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SOME ASPECTS OF VEDIC EXEGESIS

Henry Thomas Colebrooke is said to have inaugurated what may be called the modern period of Vedic philology through his essay, *On the Vedas, or Sacred Writings of the Hindus*, published in 1805 [1]. In that essay, Colebrooke has, among other things, made the following points: (a) The Vedas are far too extensive to be translated in entirety; (b) the ancient dialect in which they are written is exceedingly difficult and obscure; and (c) the contents of the Vedas are such as would render their translation hardly rewarding either to the reader or to the translator. Fortunately for us, these observations of Colebrooke's did not act as a caveat against further Vedic study and research. On the contrary, some years later, that is, in 1846, Roth asserted — and his assertion has proved prophetic — that the Veda offered a very rich and fertile field for research [2].

It had no doubt been realised, even at an early stage, that the *Rgveda* (*RV*) was truly a « book bound with seven seals ». But the scholarly efforts towards its proper understanding by no means waned on that account, and various approaches to its study were proposed and tried. Definitive solutions to the different questions involved in that study cannot, of course, be reasonably claimed to have been found, but one at least became acutely aware of those questions.

In this paper, an attempt has been made at a rethinking and restatement of three such questions which have acquired a sort of topical interest in recent years.

The first question pertains to the extent of the applicability of Pāṇini's grammar to Vedic exegesis. Pāṇini (P.) may be said to have dealt with the special features of Vedic in a little over 200 rules scat-

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1. As. Res. 8, pp. 369-476.
2. *Zur Litteratur und Geschichte des Weda*, Stuttgart, 1846.

tered through the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (*A.*). Two extreme views have been put
forth on the subject of the applicability of those rules to Vedic exegesis.
On the one hand it has been averred that P.'s Vedic rules are quite
inadequate in so far as they do not cover all the Vedic facts [3]. They also
betray a lack of principle as regards the facts noted. Further, the termi-
nology used by P. in his treatment of Vedic is inconsistent. Reference
is also made to the theoretical lacunae in the *A.* such as the ignoring
of the category of subject and the unconcern over the sentence as also
to the misleading character of the *Dhātupāṭha*. As against this, P.'s
treatment of Vedic grammar is claimed to be quite systematic and to
have been based on an intimate knowledge of the Vedic texts, particu-
larly the Vedic *Saṁhitās* [4]. In connection with his editions of the *Katha-
Saṁhitā* and the *Maitrāyaṇī-Saṁhitā*, Leopold von Schroeder has strongly
vindicated P.'s accuracy in the Vedic domain. He has specially admired
the direct and definite statements of the ancient Indian linguisticians
including P. about the occurrence of certain roots or word-forms [5].
P.'s grammar helps the ascertainment of the exact formation of a word.
His information is well founded, and not arbitrary. His Vedic rules
enlighten many a difficult and ambiguous passage in the *RV*. P. is thus
a dependable — nay, an indispensable — guide in the matter of Vedic
interpretaion. As a corollary to this, it is asserted that Vedic interpre-
tation, in order that it should be acceptable, must be faithful to P.'s
Vedic rules.

One has, however, to concede that the Vedic portion of P.'s gram-
mar has various glaring limitations and deficiencies. P.'s use of termi-
nology is not very precise, as can be seen from a critical study of such
terms as *nigama, chandas*, etc. The term *mantra* is said to denote,
according to P., a *ṛk* or a *yajus* as opposed to a *brāhmaṇa*, but this is
not borne out by P. III, 1, 35 ff. It is also generally seen that P. is more
interested in the morphology of a word than in its sense. Many of his
rules, accordingly, prove to be rather rigid so far as the interpretation
of a word in any particular context is concerned. Further, there is
reason to believe that P. either did not know or, having known, ignored
some Vedic texts which we know today. Otherwise he would have
referred to the fact that the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* shows only two
accents. Actually he does not seem to be aware that there are several
other systems of accentuation than the one described by him. His use
even of the material with which he seems to have been familiar is by
no means exhaustive nor entirely free from error. For instance, his
treatment of prolation (*pluti*) in the context of ritual is shown to be

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3. Cf. for instance: WHITNEY, *The Veda in Pāṇini*, GSAI 7, pp. 243-54; *Sanskrit
Grammar*, eighth issue, 1955; KEITH, *Pāṇini and the Veda*, IC 2, pp. 735-48.
    4. Cf. for instance: THIEME, *Pāṇini and the Veda*, Allahabad, 1935; BHAWE, *Pā-
ṇini's rules and Vedic interpretation*, in « S. K. Chatterji Fel. Vol. », 1955, pp. 237-49.
    5. L. VON SCHROEDER, *Das Kāṭhaka*, ZDMG 49, pp. 145-71.

only illustrative and not exhaustive. One also wonders whether, in many cases, P. has not allowed his passion for — indeed, obsession with — brevity to override the demands of clarity and accuracy. P. has not noted many Vedic formations though they are really peculiar. His work is obviously eclectic and cannot claim universal applicability.

Indeed, it would appear that Vedic was treated in the *A.* only secondarily[6]. The *chandas* and the *bhāṣā* cannot be said to have been given equal weight. It has been rightly pointed out that P.'s system is essentially dictated by the structure of classical Sanskrit and that the Vedic peculiarities are derived by patch-up rules added to the rules established for and motivated by classical Sanskrit. Such treatment of Vedic as an extension of classical Sanskrit has resulted in the Vedic grammar having become deficient. For instance, the 10 *lakāras* (tense-mood categories) may constitute an efficient device for presenting the verb-system of classical Sanskrit, but, as has been rightly pointed out, they can by no means adequately represent the cross-classification of tense and mood in Vedic. The Vedic analyses in the *A.* are often loose and have accordingly tended to render P.'s Vedic rules mostly generalizations. As for the purpose of P.'s Vedic rules, it is suggested that they are meant either for indicating the *ārṣa* forms which have to be avoided in the standard language[7] or for emphasizing that those forms are not to be regarded as incorrect since they are derivable from the rules of grammar[8]. Actually, however, some scholars have gone even to the extent of saying that, if all the specifically Vedic rules were erased from the *A.*, one could scarcely tell from the structure of what would remain that it had ever contained them[9]. Incidentally, it is not without significance that the post-Pāṇini grammars do not generally deal with Vedic.

The situation being as described above, one has to admit that absolute and exclusive validity cannot be claimed for P.'s Vedic rules so far as the interpretation of the *RV* is concerned. They may be used as an aid — and sometimes as a corroborative authority — for Vedic interpretation, but they should on no account be allowed to control or orient Vedic interpretation. It is what Oldenberg calls the tenor of any particular context which should generally serve as the deciding factor, even against P.'s rules. Let us consider a couple of Ṛgvedic passages[10]. *RV* I.25.7 reads: *vedā yo vīnāṁ padam antarikṣeṇa patatām / veda nāvaḥ samudriyaḥ.* Varuṇa, the administrator of the cosmic law Ṛta, is here said to be cognizant even of the commonly imperceptible phenomena.

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6. P. KIPARSKY, *Pāṇini and Vedic*, in « Pāṇini as a Variationist », Poona, 1979, pp. 56-75.

7. S. Lévi, *Des préverbes chez Pāṇini*, MSL 14, pp. 276-78.

8. THIEME, *op. cit.*

9. KIPARSKY, *op. cit.*

10. The two Ṛgvedic passages considered here have been already dealt with by G. V. DEVASTHALI — of course, with quite a different conclusion being arrived at — in *Pāṇini and Ṛgvedic exegesis*, ABORI 48-49, pp. 75-81.

The word *nāvaḥ* in the third pāda of this verse can either be feminine accusative plural or feminine genitive singular. The tenor of the context, however, requires that *nāvaḥ* should conform to the word *vīnām* in the first pāda; that is so say, it shuold be understood as a genitive like *vīnām*. This is confirmed by P.'s rule of accent VI.1.68. So we shall be justified in interpreting *nāvaḥ* not as accusative plural being the object of *veda* (« he knows the boats ») but as genitive singular to be construed with *padam* which has to be understood as being repeated here from the second pāda and which is the proper object also of the second *veda* (« he knows the track of the boat »). The word *samudriyaḥ* in the third pāda can be parsed as feminine accusative plural of *samudrī* qualifying the feminine accusative plural *nāvaḥ* (« he knows the seafaring boats »); but, as suggested above, this is unacceptable. *Samudriyaḥ* may be alternatively understood as masculine nominative singular, being the subject of the second *veda* (« [Varuṇa] the sea-dweller knows... »). P.'s accent rules would seem to support this explanation. It may also be argued that the mention of Varuṇa as *samudriya* (seadwelling) has some relevance in the context of boats. I am, however, inclined to think that there is no special propriety in stating that the god who dwells in the sea knows the track of the boat. Besides, *samudriyaḥ* will have to be syntactically connected also with the first two pādas (*yaḥ* [*samudriyaḥ*] *vīnām padam veda* [*saḥ*] *samudriyaḥ nāvaḥ padam veda*); and this is certainly not appropriate. As against this, the tenor of the verse requires that *samudriyaḥ* should conform to the adjectival genitive phrase *antarikṣeṇa patatām* which qualifies *vīnām*. In other words, *samudriyaḥ* also has to be understood, even regardless of P.'s rule (IV.4.118), as a feminine genitive singular of *samudrī*, qualifying *nāvaḥ*. One can properly speak of *padam* « track » only with reference to something which is in motion, namely, a boat sailing across the sea (*samudriyaḥ nāvaḥ padam*, rather than the static *nāvaḥ padam*). The verse may then be translated: « Who knows the track of the birds flying through the midregion — (he) knows (the track) of the boat sailing across the sea ».

ṚV II.39.4 reads: *nāve 'va naḥ pārayataṁ yuge 'va nabhye 'va na upadhī 'va pradhī 'va / śvāne 'va no ariṣaṇyā tanūnāṁ khṛgale 'va visrasaḥ pātam asmān.* It is a prayer to Aśvins for rescue from dilapidation. Here, according to the accent rule of P., the word *nāvā* in the first pāda will have to be taken as instrumental singular (« Do you two bring us across as with a boat »). But the other nouns joined to *iva* in this verse, like *yugā, nabhyā, upadhī,* etc., are all nominative dual forms and are obviously to be understood as the *upamānas* of Aśvinā (understood). Naturally, therefore, *nāvā* too has to be made to conform to the general pattern and to be interpreted, even against P.'s rules, as nominative dual. Aśvins are not implored to use any boat to help the supplicants cross beyond, but they are implored themselves to act as two boats as it were. If it is argued that an appeal is made to Aśvins to

rescue the supplicants by means of a boat in the same way as they are reputed to have rescued Bhujyu by means of *arāvā*, then the word *iva* would be out of place. To regard Aśvins themselves as two boats is certainly a more apt imagery. Incidentally, Sāyaṇa also takes *nāvā* as nominative dual.

Two other linguistic factors which have a bearing on Vedic exegesis may be briefly touched upon in the present context. In connection with the interpretation of the Veda, etymology too should not be given undue weightage. Like P.'s grammar, it is a good servant but a bad master. Etymology often tends to be an isolated activity; it is divorced from — and may even contradict — usage. It may help the understanding of the approximately original meaning of a word, but it has to be realised that between the original meaning of a word and its meaning in some later context, there occur many vicissitudes of life and thought which vitally influence the semantic development of that word. Similarly, one has to be exceedingly wary of accepting the validity of etymology for the comprehension of the Vedic mythology. The etymology of the name of a Vedic god, even if correct — and one cannot be too sure of its correctness —, is mythologically unhelpful, because the meaning which it furnishes is so general that it may designate a number of different things and consequently provide no clue to the precise individual character of the god in question. And, further, by sticking rigidly to a particular meaning provided by etymology, shall we not be ignoring the peculiar polysemantism (Vieldeutigkeit) which constitutes one of the distinguishing features of the magico-ritual vocabulary of the Veda?

Now the other factor. It is suggested that the Vedic texts, including the family-books of the *RV*, bear evidence of a Dravidian substratum influence [11]. Dravidian, it is claimed, has influenced not only the phonology and vocabulary of Vedic but also its sentence-structure. I think that this is an exaggerated view. In this connection, a reference is often made to the retroflexion in the *RV* having originated on account of Dravidian contacts. It is, however, rightly pointed out [12] that in the *RV* we have evidence for the contacts, conflict, and confrontations of the Aryans with the non-Aryans but that there is no evidence for convergence with them. The Aryan speech at that time could not have been phonologically affected by any foreign speech. It is further pointed out that the origin of retroflexion in Sanskrit lies not so much in the Aryans' borrowing this trait from the Dravidians in the early times as in the Dravidians' adapting the Aryan speech to their native phonology. There is also the view [13] that spontaneous cerebralization has taken

11. F. B. J. Kuiper, *The genesis of a linguistic area*, IIJ 10, pp. 81-102; M. B. Emeneau, *The Indian linguistic area revisited*, in « Contact and Convergence in South Asian Languages », 1974.

12. Madhav M. Deshpande, *Genesis of Ṛgvedic retroflexion. A historical and sociolinguistic investigation*, in « Aryan and Non-Aryan in India », 1978, pp. 235-315.

13. T. Burrow, *Spontaneous cerebrals in Sanskrit*, BSOAS 34, pp. 538-59.

place in Sanskrit on quite a massive scale. There has occurred in Sanskrit a process of fission by which the original dentals of Indo-Iranian have in Indo-Aryan been partly replaced by cerebrals without the presence of any pre-disposing influence. It has been suggested that such fission of one sound into two took place early in Indo-Aryan, beginning in the Vedic age. According to this view the case of cerebrals being due to loan-words from Dravidian or some other non-IE sources does not stand. In some cases, where Dravidian explanation has been proposed previously, a more satisfactory explanation is now available from the IE side [14].

I should like to conclude this section regarding Vedic exegesis and grammar by raising a few fundamental issues. Grammar may have conduced to the standardization of Vedic to some extent, but are we justified in expecting the Rgvedic seer-poets to have always been grammatically conscious? Certainly, their religio-poetic fervour must have occasionally made them impervious to the rigid rules of grammar. Similarly it is not unlikely that the so-called metrical irregularities in the *RV* were actually intended to serve some deliberate expressive function. Indeed, prosodic license can in many cases be shown to enhance the poetic charm of a passage, as, for instance, in *RV* V.59.2 where it helps to delineate beautifully the rocking movement of the ship [14a]. One must also fully appreciate the importance of the metaphorical transfer in a language and not concern oneself only with the primary sense as Yāska and Pāṇini seem to have done. And, finally, is it not the general experience that, for a proper understanding of the *RV*, an approach to it oriented by the mere knowledge of the language, however profound and grammatically precise, does not suffice? What is basically needed is an insight into what may be called the mystique of the Rgvedic seers. Indeed, it is even suggested that an extensive study of the magicoreligious traditions of the different parts of the world would alone bring about a greater appreciation of the *RV*.

The second question relates to the *RV* and what is called — not very happily — « solemn » ritual [15]. How may one characterise the *RV-Saṁhitā*? Is it the result of poetic creativity — a lyrical anthology pure and simple? Or is it a product of priestly activity dictated by the needs of the ritual — a liturgical collection from the very beginning? Some scholars have described it as a collection of the aristocratic Aryan cult. It is averred that the *RV* is not a spontaneous and naive expression of a naturalistic religion as it has been usually assumed to be, but a product of highly learned and sophisticated class of ritual priests. As against this, it is urged that the *RV* is an outcome of true religious fervour. There is also the view that the *RV* can be best understood if

14. THIEME, *The Sanskrit language*, JBRS 58, pp. 197-223.
14a. *Ibid.*
15. Cf. J. GONDA, *Hymns of the Rgveda not employed in Solemn Ritual*, 1978.

approached rather as a linguistic fact, with emphasis on literary and lieralistic values, than as a sociological document.

At the very outset, it may be conceded that purely poetical or aesthetic activity must have been alien to the Vedic times. Anthropologically, all literature or art produced in a milieu similar to that of the Veda is known to have been essentially functional in character. The poetic form or the « rhythm » of the Ṛgvedic *mantras* is not so much an aesthetic feature as a magico-religious necessity. It has also been pointed out that the figures of speech or *alaṁkāras* in the *RV* are intended primarily for rendering the *mantras* magically perfect and efficacious (*alam*) and not as mere poetic embellishments. Similarly, it would not be correct entirely to discountenance the significance of the *RV* as a content-oriented culture-historical document and to approach it merely as a linguistic fact.

At the same time, the ritual as is reflected in the *Brāhmaṇas* and particularly the *Śrautasūtras* could never have been the main purpose of the *RV*, for the simple reason that it was a post-Ṛgvedic development. That the *RV-Saṁhitā* definitely did not originate as a liturgical collection is clear from its very structure and arrangement. The main factor which has governed the *Saṁhitīkaraṇa* — except in respect of the ninth *maṇḍala* — is authorship, the other factors being the *devatā* and the length of a hymn. Even the ninth *maṇḍala*, which consists exclusively of the hymns relating to Soma, cannot be said to reflect the later Soma-sacrifice. The subsequent ritual application of a Ṛgvedic *mantra* or hymn by no means implies its ritual origin or character. But, though mostly non-ritualistic in origin and character, the *RV* is nonetheless essentially religious in origin and character. The fundamental distinction between the Ṛgvedic religion and the solemn Vedic ritual must never be lost sight of. At one stage in the history of Vedic philology it used to be asserted that the Ṛgvedic mythology and the Vedic ritual were inseparable and that the former could not be adequately studied without constant reference to the latter. But the Ṛgvedic mythology can be shown to have hardly any relation to the « solemn » ritual.

So far as I have been able to see, the idea that the Vedas have originated for the sole purpose of ritual is rather late and has been expressly set forth, for the first time, in the *Vedāṅga-Jyotiṣa* (*vedā hi yajñārtham abhipravṛttāḥ*). The Mīmāṁsā dictum, *āmnāyasya kriyārthatvād ānarthakyam atadarthānām*, is perhaps later, and the tradition that, before undertaking the study of any hymn of the *RV*, one must know the four features of that hymn, namely, the seer, the metre, the divinity, and the *viniyoga* or ritual application, is evidently later still. Once it was accepted that the main purpose of the Vedas, including the *RV*, was ritualistic, it naturally became generally incumbent to invent some *viniyoga* for every hymn of the *RV*. The view, *viniyojakaṁ brāhmaṇam* (« the *Brāhmaṇa* defines the ritual purpose of a Vedic text »), also came to be vigorously canvassed. It is, however, seen that the

viniyoga or the application of a hymn or a *mantra* in solemn ritual is rarely inherent in that hymn or *mantra*. Even an avowedly ritualistically oriented commentator like Sāyaṇa has not been able to assign *viniyoga* to each hymn or *mantra*. Very often he has to satisfy himself with such evasive remarks as *viniyogo laiṅgikaḥ* (« the ritual application is to be inferred from the indicatory marks ») or *gato viniyogaḥ* (« the ritualistic application has already been mentioned or it is traditionally well known », implying thereby that it need not be specifically mentioned again). All attempts — even the modern ones — to establish the applicability of the *mantras* to a specific ritual are nothing more than exercises in squaring the facts with an artificial tradition. Most of the *viniyogas* of Ṛgvedic *mantras*, whether in the *Śrauta* or the *Gṛhya* ritual, are forced ones. They do not show that the purport of the *mantras* has been taken into account. Some of them are based upon a mere similarity of words (*padasādṛśya*) as in the oft-quoted instance, « *dadhikrāvṇo akāriṣam iti agnīdhrīye dadhidrapsān prāśya* » (*Āśv SS*). Dadhikrāvan in the *RV* is actually the name of a horse and has nothing whatsoever to do with curds (*dadhi*) the consuming of which is prescribed in the *Āśv SS*. Then there is the similarity of letters or sound (*akṣaravarṇasādṛśya*) which has led to still stranger *viniyogas*. The *mantra*, *śaṁ no devīr abhiṣṭaye...*, which pertains to Āpaḥ, is prescribed to be employed in the worship of Śanaiścara (Saturn) in a *Gṛhya* rite (on account of the similarity between *śaṁ no* and *śanaiḥ*), the *mantra*, *ud budhyasva...*, in the worship of Budha (Mercury) in another *Gṛhya* rite, and the *mantra*, *bhadraṁ karṇebhiḥ śṛṇuyāma...*, in connection with the piercing of the ear of a child (*karṇavedha*). When no specific *viniyoga* could be thought of, even in a forced manner, there was prescribed, as a last resort, as it were, what may be called an omnibus *viniyoga*, e.g., *āśvine saṁpatsyamāne sūryo no 'deyād api sarvā dāśatayīr anubrūyāt* (*Āp SS*) or *sarvā ṛcaḥ sarvāṇi yajūṁṣi sarvāṇi sāmāni vācastome pāriplave śaṁsati* (introduction to Sāyaṇa's commentary).

The *Brāhmaṇas* themselves are fully aware of the fact that the sense of most of the *mantras* employed for ritualistic purposes does not in any way conform to the ritual action which those *mantras* are prescribed to accompany. This becomes clear from the *Brāhmaṇa*-reference to *rūpasamṛddhi*: *etad vai yajñasya samṛddhaṁ yad rūpasamṛddhaṁ yat karma kriyamāṇam ṛg abhivadati*. When the sense of the *mantra* conforms to the rite which is being performed in the accompaniment of that *mantra* — that rite becomes endowed with the perfection of form, it becomes richly efficacious. This statement would have no relevance if the applicability of a *mantra* to a specific rite, from the point of view of the sense of that *mantra*, were always evident. As against this concept of *rūpasamṛddhi*, there arose a school of ritualists who insisted that there was no necessity of the sense of a *mantra* conforming to the ritual action which it accompanied. For, they believed that the only

raison d'être for a *mantra* was its traditional *viniyoga* — the sense of the *mantra* mattered but little: *anarthakāḥ hi mantrāḥ*.

The post-Ṛgvedic period was characterised by an inordinate growth in the variety and complexity of ritual. This growing ritual needed *mantras* to accompany its many rites. So a new *mantra*-producing activity, as it were, came to be started. As can be gathered from the *Brāhmaṇas*, and particularly from the *Śrautasūtras*, this activity had several aspects. The old established *mantras* were revised to suit the new ritual. New *mantras* were extemporised and employed. That is why they are not traceable in any of the existing *Saṁhitās*. New *mantras* are also seen to have been made up of fragments — often contextually unrelated fragments — of old *mantras*. Some of these are included in the *Khila*. Then there were *mantras* composed in imitation of well-known old *mantras*. For instance, the *Maitrāyaṇī-Saṁhitā* (as also the *Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka*) contains eleven *mantras* which are obvious imitations of the famous Sāvitrī Gāyatrī in the *ṚV*, *tat savitur vareṇyaṁ bhargo devasya dhīmahi / dhiyo yo naḥ pra codayāt*. They are poor and often meaningless imitations and refer to later divinities like Nārāyaṇa, Gaṇapati, etc. (e.g. *ekadantāya vidmahe vakratuṇḍāya dhīmahi / tan no dantī pra codayāt; tat puruṣāya vidmahe mahādevāya dhīmahi / tan no rudraḥ pra codayāt*).

A major part of the *ṚV* is constituted of mythological legends, panegyrics, and prayers which are unconnected with the performance of any solemn ritual. The religious efficacy of the Ṛgvedic *mantras* lies in their very utterance; they do not need any elaborate ritual action either to vivify them or to render them effectual. The *mantras* produce sacred magic, and that, verily, is their main and only purpose. This sacred magic has to be distinguished from religion as it is generally understood. It may be broadly stated that magic, which is a very definite rung in that poor ladder which man has tried to climb up in his efforts to ascertain the unknowable [16], and which, incidentally, is closer to science than to religion, is a way of making people believe that they are going to get what they want, while religion is a system which persuades them that they ought to want what they get [17]. I have always thought that the true significance of the profuse use of the subjunctive mood in the *ṚV* is to be sought in this characteristic feature of the Ṛgvedic *mantra*. The subjunctive is less peremptory than the imperative but more so than the optative. The Ṛgvedic prayer which is often clothed in the subjunctive implies « compelling » « unignorable » appeal. It is expressive of *kratu* (that is, « will » which stands between wish and command) which, as implied in a *Brāhmaṇa*, is that mental activity which is invariably and immediately followed by its concrete physical result. The *mantras* of the *ṚV*, thus, are of non-ritual yet practical religious origin; they are

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16. J. W. HUTTON, *Caste in India*, 1946.
17. V. GORDON CHILDE, *History*, p. 37.

sacred in character in so far as they are found « suitable for entering into contact with the universe ».

The third question to which I now wish to turn briefly is the Ṛgvedic mythology and Indo-Europeanism [18]. The study of Sanskrit, particularly Vedic, in the West gave rise to the rapid development and consolidation of two disciplines, namely, comparative linguistics and comparative mythology. In the early years of this study, the Vedic mythology had come to be regarded rather as an aspect of the IE mythology than as an Indian mythology. In course of time, however, there followed the inevitable reaction to this extreme position. Strong exception came to be taken to what were called « international generalities » encouraged by comparative mythology. The essentially Indian character of the *RV* was emphasized, and attempts were made to interpret that Veda with the help of the post-Vedic Indian literature. It is not intended here to trace, at any length, the various vicissitudes in the fortunes of comparative mythology vis-a-vis the Vedic mythology. Attention may, however, be drawn to the fact that the discipline of comparative mythology has, in recent years, once again come into its own, thanks mainly to the prolific work of Dumézil. But this revival has proceeded along quite different lines. There is evident a clear shift of emphasis from lexical analogues to structural similarities, — from an atomistic approach to the Vedic mythology to a structuralist approach. It is not possible, within the limits of this paper, to subject to a critical analysis this fresh intrusion of Indo-Europeanism on the Ṛgvedic mythology. I shall, therefore, restrict myself to making a few general observations.

As has been suggested above, comparative linguistics, particularly the etymologies of the names of the Vedic gods, should not be made the starting point of any study of the Ṛgvedic mythology. Comparative mythology too has but limited scope in this regard. Indeed, the Ṛgvedic mythology is much farther removed from the IE mythology than the Vedic language from IE. One must also guard against mistaking « universal » concepts for IE concepts. Similarly, the importance of anthropological and ethnological factors in the formation and development of mythology should not be underestimated. The Dumézilian pattern of functional tripartition provides too narrow, too rigid, and too arbitrary a frame to contain all the variety and complexity of the Ṛgvedic mythology. Vedic mythology is by no means a static phenomenon. It is essentially an evolutionary mythology. Its character is determined, at different stages, by the vicissitudes in the life of the Vedic Aryans. So approached, the mythology as it emerges from the *RV* itself will be found to show only few, faint, and feeble IE elements. Compared to the mythologies of some other IE peoples, the development of some of the IE elements appears to have been arrested in the Vedic mythology (as in the case of Dyauḥ) while the nature of some others is seen to have undergone

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18. For greater details, see: Dandekar, *Vedic Mythological Tracts*, pp. 351-65.

a conspicuous change on account of the peculiar influences to which they had been exposed (as in the case of Aśvins).

The Vedic religion and mythology began to receive their first distinctive characterisation during the proto-Aryan period while the common ancestors of the Vedic Aryans, the Iranian Aryans, and the Anatolian Aryans had been living together presumably in the region of Balkh. The concept of Ṛta or cosmic order and the « binder » gods Varuṇa and Mitra, the simple Soma cult, and the peculiar fire cult are some of the principal exclusive features of the newly evolved Aryan religion. The migration from Balkh to Saptasindhu and the early settlements in Saptasindhu, which had been beset with many impedements (*vṛtrāṇi*), natural and human, gave rise to the mythology of *vṛtrahan* Indra, the human hero who was transformed into a war-god. This was the result of mythologisation of history. Understandably enough, the *ṚV*, a major part of which corresponds with the Aryan conquest and colonization, is dominated by the figure of Indra. Side by side with the hieratic religion centering round Varuṇa, Indra, Agni, and Soma, there existed several popular religious cults among the Vedic people. Similarly, in their new environments, the Vedic Aryans confronted some pre-Vedic non-Aryan religious cults which had been widely spread and deeply rooted and which they could neither ignore nor overwhelm. They accommodated these popular and non-Aryan cults into the framework of their own religion and mythology. This becomes evident, for instance, in the mythology relating to Viṣṇu and Rudra. The obviously artificial association of the popular gods with Indra, who, as it were, served as the philosopher's stone in respect of the hieratic elevation of those gods, the tendentious suppression or transformation of some of the original traits of the popular and non-Aryan religious ideologies, and the solarization of the originally non-solar divinities are some of the features of this process of hierarchisation of popular cults.

Poona.