diōnē* looks like an inherited form but it is most probably a much later Greek production. Whether it was coined by the poet(s) of the *Iliad*, as Burkert seems to think (B 97-8), or is of a much earlier date, it is not easy to decide on the available evidence. As for the Mycenaean *Diwija*, this clearly is *S divija* 'skyborn' or *divya* 'divine, celestial'.

b) According to Burkert, the name Aphrodite may be a "Greek form of Western Semitic Ashtorith, who in turn is identical with Ishtar" (B, 98 and n 7). However, if we forget about the Aphrodite-Adonis affair which is parallel to Ishtar and Dumuzi/Tammuz and is of late report, there is very little left to connect the two goddesses' character and deeds. Here, I ignore the evidence of Paphos and architecture (Farnell, 1896: II, 618), of Hermaphroditos, ornaments,

votive offerings, figurines and the like, many of which are doubtful, as presented by Burkert (1977: 238ff): all these (particularly, repulsive figurines of a naked goddess with a bird face) have little bearing on the character we see in the *Iliad*, *Theogony* and the Homeric Hymns (*Odyssey* 8 being a different matter: see c below).

To begin with, we face serious difficulties with the derivation of Aphrodite's name, whichever way we look at it. Be that as it may, the name does reflect the mythologem of her birth out of sea-foam in *Theogony* 178-97. Even if we accept a putative derivation from the Near East, and Aphrodite's birth from Zeus-Dione (be it another borrowing), we still have to account for her rise from sea-foam in Hesiod. Ishtar has to all appearances a normal birth from her parents Anu and Antu. In addition, unlike Aphrodite, Ishtar is passionate and explosive wherever she appears (*Gilgamesh* VI; *The Descent of Ishtar...*; *Erra and Ishun* : MM 77, 80-1; 155ff; 305). Goddess of sexual love, storms and war, she had "countless lovers" and an "ability to engage in incessant sexual intercourse with numerous men without tiring ... Inanna [Sumerian goddess = Akkadian Ishtar] was known for her ambition and cruelty" (Dunstan 1998: 59; Penglase 1994: 19). Aphrodite has no such traits. It is claimed that she may be armed and can bestow victory (Burkert, 1977: 238 n 8) but we see nothing of this in Homer and Hesiod. Her coercion of Helen to go to Paris after his defeat by Menelaos (*Il* 3, 380-420) is of little significance when set beside Inanna: "You are known by your destruction of rebel-lands, / ... by your massacring (their people), / ... by your devouring (their) dead like a dog" wrote Enheduanna in her hymn to that goddess (Pritchard, 1975: 131). No, Aphrodite is not a *furchtbare Göttin*, a terrible goddess, as Burkert writes (1977: 240; and nothing more is added by Penglase in 1994: 162ff).

e) The archaic texts present Aphrodite in two different versions. In the *Iliad* (5, 311ff) Aphrodite has had her son Aeneas with Anchises (under Zeus's influence, in the long *Hymn to Aphrodite*) and Hephaistos is married to Charis, who is well disposed towards Thetis, mother of Achilles (*Il* 18, 368-409), and therefore cannot be Aphrodite under another name, as Kerényi suggests (1982: 72), since the latter is pro-Trojan. In *Theogony* 945 Hephaistos marries Aglaea, the youngest Charis (thus agreeing with *Iliad*), while Aphrodite bears to Ares two sons, *Phobos* 'fear' and *Deimos* 'terror' and a daughter, Harmony (*Theog* 933ff). However, in *Odyssey* 8, 276-381, she is married to Hephaistos but gives herself to Ares and, in a scene that is both burlesque and soft pornography, is caught in the act. (Clearly, the Homer who wrote the *Odyssey* scene is either a different or a very forgetful one.) This incident is probably the beginning of her reputed promiscuity and the later affairs with Hermes, Dionysos and Adonis (GM I, 68ff), in contrast to the timid, conciliatory and rather chaste figure in the other texts. Although she is the goddess of beauty and her function is to stir love and passion in gods and in mortals bringing about union (*Theog* 203; in *Il* 5, 429 'marriage' *ér̥ga gámoio*) by using her magic girdle, she does this not for herself but for others. She is docile and not very acute: Hera dupes her very easily in borrowing her magic girdle (*Il* 14, 170-214). The sexuality that Burkert ascribes to her is also not borne out by the very early texts (except *Odyssey* 8).

It may be that we have two different aspects of one goddess, but the details of her birth and her marriage suggest two (or more) distinct figures. The two versions contain confused elements and overlap: they furnish the origin of the later *Ourania* 'Celestial' Aphrodite (Herodotos I, 105; Plato *Symposium* 180D) as distinct from the *Pandēmos* 'Vulgar' (Burkert 1977: 242 and n 34).

d) In origin, Aphrodite has some affinities with an Indic goddess. This is not *Uṣas*, the Dawn, as many scholars have speculated. D D Boedeker argued for Aphrodite's origin in the PIE (really Vedic) Dawn-goddess; seeking support in philology, she examined earlier attempts at the derivation of the name and finally settled for S *abhra* 'rain, cloud, sky' and the PIE **dei-*'shine' (1974: 7-12). Following a different route, P Friedrich also arrived at the PIE Dawn-goddess (1978: 22-53) and mentioned briefly Boedeker's work (p 44). Such an origin is not impossible, of

course; the Greeks formed *Diōnē* (z S√div > *dyaus* ‘sky’ etc: see a, above) as the Romans formed *Venus* (z S√van ‘love, gain’ > *vanas* ‘beauty, desire’). The Greeks could have formed the name *Aphroditē* from a compound, though not *abhra* and **dei* but perhaps *abhra-* and *-udita* (**abhroditā* is not attested in Sanskrit) in the sense ‘risen from sky-water’ (or even *abhra-* and *-aditi* ‘the boundless mothergoddess of skywaters’ which **abhrāditi* also is not attested). Nonetheless, it is very difficult to see what Aphrodite has in common with Uṣas. Nor is it necessary to speculate about innovation and development of the Uṣas figure, because there is another Vedic goddess that has several affinities with Aphrodite. This is Śrī/Lakṣmī – and it could be argued, of course, that this goddess was in some earlier phase an aspect of Uṣas, who is daughter of Dyaus (RV I, 48, 1).

In the Vedic tradition we find goddess Śrī ‘goddess of beauty and abundance’. (The name appears perhaps in Gk *Kēr/Kar* ‘goddess of doom’ and Roman *Cer-ēs* ‘goddess of agriculture’.) In the *Rgveda* and *Atharvaveda* the noun means simply ‘beauty, splendour, glory, prosperity’ and the like, but it may have a tinge of divinity in RV I, 85, 2 and AV VI, 73, 1. As a fully recognized goddess she appears in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* XI, 4, 3 and in the later iconography she is often seated on a lotus, thus being connected with the (later) appellation *Padmā* ‘She of the lotus’; of course the lotus floats on waters. We do not hear of her origin until the epics where she is identified with Lakṣmī as consort of Viṣṇu. Here Śrī is said to rise from the (butter-)foam of the (milk-) ocean when gods and demons cooperated to obtain *amṛta* ‘the elixir of immortality’ (*MB* I, 16; with important variants *Ra* I, 45): as the ocean was churned and churned, first rose out of it the Sun, then the Moon and then Śrī clothed in white. (Other wonders rose also and eventually Dhanvantarī, the gods’ physician, holding a gourd with *amṛta*.) Strangely, West is unaware of this myth (1997: 4-5, where the *MB* is discussed, and pp 222-6, where a Maori myth is mentioned on the separation of earth and sky).¹⁰

Apart from her birth, Śrī has another affinity with the Greek goddess in that as Lakṣmī she is consort of Viṣṇu. As we saw, in *Theogony* Aphrodite is associated with Ares, the Wargod. Now, in action Ares is a rather pitiable god of war. Zeus, his father, is utterly contemptuous of him (*II* 5, 765-6), Athena invariably defeats him (*II* 21, 40), he gets wounded by Diomedes, with Athena’s help (*II* 5, 858), and in fact he never wins a fight (*GM* I, 73-4); nonetheless, he is the Wargod and Aphrodite bears his children. Not of major importance in the *RV*, Viṣṇu ‘the active, expansive one’ displays a martial streak in aiding Indra slay Vṛtra and himself slaying a mighty boar (*I*, 61, 7; VIII, 77, 10). He becomes a high god in the *Brāhmaṇas* (*ŚB* XIV, 1, 1, 1ff; *AB* V, 1, 1ff) and in the epics he is incarnated in the warrior caste of kṣatriyas, as the mighty and wise Kṛṣṇa of the *Mahābhārata* and as prince Rāma, the incomparable warrior of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Viṣṇu’s consort Lakṣmī is the goddess of Good Fortune and as Sītā, Rāma’s wife, she bears two sons (but of opposite character to Ares’s sons).

The noun *lakṣmī* initially means ‘sign’ (RV, X, 71, 2) as also given in *Nirukta* IV, 10. It acquires the meaning ‘good sign’ *puṇyā lakṣmī* in the *Atharvaveda* as also ‘prosperity, good fortune’, and in the later texts becomes the name of the goddess of Good Fortune. (In fact both Śrī and Lakṣmī are juxtaposed as “wives” of Primordial Man, *Puruṣa*, in the (*White*) *Yajur-Veda* XXXI, 22.) In this there is an additional affinity with Aphrodite, who was at Athens regarded as the eldest of the three Fates (Pausanias I, 19, 2; X, 24, 4; *GM* I, 72). Kerényi mentions also

¹⁰ The critical ed of the *Mahābhārata* (Poona 1970, BORI, Bk I, ch 16) and J A B van Buitenen in his translation (1980, Univ of Chicago Press, vol 1, pp 74-442 n 30) accept Śrī’s rise as belonging to the mainstream story of the epic.

The emergence of *lḍā* from the milk-offerings poured by Manu onto the waters (*ŚB* I, 8, 1-11) may be related to Śrī/Lakṣmī also, though this is not certain.

Aphrodite's related aspect as Genetullis 'caring over child-birth' which places her close to Hekate, another Fate-figure (1982: 67).

Aphrodite's girdle provides yet another link. In the Vedic tradition, women as compared with men are always the inferior parts of the sacrificial rite and impure and must wear a girdle (*ŚB* I, 3, 1, 12). It is not impossible that this girdle became in course of time a means for inciting passion.

e) In conclusion, we have at least two figures of Aphrodite, one with a birth from Zeus-Dione and the other from the genitals of Ouranos in the sea-foam. The two have contradictory aspects and don't fuse satisfactorily. We find contradiction not only between the figure in the Homeric epics and that in Hesiod's *Theogony*, but also between the figure in the *Iliad* and that in the *Odyssey*. Penglase writes that "The birth myth [of Aphrodite] has some features which parallel those found with Ishtar in her myths" (p 165); but after giving an account of Aphrodite's birth in *Theogony*, he states "this myth has no parallels of narrative to those myths which survive about the Mesopotamian goddess" (p 166). The phrase "which survive" suggests that there may have been a myth of Ishtar rising from the sea. The suggestion is legitimate, of course, but it ignores the fundamental and irreconcilable dichotomy in Aphrodite, if taken as a unitary figure.

The two figures or the two births of the Greek goddess suggest two different sources. The foam-born deity seems to be of IE descent while the other one, the figure in the *Odyssey* and later myths, comes from the Near East. This view alone would accommodate all the relevant elements in the myths and cult of Aphrodite and the testimonies of Herodotos (I, 105; I, 131) and of Pausanias (I, 14, 7) about her origin in the Near East.

VII) Miscellany

In this section I examine some other elements in the Greek culture.

1) Some Historical considerations

According to S Kak (2000) art-experts A D Napier, H Zimmer, think that the Gorgo representations in Greece owe much to Indic art. This is plausible, but such iconography would not be part of the IE heritage the Greeks brought with them. Any similarities would be due to contacts between Greeks and Indians after the 9th century and mainly due to the presence of Indians in the Persian armies that invaded Greek areas in the 6th (in Ionia in the eastern Aegean) and early 5th centuries (mainland Greece). From the time of the IE dispersal in the 4th or 3rd millennium, no contact of great significance could have taken place between Greeks and Indians before Alexander's penetration into Bactria. There are reports by writers of the Hellenistic and Roman periods that Greeks had visited India in much earlier times; Plutarch in his *Lives...* reports that legendary Lycurgus of Sparta visited India (*Lycurgus*, 6). In fact Plutarch, Diodoros Sikeliotes (known as Siculus) and Diogenes Laertios manage between them to send just about every Greek sage into the East (including Pythagoras and Democritos, but notably not Socrates and Aristotle). Even if such journeys did take place, these sages are more likely to have brought back with them philosophical or scientific ideas rather than iconographic. It is much more likely that iconographic material would have reached Greece through conscripted soldiers in the Persian

armies or through merchants.¹¹

Unfortunately there is very little evidence available for this subject; consequently all discussions must entail much conjecture. In any case, the period concerned here is post-Archaic.

2) *Lamia and Gorgon.*

Burkert is most probably correct in seeing borrowings of iconographic representations of the Lamia and Gorgo monsters from NE sources (1992: 82-7). The reproductions he presents (1992; also 1987: 30-33) are convincing and are matched by similar reproductions in Dalley (1998: 89, 90, 99, 102). Even archaeologists who minimize the total effect of NE influences on archaic Greek arts and crafts accept that there was imitation of and inspiration from NE forms (eg Starr 1962: 213ff; Snodgrass 1971: 417 & 1980: 64-7).

However, we must remember that often artists and craftsmen in one culture imitate forms of another culture in order to improve their own and express better their own ideas. These demonesses/monsters that snatch up children (mainly Lamia) and eat up people may have belonged to the IE side of the Greek culture. Such monsters are found in most cultures. Thus in *RV* IV, 18, 8 occurs – this once only! – *kuṣavā*: according to Sāyana she is a demoness ‘Evil-birth’ who swallows children; according to some modern scholars she is a river who swallowed Indra (O’Flaherty 1981: 142 and n 14). Nothing more is known about *kuṣavā*. However the Dharmaśāstra Sūtras do refer to demons snatching children (eg Pāraskara’s *Gr̥hyasūtra* I, 12, 4).

Here a small parenthesis may not be out of place. In the Rigvedic mythology anthropomorphism is down to a minimum and so is theriomorphism (mainly but not exclusively in the case of demons): human or animal features are minimal and, of course, at that time (whether 4th millennium or c 1000) there were no iconographic representations. Thus scholars at different periods interpreted these deities and demons as forces of nature (Max Müller, Oldenberg, Hillebrandt, Macdonell), as psychosomatic or spiritual forces within man (Shri Aurobindo, 1982;

¹¹ Possible contacts between Greece and India from most ancient to Roman times have been examined extensively by J W Sedlar (1980). For this particular period see p 79.

Prof S Kak writes: ‘According to Lomperis (1984), “Plato, through the Pythagoreans and also the Orphics, was subjected to the influence of Hindu thought but he may not have been aware of it as coming from India”’ (Kak 2000). I have not read Lomperis; his view sounds conjectural, given the insufficiency of early Greek sources, but, of course, it is possible. Later in the same article Kak cites Zimmer (1946) and Napier (1986, 1992) who argue that the Gorgon and the Cyclops have elements deriving from India; this too has some plausibility. He also cites Krishna (1980) who thinks the name of the mycenaean city Tiryns “is the same as that of the most powerful Indian sea-faring people called the Tirayans”. This sounds utterly improbable. ‘Tiryns’ (*tirun-th-os*, genitive singular, with stem *tirun-th-*) cannot philologically be a cognate with, or derivative of, ‘Tirayan’: Greek *upsilon* [u] cannot correspond to, or derive from, Sanskrit [aya] (cf Greek *kiō* ‘move, go’, *ōkeanos* ‘ocean’ and *treis* ‘three’ and Sanskrit cognates *cay-a*, *āśayāna* and *trayas* where the correspondence is strictly of palatal phonemes); then, we would have to account for the consonant *theta*. If we assumed that this most unlikely linguistic event took place, we would have to suppose then that a band of Indian seafarers before the 17th cent BCE somehow managed to sail into the Mediterranean, got into the gulf of Argolis in the Peloponnese, landed there, travelled inland and somehow established a city or managed to give their own name to an existing community, while at that time, or afterwards, the advancing Greeks were setting up their own cities at Mycenae, Pylos and elsewhere. This I find incredible.

Relevant titles from Kak’s bibliography: Krishna N 1980, *The Art and Iconography of Vishnu-Narayana*, Bombay; Lomperis T 1984, *Hindu influence on Greek Philosophy*, Calcutta; Napier AD 1986, *Masks, Transformation and Paradox*, Berkeley, 1992, *Foreign Bodies: Performance, Art and Symbolic Anthropology*, Berkeley; Zimmer H 1946 *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, Princeton.

Frawley 1982 & 1992), as forces of fertility and sexuality (O'Flaherty in almost all her publications), as forces in Thermonuclear Physics (Rajaram 1999) and so on. How one interprets the *RV* hymns obviously depends on what circulates in one's mind at the time.

3) The Greek legend of the *Seven against Thebes* (in the drama of Aeschylus, c 467, which may carry echoes of events from the Mycenaean era) has certain similarities with (and many differences from) the NE myth of the terrible Seven (*Sebbiti*) who ride with Wargod Erra (*MM* 282ff). Burkert thinks the Assyrian legend may have influenced the Greek one even if the latter were originally an historical event (B107-114). In support of the NE influence are adduced the Seven Sages and the seven-headed Hydra (B, 114). Although it is not stated explicitly, it may be that these evil Seven are an aspect of the Seven Sages or original Craftsmen (*MM* 291, 294) who, after civilizing mankind before the flood, were banished back to the Underworld of Apsu (*MM* 327-8).

In the Veda there is no (allusion to a) legend of Seven evil-ones attacking the world or a city – only the 10 against king Sudās (III, 5, above). The only approximate motif is Indra's destruction of Seven Forts of a tribe 'of insulting speech' *mṛdhravac*, whom Keith calls (1989: 234) *Dāsas*, a common name for demons, in *RV* I, 174, 2; but no more is said of this. There are many allusions to the Seven Sages *sapta-rṣi* (eg *RV* IV, 42, 8) and to monstrous *Viśvarūpa* who is called 'threeheaded' and 'seven-rayed' (II, 11, 19; X, 8, 8). In later texts there appear seven-headed monsters also. However, the most likely candidate, if at all, are the Seven Maruts of *RV* VIII, 28, 5, who are sometimes presented as 7 bands of 7 (*RV* V, 52, 17), and are companions of Indra.

The Vedic threads are admittedly very slender but no more than the Akkadian ones. Many strange transmutations of motifs are observed in oral transmission. Thus Indra, the mighty divine hero of the IndoAryans is but a minor fiend in the Iranian *Avesta*; he appears as Inar(a) in Hittite myths and as goddess Andarta (or Andrasta) among the Celts of Gaul and Britain. Again, Parjanya, a Vedic minor god of rain, is Perenu (and variants) in Slavonic mythology, a great Wargod (who, like Indra, killed a serpent to release cattle and waters) or the Lord of the universe; in the early Baltic texts he is a mere name *Perkunas* in a list of gods and later the oracular Thundergod; among the Norsemen he appears as male Fjorgyn and female Fjorgynn, mother of Thor. Similarly *azugallatu*, the title of the Babylonian goddess of healing, Gula, becomes in Greek masculine *asgelatas* and perhaps *Asklēpios* (B 75-9). So it would not be all that incredible if the seven godly Maruts appear in Greece as seven evil attackers and the seven forts as the seven-gated fort of Thebes – possibly with NE influences.

4) Plato devotes the whole of his *Republic* to show that a society would really prosper only if it were governed by wise men or philosopher kings; he reiterates this theme in his *Laws* 710B. This theme goes back to archaic texts where we read that the land and the people thrive under the good government of a faultless king (*Odyssey* 19, 106-13) or that peace and happiness prevail where just men rule (Hesiod's *Works and Days* 216-37). This view sounds so superbly reasonable that it comes as no surprise to find it expressed in other distant cultures, like the Chinese (eg Chuang Tzu in Giles 1980: 30, 76-7, 109-12), which enquired with sagacity into the nature of things.

This theme may have been developed indigenously by the Greeks. On the other hand, it is adequately presented also in the Veda. The bare principles of kingship (its inviolability, the defence of Law and of the people) and the structured social classes are enunciated in the Brāhmanas (eg *ŚB* V, 1, 5, 14; V, 4, 4, 7ff; etc). In these texts there are several stories of righteous kings whose realm prospered. The best example is perhaps that of Aśvapati Kaikeya in whose kingdom "there is no thief, no miser, no drunkard, no man without the sacrificial fire, no ignorant person,

no adulterer or courtesan” because he himself “had realized the Universal Self” (*Ch Up V, II, 3-5*).

5) *The substitution of sacrificial victims* is another practice in archaic Greece that has parallels in the Veda. This substitution in Greece for various reasons in different circumstances, including pestilence, is examined extensively by D Hughes (1991: 79ff). The practice is well attested in the Veda too. In the Vedic texts this takes many forms and is done in a variety of circumstances (Keith, I, 268: “the victim is really offered as a ransom for oneself”). The best known case is that of young Śunaḥśepa whose release is mentioned in *RV I, 24, 12-3* and whose entire predicament is narrated in *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa VIII, 13ff*: an avaricious brahmin sells his son, Śunaḥśepa to king Hariścandra, who is suffering from dropsy having avoided to sacrifice his own son to Varuṇa as he had promised to do; the lad takes the place of the king’s son and is tied to the post but prays to the gods and they release him. The theory of substitution is stated in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa I, 2, 3ff* and in *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa II, 8*. Since this practice is found also “in the provision of the old Law of the Twelve Tables in Rome where a human being is substituted by a Ram” (B, 74), we can safely assume that the practice has its root in the IE tradition.

6) *The castration of Ouranos by Kronos* in Hesiod’s *Theogony* (ll 178ff) is a most curious mythological motif. Since the discovery of the Hittite texts *Kingship in Heaven* and *The Myth of Ullikummi*, orientalist and classicists invariably cite the NE parallel of Kumarbi castrating Anu as the origin for Kronos castrating Ouranos in Hesiod.¹² No classicist ever mentions in this connection any affinities with the Vedic mythologem of Indra’s slaying the dragon Vṛtra (*RV I, 32*); neither do comparativists, as far as I know, mention any relation, albeit hypothetical.

The *RV* hymn I, 32 is one of many about Indra and his heroic deeds and is devoted wholly to Indra’s fighting and slaying Vṛtra. The most relevant stanza is 7: *vṛṣṇó vādhrīḥ pratimānam búbhūṣan purutrá vṛtró aśayad v́yastah*. The more recent translations I have seen by W O’ Flaherty (1975: 75; 1981: 150) and by J Puhvel (1989: 52) are misleading in presenting the contrast between a “steer” (ie Vṛtra, a castrated young ox) and a “mighty bull” (ie Indra). I don’t see why *vadhri* should be taken only as a metaphor; in *RV X, 69, 10* the attestation of *vadhryaśvāḥ* ‘the gelded horse’ or ‘one whose horse is gelded’ indicates that *vadhri* does not on its own automatically mean a castrated animal. A more correct translation would read, “Emasculated, Vṛtra lay with limbs dissevered/scattered in many places – he who strove to be the equal of the mighty one”. In other *RV* hymns we read that Vṛtra was struck in his ‘vital part’ (= *márma*: I, 16, 6; III, 32, 4; etc) and then hacked to pieces (I, 16, 12; VIII, 6, 13). Vṛtra had genitals since there was a brood of Vṛtras and he was the eldest or foremost. So he got castrated in the course of fighting: his genitals were among the other parts of his body strewn here and there. And the next stanza (8) says that these scattered parts got submerged in billowing waters. When, moreover, we learn that Indra himself gets emasculated by a curse from sage Gautama after he, in the sage’s form, went to bed with his wife Ahalyā (*Ra, I, 47-8*, developing the motif from *ŚB III, 3, 4, 18 & XII, 7, 1, 10ff*), then we can with good reason suspect that the castration of Ouranos may well be an inherited motif reshaped and retold by Hesiod, perhaps under NE influences.

There is another point of resemblance in this incident that should be taken into account. Stanza 4 of the *RV* hymn says that when Indra killed the dragon “at that moment [he, Indra] brought forth the Sun, Heaven and Dawn”; in *RV I, 51, 4* again at the killing of Vṛtra Indra raises the Sun in the sky. Here then we see cosmogonic action beyond the release of the imprisoned waters. But the cosmogony here is quite different from the theogonic results of Ouranos’s

12 See Penglase (1997: 185-6) for full Bibliography.

castration. Here the Sun, Heaven, Dawn and Waters already exist and are covered up or wholly encompassed by Vṛtra who is himself encompassed by darkness (RV X, 113, 6); Indra merely brings them forth again. The Hesiodic narrative has different proliferations: Ouranos disappears completely from the scene thereafter and Kronos (born wily, most terrible and hating his father) ascends the heavenly throne; from the blood of Ouranos on earth emerge the Erinyes (the terrible instruments of divine punishment), giants and nymphs, while in the sea rises the goddess of beauty and love, Aphrodite. These complications seem to relate to the Vedic sacrifice of Puruṣa (=primordial Man) by the gods and its cosmogonic result (RV X, 90); in the Scandinavian myth the gods Odin, Vili and Ve dismember the giant Ymir (z V *Yama*) again with cosmogonic results; castration is not involved in either – nor in the cosmogonic dismemberment of Tiamat by Marduk in the Mesopotamian *Epic of Creation* (MM 256-7). Even stranger seems the Hurrian/Hittite myth where Kumarbi, skygod Anu's son, bites off and swallows his father's genitals, becomes pregnant (!) and begets three gods, one of them being the Weathergod who overthrows in turn Kumarbi. I suspect the Greek and NE myths are both developments of the PIE motifs as preserved in the Vedic tradition. The Hittites after all were IE and must have brought with them some inherited material, even though this underwent, much more than the Greek IE heritage, "heavy substratal exposure and adstratal influence ... vertical diffusion from the local past and lateral diffusion from the contemporary vicinity", as Puhvel says of the Greeks (1989: 22). The Kassites again were IE or had absorbed strong IE influences since many of their names and some of their gods were of IndoAryan descent¹³ : under their rule in Babylonia, especially under Agum II (early 16th century), there was "a surge of literary invention, collection and recording" (MM 47, 229; Heidel 1965: 13-4; Roux 1992: 251).

7) Many other motifs and themes common to the mythologies of archaic Greece and Vedic India could be mentioned but most of them have been indicated and discussed by other scholars (eg Keith, Bhattacharji, Arora, Puhvel et al). In this study I have examined aspects that have not been indicated or adequately treated so far and especially aspects of literature, religion and magic (sections III, IV, V and VII). No doubt there are others.

VIII) Conclusions

One first conclusion concerns the archaic Greek culture itself. It has a distinct strand of IE tradition. This would not have been pure since the Greeks must have assimilated other elements from peoples they met on their way to the shores of the Aegean. A second strand is the indigenous culture the immigrants met when they arrived in Greece: this too would have been composite, consisting of the mainland culture, the Minoan on Crete and the Cycladic (and other islands of the Aegean). A fourth strand, also composite, came from the Near East. These four got interwoven and produced the miracle of classical Greece. Puhvel thought the Greek tradition was not a conservative repository of IE heritage (1989: 22). This is true, of course, but only if one compares the Greek culture with the Vedic; otherwise the Greeks seem to have preserved much more than any other European tradition and the Anatolian one. The fact that the Greek language is *centum* while Vedic is *satam* (or *satəm*) suffices to show that the Greeks and the IndoAryans were not close companions for any length of time to the exclusion of the other IE branches (ie Celts and Slavs, for example). Therefore the Greek correspondences or parallels with Vedic elements or

¹³ Leaving out uncertain or disputed names, we find some names, or an element in compound names, that are indubitably Indo-Aryan: -indaś < S *Indra* ; -bugaś < S *Bhaga* ; -Maruttaś < S *Marutas* (plural); -Śurīaś < S *Sūrya* ; etc. All are taken from J A Brinkman's chronology and lists of Kings in A L Oppenheim (1977: 338).

practices cannot be coincidental (though some of them *may* be due to independent development): they derive from a common source, the PIE culture.

Another motif common to NE mythologies, Greek theogony and the Veda, is the incestuous relationship of many deities. In the peoples of the Near East this relationship is also a fact of life, at least among royal families. This is not so in the archaic Greek and Vedic cultures: incest is condemned in both, as is evident in the Oedipus legend (mother-son relation) and the Yama-Yami dialogue in *RV* X, 10 (sister wants to mate with brother but he resists). The explanation I would offer is that the Vedic culture knew that the gods were not real and did not exist as autogenous and autonomous entities. Karel Werner argued convincingly that the *Ṛgveda* contains two concurrent beliefs: one in polytheism with many individual gods and one in monotheism (1989). Indeed the Creation Hymn *RV* X, 129 presents a most profound view of the primal Unity as the origin of all divine, cosmic and human phenomena. Scholars somewhat grudgingly conceded to the ancient Indian seers this view placing it as a late development of Vedic speculative thought (eg Keith, II, 446). Werner (acknowledging the work of R Otto and others) showed that this was not so, but that monotheism is in the *RV* as old as polytheism. He should have utilized at least four more hymns. Two, which may be late (I, 164, 6 and X, 114, 5), say that poets speak of It, being One, in many ways – naming It Agni, Yama, Indra etc. The other two belong to the Family Books and are probably very early: hymn VIII, 58, 2 says “It being One has variously (*vi*) become this All (and Everything)”; then, the refrain of III, 55 states plainly “Single is the great god-power (*asuratva*) of the gods.” Since the deities were representations of cosmic forces and manifestations of the One, then obviously it would not matter if they united and generated other deities just as cosmic forces mingle and generate new phenomena. In social life incest was not practised in ancient India, nor among the other IE branches.

The idea of a primordial Unity as the originative principle of all cosmic phenomena is absent in the Greek (and other IE) and NE mythologies, though in Greece some three centuries of philosophical enquiry into the nature of things led eventually to formulations of that Unity (by Anaximander¹⁴, Melissos of Samos and Plato). The Greeks retained the incestuous relationships among the gods but, probably because of their IE heritage, not in their ordinary life. So did the IndoAryans. The odd thing about the Greeks is that while their Philosophy found that primordial Unity, their religion continued with its polytheism. Of course, the same thing prevailed much earlier in ancient India. Obviously the One Primal Source of all, being Itself unmanifest, cannot so readily become an object of worship as other deities.

The second conclusion concerns the Vedic culture. Without it much in the ancient European cultures would have remained unconnected and unexplained – both in language and in religion or mythology. The legend of Greek Dioskouroi and Lithouanian Dievo Sunelai would not have been connected if it had not been for the Vedic Aśvins. The practice of sacrificial substitute (above VI, 5), to mention an example from religion, would be considered (as Burkert takes it in 1992: 73-5) a result of borrowing or diffusion from the Near East to Greece and thence to Rome. Philologists in the West, and no doubt many in India who follow western trends, place almost all IE branches on the same level in linguistic and broader cultural considerations. Thus O’Flaherty refers to “Indo-European attitudes” and “Indo-European cultures” in her examination of the IE myth of twins and horse-deities and begins with a discussion of the Celtic material and then the Vedic – and first the ritual of the horse-human copulation and then the myths (1980: 151ff); at least Puhvel starts his comparative study with the Vedic tradition (1989). It is understandable that all cultures should be

14 Through inadvertence I had written here Parmenides and this was printed in ABORI LXXXII, p 34. Parmenides’s One Being has limits and is presented as a sphere, a concept quite different from the Unlimited *apeiron* of Anaximander and Melissos. The error is hereby corrected.

studied with the same zeal but not that all should be accorded the same status or importance. Why? First of all, it is obvious that some preserve only a very small amount of inherited forms while others have a very rich inheritance and the Vedic tradition seems to be the wealthiest of them all. Then the Vedic heritage, even by the most niggardly dating at c 1000 BC, is older by at least 300 years than the earliest Greek records (barring the scanty Mycenaean ones). There is no disagreement among scholars that “Vedic is a language which *in most respects* is more archaic and less altered from original Indo-European *than any other member of the family*” (Burrow 1973: 34, emphasis added). Here we can add some philological considerations. Greek has *huios* for ‘son’ (z S *sūnu*, Gmc *sun-*, Sl *synŭ*, Tocharian A/B *se/soy*, Av *humu*) and *hus/sus* for ‘sow (she-swine)’ (z S *sū-kara*, Gmc *su-/gu-*, L *sūs*, Av *hū*). Curiously, in Greek (and in the other IE languages) the two stems stand isolated without a root or other verb- and noun-cognates. Only Sanskrit provides a root (common for both ‘son’ and ‘sow’) with the dhātu \sqrt{su} (>*sūte*) ‘beget’ and cognates both in nouns and verb-formations. Again Gk *thugatēr* ‘daughter’ stands rootless and isolated, as do its cognates in the other IE languages (Av *dugədar*, Gmc *tochter*, Lth *duktē*, etc); there are secondary, later formations eg Gk *thugatrion*, but only S *duhitṛ* shows a connection with \sqrt{duh} ‘milk, derive’ and other cognates. We observe the same situation with Gk *mētēr* ‘mother’ (z L *mater*, Gmc *muoter*, etc) or *mus* ‘mouse’ (L *mūs* Gmc *mūs/maus*, etc): here too only Sanskrit has \sqrt{mus} ‘steal’ and other primary nominals and verbal formations. Another, somewhat different consideration concerns the IE names for ‘sun’: all branches have cognates like S *sūrya*, Gk *hēlios*, L *sol*, Lth *sáule* etc, all masculine, except the Gmc *sun-* (Old English *sunne* OHG *sunna*) which is feminine; yet here again Sanskrit has fem *sūryā* ‘sunmaiden’ and thus provides a probable explanation for the difference. It is strange that, given all these simple facts, the Vedic culture is not given the higher status it deserves and it is a pity sanskritists acquiesce in this situation.¹⁵

An examination of archaic Greek cosmogonic material would reveal further parallels in the Vedic texts. Neither in the Mycenaean nor in the archaic Greek period do we find the concept of the Unity that is the originative principle of all creation. This is true, of course, of all other IE and NE mythologies – except the Judaic religion; even in Egypt, Atum (=the Complete One), who ‘evolves’ or ‘becomes’ (=kheper) out of the primeval Water *Nun*, is only a secondary power, having something prior to him. It is therefore correct to see in all these mythologies “matter created from the action of heat on water” and also “a multi-layered dualism that pervades Indo-European myth and religion” (Stone 1997: 79). However, it is misleading to ascribe this view (as Stone does on the same page¹⁶) to the Vedic tradition as well, which, more clearly than any other ancient document, asserts the primordial Unity as the First Principle of all cosmogony. Such an examination would, however, require a separate study.

The evidence of parallels between archaic Greece and India leads to a third conclusion – that there are connections between the Vedic tradition and NE cultures. In the course of our discussion

¹⁵ Some notable exceptions have argued for the seniority and importance of Sanskrit and the Vedic culture: eg L Dhar *The Home of the Aryans* 1930, Imperial Book Depot, Delhi; S S Misra *The Aryan Problem* 1992, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi; et al. I disregard here shrill Indian publications that rely on nationalist feeling rather than scholarly method and evidence.

¹⁶ Puhvel states the situation with care, making the right distinction: “Fire and ice/water were both present in Norse cosmology and eschatology alike. ‘Fire in water’ is a theme that recurs in Indo-Iranian, Irish and Roman lore, in a complex mythologem of clear Indo-European significance” (1989: 277).

we saw many similarities both in mythological motifs and ritual practices.¹⁷ Many of them could perhaps be ascribed to independent coincidental growth, arising from observation of natural phenomena like sunrise, rain, storm and lightning, the night-sky, the repetition of seasons and so on. Such may be, to take Egyptian mythology, the separation of Earth and Sky by Shu, god of Air and Light who corresponds to Indra in his aerial and solar aspects. That Hathor should be thought of in terms of a divine Cow of plenty, while the all-nourishing Cow of heaven is a very common motif in the Veda, would also fall in the same category; the same can be said of Earth appearing in the midst of Waters, a concept shared by both the Egyptian and Vedic people. This, however, cannot be said of the idea that the souls of heroes or noblemen after death go to heaven and join the sun or stars: this concept could not have arisen from observation, nor the concept of “the cosmic egg” in the Vedic lore (*mārta-aṇḍa* ‘sprung from the dead egg’ in *RV* X, 72, 8; *hiraṇ yagarbha* ‘golden germ’ in X, 121, 1; division of egg in *Ch Up* III, 19, 1-4) and in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, spell 85 (also *Coffin Texts*, spell 223: for both, see Faulkner). However this matter also would require a separate study.

¹⁷ Many a scholar (eg West 1978: 175-6, with bibliography) thinks that Indic legends like the 4 Yugas (*Manusmṛti* I, 81-6) and many others have a NE origin. M Eliade believes that the conception of seven or nine heavens found in Buddhism and earlier Brāhmanism “probably represents the influence of Babylonian cosmology” (1972: 406) but adduces no evidence for this and I can’t help wondering why the statement is made at all. Arora, again, thinks that NE legends influenced Vedic texts (1981: 183-4) and that Greek legends influenced the Indian epics and fables (177-82). The latter case is very probable if we take into account the settlement of Greeks into the northwestern regions of India after Alexander. The former case can be maintained only if we accept the “Aryan-immigration” theory and all it entails, a theory that has no basis whatever in fact (see n 5, above).

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