

MYTHOLOGICAL AND RITUAL SYMBOLISM

**A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO
THE VEDIC AND TANTRIC AGNI**

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DIPAK BHATTACHARYA

With a Foreword by

Professor Govindagopal Mukhopadhyaya



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To the memory of my father

**LATE PROFESSOR
DURGAMOCHAN BHATTACHARYA**

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Note on diacritical marks

^ e.g. <i>pastyâsu</i>	indicates long circumflex
ñ e.g. <i>mahñm</i>	indicates nasalisation of the preceding vowel
ɿ and ʳ	indicate the same vowel.

Otherwise the usual marks have been used.

FOREWORD

The Ṛgveda, being the oldest literary production of the world and the foundation of Indian culture, has been the perennial source of study of all scholars, both in the East and the West even up to the present day. It is almost an impossible task to unravel the exact significance of the Ṛgveda, clothed as it is in a thick mythical and ritualistic garb, which can hardly be penetrated at such a distant date with all tradition lost and rituals almost obsolete. The first full-fledged interpreter in India, Sāyaṇa was also handicapped by this break of tradition though he constructed with his amazing genius and heroic efforts a plausible meaning of the verses. He, however, was himself not sure of his grounds and so was not confident of the interpretations he was putting forth as is evident from the numerous alternative meanings suggested by him at many places. This weakness of Sāyaṇa has been assailed by later interpreters, especially of the West, who lay more claim to infallibility as their interpretations are said to be put forth on the scientific basis of linguistic studies. But still we are no nearer the exact and original meaning, which eludes all intense intellectual analysis and intuitive suggestions. Baffling yet are the myths and rituals which surround the Vedic gods.

The present book is, therefore, a welcome venture to explore the myths and rituals related to Agni, one of the principal deities of the Ṛgveda, which "divinity has kept itself continuously important throughout the history of Brahminism", as rightly stated by the author. The author has both an open and a critical mind, which makes his study really commendable, though one may not agree with all his observations on the subject. He takes into account all interpretations put forth by Western scholars like Oldenberg, Macdonell, Hillebrandt, Bergaigne, Renou, Gonda, Lüders and others as well as those by Eastern scholars like Coomaraswamy, Sri Aurobindo, Dandekar, Agrawala, Kunhan Raja, Srimat Anirvan and others.

before coming to his own conclusion and as such his treatment of the subject is well laid on a very wide background. He also deals with the subject from the linguistic, mythological, philosophical as well as historical points of view, which make his study not only very scientific but also integral.

The book will surely arouse the interest of scholars anew in the field of Vedic studies and will also provide the lay reader with a mine of information regarding the innumerable viewpoints of different Vedic scholars about Agni. I hope this study of the birth of Agni will give birth to many more such studies by the young author and like his illustrious father, the late lamented Professor Durgamohan Bhattacharyya, he will also enrich the field of Vedic studies by similar original and momentous researches. His first book in this field, I am sure, will win wide acclaim and whoever chooses to go through this book will find it both rewarding as well as stimulating.

Govindagopal Mukhopadhyaya

Calcutta

Sri Panchami

7. 2. 84.

PREFACE

I have for some years been urged by a few well-wishers of mine to get this work, prepared between 1972 and 1975 as part of a Ph.D. thesis, published. The remaining part on the numeral four was taken out to make the work convenient for readers. This has resulted also in a few inconveniences for me. For, I have to state separately here that within the scope of what the title indicates the work also intends to trace the development of the idea of speech (*vāk*) till the end of the Saṃhitā period.

*

The late Dr. Hertha Krick's unpublished Ph.D. thesis (*Das Ritual der Feuergründung*, Vienna, 1975) on the Agnyādheya was not available to me when the manuscript was prepared. I could glance through it in 1982 when Professor J. C. Heesterman (Leiden) kindly gave me access to a copy in his possession. Although I consulted the Śrautakoṣas, the homogeneous presentation in Dr. Krick's comprehensive translation of all the material for the Agnyādheya would have been very useful for me.

H. P. Schmidt's *Bṛhaspati und Indra* is another important study which was not available to me till the manuscript was prepared. I could only add a few footnotes on Schmidt before the work was sent to press. A few relevant points are touched below.

Schmidt aims at showing the position of Indra, Bṛhaspati and the Aṅgirasas in the Vala myth and also interprets the myth. Indra is the 'lord of the sacrifice' (Opferherr), the 'king-priest' in an account of the ur-ritual where the Aṅgirasas are his associates. Bṛhaspati had originally no independent position in the myth; the term was originally an epithet of Indra conforming to the priestly character of Indra. *āṅgiras* = 'singer' also was originally an epithet of Indra. The priestly character of Indra is also supported by the occasional use of such terms

as *kavi*, *vipra* as epithets of Indra. Moreover certain late Vedic passages mention the king as Brāhmaṇa.

Early use of the term *bṛhaspāti* as an epithet cannot be doubted. But as Schmidt (93) himself shows it is used for many gods including Agni. And this is not a progressive phenomenon in the ṚV. For, in the ṚV Bṛhaspati is in the process of anthropomorphism and by the end of the Ṛgvedic period the process is complete. This means that by showing the original use of a term in a given context one does not explain the factors behind the anthropomorphism of the deity meant by the term. Since Indra is not primarily a priestly or wise divinity the use of *bṛhaspāti* as an epithet of Indra does not explain how Bṛhaspati was anthropomorphised as an independent, priestly and wise divinity within the ṚV and was so established in post-Vedic mythology.

āṅgiras as an epithet of Indra does not speak for a priestly character of Indra and less for Schmidt's (38) view that Indra should have belonged to the family of the Aṅgirasas. The observation is based on perfunctory analysis. Agni is 17 times called an Aṅgiras, 6 times *āṅgirastama*; Indra is perhaps never called an Aṅgiras and twice *āṅgirastama*. One may consult the Table of Aṅgirasas (68ff below), where the epithetic and appellative uses have been classified, for more facts and observations.

The priestly character of Indra cannot be substantiated even by the occasional use of terms like *kavi*, *vipra* (150ff) as epithets of Indra. Agni is sometimes called *vṛtrahán*, but that does not make him a warrior god. There are also quite a few modern publications (e.g. VVP. 36ff, 44ff; ERV on Agni etc.) which may be consulted for the primary use of such epithets.

Moreover the idea of 'king-priest' introduced by Schmidt is something new and not in tune with the established ideas about kingship in India. The integration of royal and priestly functions has not been noted as a feature of Indian history. The functions were separate even in the Indo-European antiquity (G. Dumézil, *L'idéologie tripartite des Indo-Européens*, Brussels, 1958 and several other works on the basic functions). So far as I know any reverse trend in India has not been noted.

Schmidt has produced no specific evidence in support of such an institution in India excepting the fact (158ff) that according to certain late Vedic passages the king is temporarily regarded as a Brāhmaṇa only during the performance of a few sacrifices by him. But king-priesthood is a social phenomenon *characterising* a few early as well as medieval states. Handy explanations of rituals cannot be arguments for such a social phenomenon where other evidences speak against it.

Now, although the specific evidences given by Schmidt for king-priesthood in the Ṛgveda do not serve the desired purpose, what the author has demonstrated is of no mean importance. A long descriptive account (139-214) gives one the impression that Indra is not infrequently portrayed in the ṚV with priestly activity. One cannot deny that Indra in the Vala myth carries the shadow of a king-priest.

But how are we to explain this fact? Neither Vedic or post-Vedic developments, nor other Indo-European cultures give evidence for the background of such a development. The Brahma-Kṣatriyas of the Purāṇas and early medieval Deccan are far removed in time and had a different origin (cf. D. Bhattacharya, Introduction, AVP. II). One has to look for contemporary extra-Vedic sources. It is difficult here to exclude the possibility of Harappan connections which could have been responsible for a basic myth with a king-priest. Since the Harappan legends are still undeciphered this cannot be proved. But in the absence of any explanation of the noted fact, Harappan influence has to be regarded as a possible hypothesis (cf. 56ff *infra*).

As regards the general significance of the myth of the release of cows, Schmidt's interpretation of it as the ur-ritual also is difficult to accept. The Ṛgvedic poet does not describe it as the first sacrifice. Moreover, the concept of the first sacrifice itself is of necessity late. For, myths come primarily as explanations of origin of things and rituals grow parallelly as micro-cosmic dramas of the mythological events. Consequently the concept of the ur-ritual has to be preceded by considerable growth of ritualism and cannot be as old as early myths (182ff

below). Schmidt's emphasis on the original use of terms like *bṛhaspati*, *āṅgiras* etc. is not compatible with his comprehension of the Vala myth as the ur-ritual.

The late origin of the concept of the ur-ritual is also borne out by facts. The idea is first found in ṚV. X. 90. After this we find reference to such rituals in the later Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas etc. Hence it is difficult to believe that the idea of ur-ritual could crystallise and give birth to such an important myth in the early stages of the ṚV as Schmidt has proposed.

*

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to a few of my teachers : Professor Biswanath Banerjee (Visva Bharati) who supervised the original thesis, Professor Bibhutibhushan Nyayacharya (Varanaseya Sanskrit Visvavidyalaya) who kindly helped me in understanding some difficult problems of the Tantric Agnijanana and Professor Govindagopal Mukhopadhyaya (Burdwan University) who kindly agreed to write the Foreword.

My wife is largely responsible for preparing the indexes and she also constantly helped me in checking the final manuscript. I must make mention here also of the help I received from my sister-in-law Manju and my brother Dilip. Still a few printing errors could not be avoided partly because of mechanical hazards and partly because of the distance between Santiniketan and the place of printing and the fact that I could attend the press only during the weekend of Santiniketan.

I also thank Mr. Shyamapada Bhattacharya of the Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar for his interest in the work.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. Scope of study

All the myths and rituals dealt with in the present study on the growth of certain religious concepts and practices are, in a way, related to the Indian divinity of fire, namely Agni. The reason behind keeping the discussion centred on concepts and practices relating to Agni is not convenience but the fact that in spite of the changes that have taken place in the world of the gods of India from the age of the Vedas to the end of the medieval age, this divinity has kept itself continuously important throughout the history of Brahminism.

Within the said scope of discussion it has been possible to take up only inter-linked ideas and practices. And efforts have been made to proceed keeping the development of religion oriented philosophical thought in India as a whole in the perspective.

The first chapter deals with the main myths of Agni and their offshoots in the Ṛgveda and the Atharvaveda. The early Vedic development reaches its culmination in the tenth Maṇḍala of the Ṛgveda. Also some hymns of the Atharvaveda share the Ṛgvedic heritage. Two have been taken up from them.

This is one side of the early development—that concerning the theoretical portion expressed in the archaic mode of myth-language. As it will be discussed below, myth and theory of beings and becomings are not different in Vedic thought. But myth is never divorced from ritual practice in Indian religious thought. The compulsion of the use of every mantra in ritual¹ is not meant by this. This late belief seems to have risen only when the real integrity of mantra and yajña was lost sight of.² The integrity means that a myth—a theory, is put into practice in ritual—myth enacted. There are other opinions on the significance of the Vedic ritual and myth. These come up in

the last chapters dealing with the ritual representation of the birth of Agni in the Vedas and the Tantras.

2. Approach and method

(a) *Linguistic and ideawise analysis* : Some undesirable gaps are often found in the study of the Vedas. Till now linguistic studies and the study of ideas have developed almost as two separate branches of Vedic research. Again, in contrast to the relative enrichment of the study on the history and pre-history of Sanskrit and related languages, little unanimity will be found among scholars doing something on the ideas contained in the concerned texts.

It is known that Vedic linguistic studies had no smooth sailing in the West. The path chalked out by Roth in this regard was followed by Oldenberg but forsaken by Geldner, one of the most illustrious students of Roth.³ Geldner along with Pischel considerably modified the methods of Vedic philology bringing into being a kind of parallel methodology in Western Vedic research. These scholars looked more to later Indian ideas and to the learned movements of past ages in India than bothering about the ostentatious claims about the resources of linguistic science. This allowed some of the characteristic features of ancient and medieval Indian thought to come to the forefront even in studies of the oldest monument of Indian literature. The controversy lived even in the early decades of the present century since when even more has been demanded. The following question of Coomaraswamy is expressive of the attitude of a new generation of scholars, generally Indian, who have come more and more to the forefront since Coomaraswamy : "What right have Sanskritists to confine their labours to the solution of linguistic problems : is it fear that precludes their wrestling with the ideology of the texts they undertake ?"⁴

The preference for exclusively linguistic studies, perhaps, originated in the notion that otherwise the results achieved through Vedic studies might not be commensurate to the labour spent. In the early years of Indological research Colebrooke⁵

advised that the Vedas were not even worth minute reading. Later scholars reproved by bringing about a number of translations of the Ṛgveda. But Colebrooke's assessment of the intrinsic value of the contents of the Vedas (obviously in relation to other similarly ancient literatures) seems to have found support from many of the leading Western scholars, at least so far as the Saṃhitās are concerned. Cf. Oldenberg, "It is a foregone conclusion to us that the records of our beliefs should give exact and definite answer to the questions about the origin of the world ; the Veda, specially in its older layers, concerns other matters. Here it is a question of exalting the gods and of seeking their favour, and not of penetrating into the mysteries of what may lie beyond the world of gods, and which are in no case connected with the joy and sorrow of the present moment."⁶

It is difficult to guess what Oldenberg understood as "questions about the origin of the world" which, according to him, are "in no case connected with the joy and sorrow of the present moment". Such things, of course, do not appear in the Ṛgveda ; and hence Oldenberg had no hesitation in coming to the conclusion, "On the whole one cannot deny a certain poverty in the descriptions spoken of here ; power of imagination, depth of thought hardly come to appear in these."⁷ The definition of power of imagination and depth of thought has so arbitrarily been narrowed in this and similar remarks that a general opinion came to prevail that since there is nothing of intrinsic value the study had got to be oriented to the solution of linguistic problems and matters of historical value.

Whatever might be the first cause for the general preference in the West for linguistic studies, there is a clear hint in the above cited passages of the absence of any serious attitude in the Saṃhitās even to the most common problems of early philosophy. The said question of Coomaraswamy gains significance in the context of the presentation of such debatable points of view. And so far as it underlines the existence of a composite Weltanschauung in the Saṃhitās and the necessity of a prior recognition thereof, the question hits at the right mark.

The emphasis on linguistic studies is a distinct feature of Western Vedic research. This can be evidenced by the change in the meaning of the word comparative philology in English. When this word came to be used in India it had already acquired the sense of comparative linguistics, a science which started with the discovery of Sanskrit.

Coomaraswamy's question may seem exaggerated to those who see some pursuit of the study of ideas in the works on mythology by Oldenberg, Macdonell, Hillebrandt etc. Perhaps it was not possible for Coomaraswamy to make clear what those studies lacked. But after a lapse of about fifty years one may find that he had experienced without theoretically stating what now appears to be an anachronism in the study of Vedic ideas.

The mainstream of Vedic research in India as well as in other countries has so far avoided giving prominence to the circumstances or the mythological set up which could serve as link between different gods of Vedic mythology. Till now a treatise on Vedic mythology means an account of Vedic gods, treated sundrily according to their place or importance, while it is the myths which should be the major object of discussion.

Myths grew and developed, within the *Ṛgveda* and later, with gods as functionaries. Their chronology is what is required for an historical analysis. Hence the discrete treatment of gods reveals a failure to give a whole to related concepts and their development. But, this is perhaps anticipated in the theory of henotheism which sees each god as an independent, nineteenth century individual not subject to a prevailing chief or a set of events.

The term *Ṛgvedic philosophy* has, however, some currency. So far the application of this term has remained limited to a few late hymns of the *Ṛgveda*. Specially three hymns—*ṚV.* X. 90, 121 and 129—are regarded as the beginning of three lines of thought about creation in classical Indian philosophy. But so long as the gods of the early layers are not understood as subject to and functioning in myths, the pre-history of the said three hymns may remain in darkness.

This is not to deny the existence of other approaches. In the seventies of the last century Bergaigne⁸ started from a different premise. In his own way he tried to find out in the Ṛgveda a composite Weltanschauung concerning the origin of the world, cosmology, man's relation to the universe etc. But in Bergaigne's world of Vedic gods there is nothing beyond biomorphism. He gave a rigid frame to an unwieldy mass of beings which, in his view, originated in natural phenomena.

Lüders⁹ too tried to focus on how the problems of cosmogony and cosmology came up in the older hymns of the Ṛgveda. Lüders explained the Indra-Vṛtra legend as a cosmogonic myth¹⁰ and also similarly spoke of certain other legends which have usually been explained as based on natural phenomena.

The basic approach of these studies is accepted here with different assessment of the material at hand. As it will be seen later, the myth of the birth of Agni in ṚV. IV. 1 is closely similar to that of the release of cows by Indra which too was noted as a cosmogonic myth by Lüders.¹¹ In the second chapter below it has been attempted to show how the myth relating a train of events following the birth of Agni could express a theory of the beginning of things.

(b) *Mode of expression : Ṛgveda X and impervious layers :* That was one aspect of the many-sided problem with the Vedas, which relates to early Ṛgvedic theory—pre-ontology. There is another important side of Vedic thought concerning the archaic Ṛgvedic mode of thought and expression through symbols, myths etc.

The discovery of myth as an archaic way of thinking and expressing matters of fundamental importance and, consequently, as capable of yielding far deeper meaning than what meets the eye is a comparatively recent event in modern thought. This explains why scholars who could rightly point to the existence of philosophical speculation in the tenth Maṇḍala made altogether different assessment of the earlier strata. It was possible to speak of philosophy in some hymns of the tenth Maṇḍala, for the language here is relatively understandable and

familiar to us. But this cannot mean that there is no philosophical speculation in the earlier strata where the language is more symbolic and abstruse. The Upaniṣads which do mainly without old types of myths make further advancement than that in the tenth Maṇḍala. This new form of expression which struck deeper and deeper root in Indian intellectualism eventually ushered Indian philosophy into the era of direct systematic exposition.

Lüders was certainly aware of the peculiarities of the early Vedic form of expression.¹³ But, unfortunately, because of the incomplete nature of his major work on the Vedas, viz. VARUNA it is difficult to see how he viewed the whole problem. Related problems have sometimes come up secondarily in the writings of Renou and of Gonda among Western scholars.¹³ The second scholar is mainly interested in describing ingredients of later Indian beliefs and theology in the Vedas.

The acquaintance of modern Indian admirers of the Vedas with both of the above mentioned aspects of Vedic thought is evident in the writings of the leaders of the modern neo-Vedic movements.¹⁴ But sustained professional studies seem to have been started by Coomaraswamy and contributions have been made by many other scholars like Kunhan Raja, Agrawala, Kapali Shastri etc.¹⁵

One of the aspects of this new development in Vedic research is that even those scholars who are interested in understanding and revealing Ṛgvedic mysticism do not generally make further spadework beyond the layers dug out by those Western scholars for whom "the Vedic problem is lost in the sands of a primitive religion bearing the load of blind myths."¹⁶ Coomaraswamy's own new approach to the Vedas¹⁷ found its expression through the analysis of ṚV. X. 72, 90, 129, BU. I. 2 and portions of the Maitrī Upaniṣad. Another scholar—Kunhan Raja¹⁸—worked on the poet philosophers of the Ṛgveda and selected five recognised philosophical hymns belonging to the tenth Maṇḍala (X. 81, 82, 90, 121, 129) while showing the Ṛgvedic foundation of the views of the post-Vedic

systems of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Vedānta and Sāṅkhya about the formation of the world. The scholar maintained that similar points of view are to be found also in hymns belonging to the earlier strata¹⁹, and still limited his studies to such parts of the Ṛgveda as are usually regarded as belonging to the latest strata of the Ṛgveda !

(c) *The existing ideas about Ṛgvedic myths* : It is the older layers of the Ṛgveda which offer the difficult problems of Vedic mythology. The most prominent theory about this part of the Vedas is that the myths and deities here represent phenomena and forces of nature.

The theory of anthropomorphism was current among the Etymologists of ancient India and was first recorded by Yāska in the Nirukta.²⁰ After its modern discovery it has been heedlessly used to explain many enigmatic Vedic characters. It has sometimes been pointed out that there is no science in thoughtless equation of deities and objects of nature. Macdonell²¹ issued warnings against the heedless application of the theory but was himself thoroughly under its influence. Bergaigne's work too was, in a way, an attempt to give a coherent shape to scattered theories of anthropomorphism. Although strongly disapproved by Lüders it continues to exert influence on modern researches.²²

Lüders²³ opposed this approach on the ground that it meant that the Vedic deities had still remained in a primitive stage of development. While not denying the existence of gods originating in natural phenomena Lüders maintained that it is wrong to present the question of the original significance of Vedic deities as the main problem, for that suspends enquiries into what the gods meant to the Vedic poets which should be our man problem.

This is justified by the fact that scholars found themselves in great difficulties in trying to discover the physical basis of the personification of Indra. In fact the basis has not yet been discovered. The Indra-Vṛtra fight, according to the Etymologists²⁴, represents thunder-storm and shower, Vṛtra standing

for clouds and Indra for lightning. Macdonell²⁵ followed this interpretation, but not Oldenberg²⁶ according to whom it was difficult to confirm the thunder-storm theory from the utterances of the R̥gvedic poets to whom the matter stood otherwise. However, Oldenberg did not deny that in its original 'pre-Vedic' form the myth represented thunder-storm. Like Oldenberg Winternitz²⁷ also said that "it is certain that the Vedic singers themselves had no clear consciousness of the original meaning of Indra and Vṛtra as nature-gods" but maintained, "The songs leave no doubt that the myth of Indra's dragon-fight refers to some powerful natural phenomenon." Different from these was Hillebrandt²⁸ who took Indra to be a solar deity and Vṛtra a winter-demon. But Lüders²⁹ brushed away all these pointing to the fact that the myth relates to cosmogony, Indra the god of war being the hero and Vṛtra, the obstructor of pre-creation waters stored in the highest heaven, being the villain of the story. The difficulties forced Indian scholars to make new speculations. Coomaraswamy, Dandekar and Kosambi gave three new interpretations of Indra.³⁰

The anthropomorphic theory in its crude form has been rejected by scholars like Coomaraswamy, Agrawala, Kapali Shastri and other new interpreters of the Vedas.³¹ In spite of their separate and independent understanding of Vedic mythology these scholars agree to the symbolic nature of elements like water, fire, soma, sun etc.

Here one may enter into controversy. The word symbol, since it left its old sense of concrete symbol, has so much been used by neo-romantics, psycho-analysts, idealists, cosmopolitanists, anti-evolutionists etc, and has so much been integrated into their own world-outlooks that an enquirer may first discover himself in an unwieldy world of ideas. There is no ideological agreement among Malarmé, Freud, Aurovindo, Coomaraswamy and Lévi-Strauss. A mere suggestive utterance with elevated romanticism, a dream picture and different versions of the birth of a god have apparently nothing in common between themselves.

Still, there is no necessity of being apologetic about

symbolism. The very coming into being of terms like 'literary symbolism' or 'dream symbolism' indicates the growing awareness of conditions of thought and expression where no other word can express the elements.

So far as mythology is concerned, in the present study the word symbolism has been used to mean the presentation of important ideas of Vedic world-outlook through words denoting real or imaginary, animate or inanimate beings, or functions of such beings. That which is symbolised may be a philosophical idea, a subjective property, a subject, an attainment or something else which generally comes up in philosophical discussions in the post-Vedic period.

This is not a denial of anthropomorphism or zoomorphism. But in the current theories of anthropo-zoomorphism, it means the personification of natural phenomena into gods or demons ; this is deification of nature or animism. Symbolism as understood by us, on the other hand, means that even those forces of nature are often to be viewed as symbolic of something else. In other words, anthropo-zoomorphic figures, too, are symbols, but the objects of symbolisation in such imageries are not the natural phenomena themselves, but aspects of the same basic ideas as are meant to be presented through the natural phenomena. Sufficient illustrations of this with particular imageries are to be given in the second chapter. But an illustration is given here in order to clarify the main point.

Agni-'fire' is sometimes imagined as a calf, sometimes as a bull. It is not logical to propose that both the imageries are symbols of the natural fire. On the contrary it is better to enquire into whether fire, calf and bull pertain to the same basic concept explicating its different aspects. It is in the fitness of things that fire should symbolise certain idea coming in Vedic speculation, say, 'enlightenment', while the anthropo-zoomorphic imageries are expressive of different aspects of the same basic idea.

There is a similar element in Gonda's treatment of epithets in the R̥gveda.³² Gonda is right in holding that epithets do

not occur wildly or arbitrarily ; they are suited to the context and are meant for making the purpose of the verse more meaningful. One may like to examine whether anthropomorphic and figures, too, have grown in order to focus on aspects not specially revealed through the natural phenomena to which the figures belong.

The term symbol is more appropriate for constant and comprehensive symbols like fire, sun etc. than for imageries whose presentation sometimes verges on metaphorical description. However, these imageries are the precursors of icons, manmade concrete symbols of later ages. Hence they belong to the domain of symbology.

It should be emphasised here that no rigid symbological system is being insisted upon as a perfected handy instrument of Vedic interpretation. The methods are proposed in view of the difficulties generally experienced in Vedic interpretation and the absence of any accepted methodology for deciphering Vedic imageries and their relation to natural phenomena.

The two main points of emphasis are

1. the existence of a serious and historically significant world-outlook in the early layers of the R̥gveda and the expression of the same through myths consisting of natural phenomena and imageries ;
2. the common basis of inter-related natural phenomena and imageries : the former being generally expressive and comprehensive and imageries being relatively explicative and aspectual.

In our enquiries, mainly related to Agni, it will be attempted to proceed on the least controversial grounds that is to say where the relation between Agni and certain imageries is explicit or has already been brought to sufficient notice. However, a few illustrations from the domain of other deities are given below in order to examine if the acceptance of the above hypothesis conduces to clarity regarding certain obscurities noted by scholars.

The Vedic poets were often unaware of the proposed basis of anthropomorphism.⁸³ This apparent obliviousness has been explained as caused by the process of formation of myth which consists of simultaneous obscuration and accretion. This means that the original object of nature was gradually obscured and at the same time new features were added to the deity. This resulted in the dissociation of the god from the physical substrate.⁸⁴

With Varuṇa the matter stands as follows. According to Oldenberg⁸⁵ Varuṇa was originally a moon-god while Mitra who is often bracketed with Varuṇa represented the sun. Hence, behind Mitrā-Varuṇa one gets an early cult of the sun and the moon as closely associated divinities and the original elements of these gods were forgotten through the said process of obscuration and accretion. Accepting this for argument's sake one might ask about the cause for the said obscuration.

Now, the moon and the sun play important role even in the Tantras. But here they are not worshipped as objects of nature but are just symbolic expressions of such matters as theory and practice (*prajñā* and *upāya*) or the *nāḍīs iḍā* and *piṅgalā*, etc.⁸⁶ The same senses must not be attached to the objects in the Vedas, which should be independently determined. If the descriptions of Varuṇa tend to show that the deity was once thought to be the moon, that can signify that the principle symbolised by the physical object could equally be signified by Varuṇa. For that principle we have to enquire into what Varuṇa meant to the Vedic poet. The main function of Varuṇa in the Ṛgveda is to guard Ṛta.⁸⁷ The underlying principle then can be pointed to as the guardianship of Ṛta.

However, the matter in the Vedas, which is more complex than what is found in the Tantras, does not end here. In the Vedas one gets also vivid myths or legends which are not so often found in the Tantras. Symbolism itself does not explain the rise of myths which is dependent upon another factor, namely, living imageries or what is generally known as personification. The imagery which is most prominent with Varuṇa is that of king.⁸⁸

Hence the factors of symbolism with reference to Varuṇa can be arranged as follows :

Principle to be symbolised—guardianship of truth.

Symbol from nature—moon

Imagery resembling life—king.

Now, if one puts the question – what caused the obscuration of the natural element, it becomes obvious that in the underlying process it is the object of nature which becomes obliterated but not the abstract element. The lunar features of Varuṇa are vague, but not the guardianship of Ṛta. The physical object is necessarily obscured as the underlying principle is more and more brought to prominence through imageries finally resulting in the complete obliteration of the object of nature. Hence a sustained effort to get rid of the physical symbol and to arrive at more direct expression from the archaic mystery-clad language of symbols underlies the said process of obscuration and accretion.

It has been possible to apply our principles here because there are no two opinions about the guardianship of Ṛta in Varuṇa. His affinity with some objects of nature also has been suggested by most of the scholars. And Varuṇa is imagined as king in the Ṛgveda. Hence there cannot be any reasonable objection to applying the said principles here. But with Indra it must be otherwise. The basic principle in Indra and the object of nature in him are controversial matters and hence necessitate further thoughts. There are also instances of inanimate symbols being not involved. In the cow of speech,⁸⁹ for instance, the symbol is merged into the imagery. Śraddhā, Manyu etc. are also directly praised without symbols. The cases of Vāyu, Soma, Agni etc. are even different. With these certain imageries developed, but comparatively slow, perhaps on account of the constant perception of the elements by man. Nevertheless, these worked as symbols.

The development of the concept of Agni is likely to serve as the best illustration of the above-mentioned process. Agni is hardly anthropomorphised in the Ṛgveda. Yet from him rise such figures as Bṛhaspati, Prajāpati and, as the evidences show,

also the figure of Viṣṇu.⁴⁰ The whole process, from one point of view, is merely that of obscuration and accretion. But this is caused by and is directly related to the increasing prominence given to those which are symbolised by Agni—the underlying weltanschauungliche principles.

The subject-matter of the study, thus, concerns the beginnings of Indian philosophy in the early layers of the Ṛgveda. The beginning, it will be seen, is made in a dream-language to be given up by later philosophers. The underlying philosophy or philosophies supply the basic materials to be used in some of the post-Vedic philosophical systems. The older form of expression—imageries and symbols—is made to be shed like worn out cloths with non-symbolic expression coming increasingly into the forefront in the scientific literature of later ages.

Myth with its symbolism is, according to this approach, an ancient mode of thought and expression which like many other functions typical of ancient man, like hunting, preparing figurines and ritual drama, has lost its utilitarian value to modern man, but has survived in specialised spheres of activity like art and pastimes, and if we are to follow a school of psychology, in dreams.

* * *

In the existing theories on mythological symbolism several trends are visible. The theories of scholars and thinkers⁴¹ who have dealt with or mainly with Indian materials have generally become the expression of one or another variety of idealism. Sigmund Freud's⁴² general remarks on mythological symbolism, occasioned only by his intensive studies on dream-symbolism, are more important for scientific purpose. He found in these an archaic mode of thought. This gave birth to a trend of thought enriched by his successors in psycho-analysis. Much benefit can be derived by students of mythology if these studies are properly utilised. But, for the purpose of a scientific presentation the matter may be discussed clearly in the concluding portion of our work and in course of our analysis. A few general remarks are made below.

The present work does not aim at defending any variety of idealism and may be best utilised as an instrument for examining the prevalent theories, not only of Indian scholars and thinkers many of whom show idealistic inclinations, but also of Freud, Jung and Eric Fromm⁴³ etc. who made significant contributions in this field from other points of view.

Freud made case-studies of dreams with general observations on myth, while the present work is an intensive study of a few fire myths and rituals as well as their inter-relation. None of the authors mentioned above made intensive itemwise analysis of any ritual.⁴⁴ The vague interpretation of rituals as symbolic acts by many of them owes much of it to idealistic ideological urge, and also to the said perfunctory nature of analysis.

d. *Atharvaveda, magic, philosophy and ritual*; Even though at least nascent philosophical speculation has been recognised by all Vedic scholars in the younger parts of the Ṛgveda, the Atharvaveda is usually regarded as barren in this regard. Winternitz,⁴⁵ for example, was strongly opposed to see any philosophical element in the Atharvaveda. But a different assessment was made by D. M. Bhattacharya⁴⁶ who noted "the preponderance of philosophical hymns in the Paippalādasamhitā which explicitly characterises Brahman as the underlying principle covering every object of the world" and spoke favourably of the Ātharvaṇic tradition that "the Mantras in this Veda impart the knowledge of Brahman in a greater degree." And as the matter stands here, besides the Ṛgvedic Nāsadāsīt-hymn (X. 129) the finest refurbishing of the materials of the early Ṛgvedic myths of the birth of Agni is to be found in two hitherto almost unnoticed hymns of the Atharvaveda which may class themselves among grandest Vedic speculations.⁴⁷

The reluctance to utilise the Atharvaveda in delineating the history of the development of Indian philosophy, perhaps, owes much of it to the abhorrence of magic which the Atharvaveda abounds in. Magic has been said to be least concerned with philosophy. "Nothing, indeed, seems farther from magic

than philosophy.”⁴⁸ The said abhorrence seems to be justified by the “unbridled wildness” of the means employed in magic. But when this side of magic is got rid of, it will be shown, the border line between magic and philosophy fades out in the rituo-philosophical set up of the Vedic world-outlook.

Thus, the birth of Agni is apparently a legend, a story. But it has also got an underlying philosophy. The story gives a model of an ever recurring phenomenon of primordial becoming and the figures in it are symbols of abstract matters.⁴⁹ Now, the phenomenon is represented in ritual with the expectation of facilitating the process in micro-cosmic plane. The impression given is that however profound the idea underlying the myth might be, the ritual representation is done according to a theory of causal relation between the ritual and the process of becoming as envisaged in the myth.⁵⁰ This has got an element of magic with it ; but one has to use the term with the greatest possible caution here remaining aware of the superfluity of demons, goblins and violence which are often supposed to be inherent in magic.⁵¹

(e) *Myth and legend*: ‘Legend’ is a very general term used to mean a traditional story, a story without proper historical foundation etc. The birth of Agni and the connected stories are legends, no doubt. In the discussions the term ‘myth’ has often been used instead of ‘legend’. This term carries a special sense with it. From the time of Xenophanes (c. 565-470 B.C.) in Greece *mythos* came to be contrasted with *logos* and *historia* and “came in the end to denote ‘what cannot really exist.’ ”⁵² But, of late, the term has acquired a new meaning the credit for which goes to the sympathetic treatment of the beliefs of ancient man by modern scholars of comparative religion. According to this a myth is a true story of beginning. Mircea Eliade⁵³ gives a rather lengthy definition of myth.

“Myth narrates a sacred history ; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the ‘beginnings’. In other words, myth tells how, through the

deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality—an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behaviour, an institution. Myth, then, is always an account of a 'creation' ; it relates how something was produced, began to *be*. Myth tells only of that which *really* happened, which manifested itself completely. The actors in myths are Supernatural Beings. They are known primarily by what they did in the transcendent times of the 'beginnings.' Hence myths disclose their creative activity and reveal the sacredness (or simply the 'supernaturalness') of their works. In short, myths describe the various and sometimes dramatic breakthroughs of the sacred (or the 'supernatural') into the World. It is this sudden breakthrough of the sacred that really establishes the World and makes it what it is today. Furthermore, it is as a result of the intervention of Supernatural Beings that man himself is what he is today, a mortal, sexed and cultural being."

Eliade finds 'Supernatural Beings' to be the main actors of the drama. But in the story of the birth of Agni in RV. IV. 1 the most important part is played by beings who are conspicuously mortals—'our human fathers' (IV. 1. 13). Secondly, Eliade does not speak of symbolism. In the R̥gveda at least a myth is characterised by symbolic expression and also imagery-building.

The common usage of the word myth, thus, stands in utter contrast to what it means to its authors, to whom it is a true theory. It is often true even to us. For example, in its exoteric significance the birth of Agni in the three worlds that is to say the manifestation of light in the heaven, atmosphere and earth is not a myth or a false story even to us. But in the R̥gveda this myth is not distinguished by its value from the myth of primeval waters giving birth to Agni. This is a myth to us according to the common usage of the term, that is to say it is a false story since it cannot be substantiated by scientific verification. To the R̥gvedic poet, however, this is a true theory. The involved truth is not that of ordinary events, but of matters with intrinsic value, of the most general

and the most important affairs in the life of the authors of the myth.

We may add here that the Vedic term *jātavidyā* occurring in RV. X. 71.11^c *brahmā tvo vādati jātavidyām* : “the priest Brahman alone relates the theory of becoming” satisfies the definition of the contents of myth as proposed here. Nirukta 1.8 explains the sentence as *brahmaiko jāte jāte vidyām vadati* “The priest Brahman alone explains the theory for each and every production”. The related word *jātāvedas* ‘knower of beings (or becoming)’ is explained in Nirukta VII.30 : ‘one who knows (*veda*) beings (*jātāni*)’.

It should be evident that both ‘being’ (that which has been) and ‘becoming’ are meant by the participle *jātā* < √jan ‘to be born’ as enjoined by Pāṇini 3.4.67,70. Sāyaṇa explains the ‘production’ mentioned in the verse as that of extra actions like expiation necessary in ritual ; so also Durgācārya on the Nirukta. But ritual becoming is only microcosmic becoming. In the Ṛgvedic outlook (Ch. III below) microcosmology and micro-cosmogony are integrally and causally related to cosmology and cosmogony. Our translation of *jātavidyā* ‘theory of becoming’ includes the phenomenon in both the planes and in the widest sense of the word *jātā*—‘the subject of birth and the act of becoming’.

For exclusive cosmogony ‘*bhāvavṛtta*’ ‘the history of becoming’ has been used in Bṛhaddevatā VIII. 46 with reference to RV. X. 129. This is a more explicit, more rational term for cosmogony.

(f) *Myth and figurative description of ritual* : Figurative descriptions of rituals are to be distinguished from myths. The former ones which sometimes look like myths are no true stories of creation or beginning. When it is said that “the young females produced (Agni) who has ten nurses” (RV. I.141.2) no real myth is concerned, for only the ten fingers active in generating fire are meant. These are invariably required in the ritual and come into picture independent of the myth of Agni’s birth. How easy it is to confuse between the two

classes of myths, if figurative descriptions are at all to be viewed as myths, is to be found in the following remarks of Winternitz.⁵⁴

“Even the actual Agni-myths have only originated in the metaphorical and enigmatic language of the poets. Agni has three births or three birth-places : in the sky he glows as the fire of the sun, on the earth he is brought forth by mortals out of the two pieces of tinder wood, and as the lightning he is born in the water. As he is brought forth with the help of two pieces of tinder wood (Araṇis), it is said that he has two mothers,—and ‘scarcely is the child born, when he devours the two mothers’ (RV. X. 79.4). An older poet, however, says, ‘Ten indefatigable virgins have brought forth this child of Tvaṣṭar (i.e., Agni)’ (RV. I. 95.2), by which are meant the ten fingers, which had to be employed in the twirling ; and as it was only possible through great exertion of strength to bring fire out of the pieces of wood by friction, Agni in the whole of the R̥gveda is called ‘the son of strength.’ ”

The first myth of Agni’s three births is a true myth, but not the latter ones. The difference is evident in the fact that by no stretch of imagination can one establish the origin of the idea of Agni’s three births in the sacrifice, while the other ideas originate only in the ritual. The ritual requires three fires, but it is not for that reason that the poet speaks of the three manifestations of fire as sun, lightning and terrestrial fire in the three divisions of the universe. The contrary, however, is true. The three sacrificial fires are deemed to represent the three fires in the three divisions of the universe. The myth of Agni’s three births or stations thus grows independent of the ritual and then is represented in that.⁵⁵

The other class of ‘myths’—those which grow only in the figurative descriptions of the ritual, are of transitory nature and do not exert any reasonable influence on the development of mythology, at least in the Vedas. As ritual fire Agni has two mothers, for the two araṇis are conceived as his mothers. The phrase ‘son of strength’ (*sūnuḥ sahasaḥ*) too, according to Winternitz, has its origin in the ritual. But when Agni is called the

son of waters he is understood as such independent of the ritual, and this phrase involves an imagery built upon objects of nature serving as symbols. Of the two types of phrases it is the latter which maintains its existence in Vedic mythology, is sought to be represented in the fire-ritual and supplies important materials for the moulding of post-Vedic mythology.

In some descriptions, however, it becomes difficult to ascertain whether a particular description pertains to a myth or a ritual. It happens so because rituals are meant to be micro-cosmic representations of particular myths, and hence certain words, equally applicable to the ritual and its myth, acquire double senses.⁵⁶

(g) *Indra's domination* : Hillebrandt⁵⁷ observed, "The Vedic poets love to present the very same subject in different fashions and, on the other hand, to present different subjects in the same fashion."

The last part of the observation is extremely important for the next chapter of the thesis. For, the story in RV. IV. 1 is closely similar to the myth of the release of cows by Indra. And accordingly, Geldner⁵⁸ discovered the myth of the Paṇis in RV. IV. 1. But what Geldner called the myth of the Paṇis was just the train of events that took place after the birth of Agni according to the hymn. The Paṇis have no connection with the events here. The seven fathers are the main characters and the name of the Paṇis is not even once mentioned in the hymn. Still the supremacy of Indra was so hard a concept that his proverbial campaign for cows against the Paṇis in association with the Aṅgirases completely shadowed that the incident of the release of cows by the Aṅgirases in RV. IV. 1 could be a part of the drama of the birth of Agni. One of the ways to avoid errors proceeding from such *a priori* reasoning is to remember the above cited observation of Hillebrandt specially the last half which only explains how similar myths could be characteristic features of both Indra and Agni. There will be several occasions to substantiate the value of Hillebrandt's observation.

(h) *Historical method* : It is unfortunate that the applicability of the historical method has scarcely been examined in studies of Ṛgvedic symbolism. Most of the scholars note that the Ṛgvedic way of thought is not a feature of post-Vedic periods. 'Somehow the age of the Vedic Mystics came to an end.'⁵⁹ But change of outlook within the ṚV is not taken into consideration by neo-Vedists. Agrawala⁶⁰ who did a good deal of labour to reveal the esoteric doctrines of the ṚV did not think of any necessity for chronological arrangement. Even Kunhan Raja⁶¹ who tried to found researches in Ṛgvedic symbolism on scientific basis would not recognise any development taking place within the ṚV. A clear statement of this point of view seems to have first come from Bergaigne⁶² who maintained that "between the most ancient and the most modern hymn of the ṚV,there never has been such a change in the Vedic religion that the latest hymns could not serve as a commentary on the oldest."

There is yet another point of view similar to the one mentioned above. The unchangeability of thought, according to Coomaraswamy,⁶³ is not confined to the ṚV, but is a feature of the entire history of Indian mythology, ritual and art. "Some have been impressed by the 'bewildering variety' of Indian mythology, ritual and art : it would be nearer the truth to speak of its sameness or monotony, for in fact it never departs from the fundamental theme of the Beginning of All Things (*iāta-vidyā*)."⁶⁴ One may also compare the views of Keith⁶⁴ that "the gods of India change, but the alteration of the higher thought is far less marked."

It cannot be denied that there is an element of continuity in Indian thought, but that cannot reduce the importance of certain far-reaching changes in outlook that took place in course of the development of Indian philosophy. It is important to note this, for the remarks cited above are not just instances of the personal belief of certain scholars, but are indicative of a trend perceptible even in the writings of some scholars who do not directly uphold the said idea of unchangeability.

The following is an instance.

The doctrine of *Catuṣpadī Vāk*⁶⁶ with *Parā Vāk* as eternal speech is a late development in Indian philosophy. *Bhartṛhari* calls speech 'threefold' (*trayī*) in the *kārikās* of the *Vākyapadiya* (I. 142, 144). The three stages of speech are *Paśyantī*, *Madhyamā* and *Vaikharī*. Later a change took place. In the *Āgamic* philosophy *Parā Vāk* is placed above *Paśyantī* and is regarded as eternal speech. Among grammarians *Harivṛṣabhadeva*, the author of a commentary on the *Vākyapadiya*, followed the *Āgamic* division.⁶⁶ He was followed by other grammarians.

But the fourfold division with *Parā Vāk* as eternal speech was not regarded as an important doctrine even long after *Bhartṛhari*. This is evidenced by the fact that *Kaiyaṭa* while commenting on *ṚV. I. 164.45* cited in the *Mahābhāṣya*,⁶⁷ which gives an early form of the doctrine of fourfold speech (see below), did not speak of any reference to *Parā Vāk* while *Nāgojī Bhaṭṭa* did so in his commentary.

Now the general scheme of fourfold division of things is as old as the *Ṛgveda*. In the Vedic form of the scheme the fourth quarter (*turiya*) is placed not above but below the other three. The *ṚV* and the *AV* know three divine quarters and a human fourth. But with the growing importance of soteriology the arrangement of the four quarters was later reversed and the 'fourth' came to be placed not below but above the other three quarters. And as there was an early general doctrine of fourfold cosmic division with the 'fourth' below the other three quarters, there was also an early doctrine of *Catuṣpadī Vāk* (*ṚV. I. 164. 41, 45*) with *Turiyā Vāk* as human speech and the other three as the secret and divine quarters of speech.⁶⁸ Similarly, the reversed doctrine of *Catuṣpadī Vāk* with *Parā Vāk* as the Eternal Verbum and the fourth quarter corresponds to the reversed form of the general doctrine of four with the *Turiya* above the other three quarters. In other words the doctrine of *Catuṣpadī Vāk* with *Parā Vāk* as the Eternal Verbum was also influenced by the said reversion of the general doctrine of four quarters and, hence, was late.

Unfortunately, the possibility of such developments does

not seem to have at all been counted by Agrawala⁶⁹ whose remarks imply that the late doctrine of Catuspadī Vāk with Parā Vāk as the Absolute is apprehended in ṚV. I. 164, 41, 45.

Such indifference to significant historical developments within Indian thought seems to be a legacy of the past and can be traced back to the shallow, nineteenth century understanding of the Orient as the 'unchanging Juggernaut' of history⁷⁰ which till now is a prominent Western theory. But this can only undermine the patient labours of those thinkers of past ages who successively contributed to the building up of what we today get as complete theories.

The present work does not proceed from any such assumption of unchangeability in Vedic or post-Vedic thought. On the contrary, the emphasis has been on enquiring into fundamental changes, when they occur, within superficially similar structures. The said reversion of the enumeration of four quarters is an instance. This falls outside the scope of the present work. But this occurred as a result of the influence of soteriology on post-Vedic thought. An evidence for this is that Hindu rituals show soteriological re-orientation in the post-Vedic period. It has been attempted to show some such reversions of rituals in chapter III and IV below in the analysis of the Vedic and Tantric rituals of fire-generation.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. *āmnāyasya kriyārthatvād ānarthakyam atadarthānām* etc., Mīmāṃsā Sūtras of Jaimini I.2.1. See D. M. Bhattacharyya in Brāhmaṇasarvasva, *Introd.*, xxvi ff for an extensive survey of this point of view.

2. D. Bhattacharyya, 'Cosmogony and Rituo-Philosophical Integrity in the Atharvaveda' *VIJ*, March, 1977.

3. *VSGP*, vol. I, Einleitung and vol. II, Vorwort for the controversy. It survived far into the present century, for Lüders (*Varuṇa*, p. 1, n. 1) argued against Oldenberg and Hillebrandt according to whom the Veda must be explained from the Veda itself.

4. *NAV*, p. viii.

5. *Asiatic Researches*, vol. VIII, p. 476.
6. *ORV*, p. 275.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 277.
8. *BRV*. I, Introduction and passim.
9. *Varuṇa*, passim.
10. *Ibid.*, 167 ff.
11. *Ibid.*, 20 ff, 326 f etc. ; also Schmidt (1968) partly, 237 ff.
12. See Lüders' remarks on the significance of name, *Varuṇa*, p. 20, n. 5.
13. Specially *EVP* and *VVP*. Gonda goes farther than Renou ; cf. *Die Religionen Indiens, Triads in the Veda* etc.
14. Specially Sri Aurobindo.
15. For the views of the four scholars mentioned *NAV*, *PPR*, *VL* and *LOV* may be consulted.
16. Agrawala in Preface to *VL*.
17. *NAV*.
18. *PPR*, pp. 221-252.
19. *PPR*, xxvi-xxvii. See n. 61 below.
20. N. VII. 6, 7 ; II. 16 etc.
21. *VMM*, p. 5.
22. *Varuṇa*, p. 2, 174 ff etc. Edgerton (*BIP*, p. 17) followed the prevalent theory ; so also Dasgupta (*HIP*. I, 16 ff). This view is favoured also by the editors (Moore and Radhakrishnan) of *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy*. But Sukumari Bhattacharji (*IT*) strikes a different note by dealing primarily with the personal aspect of the deity and maintaining that the natural element comes in as a complementary factor i.e. not as the essential one.
23. *Varuṇa*, p. 2.
24. N. II. 16.
25. *VMM*, p. 54.
26. *ORV*, pp. 137-38.
27. *HIL*, I, pp. 72-73.
28. *VMH*. III, 195 ff.
29. *Varuṇa*, 174 ff.
30. In *NAV*, 73 ff, *ABORI*. XXXI, pp. 1-55 and *ISIH*, p. 70. respectively.
31. Cf. "The Waters and the Earth are to be understood not only with reference to our terrestrial seas and continents, but as respectively the possibilities of existence in any of the Three Worlds, and the support of living beings existent in any one of them according to the term of its possibilities..." (*NAV*, p. 9). On Agni Coomaraswamy (*NAV*, pp. 10-11) wrote, "Agni, 'Fire', appears in the Vedic liturgies as the preferred designation of the First-manifested Principle, on the one hand because of the fiery nature of the Supernal-Sun...". Kapali Shastri's interpretation (*LOV*,

p. 31) is different, "He (= Agni) is in man the flaming force of the Divine Will with wisdom that helps the human personality to offer the elements of its being, its various parts and powers to their Universal correspondences...". The esoteric meaning of Agni, according to Agrawala (*VL*, p. 49) is "the immortal principle among mortals". Also see Gonda *Die Religionen Indiens* I, p. 49.

32. Gonda *ERV*. passim.

33. See nn. 26, 27 above.

34. *ORV*, 46 ff; *VMM* pp. 6, 2.

35. *ORV*, 182, 189; differently Lüders, *Varuṇa*, 4-6.

36. P. C. Bagchi, *Studies in the Tantras* I, 61-73.

37. *Varuṇa* 13 ff and passim.

38. *Ibid*, 28 ff.

39. See Ch. II. 3 below.

40. See below II. 6-8; also Gonda *Die Religionen Indiens* I, p. 72. H. P. Schmidt's assessment (1968, 239) is different; Bṛhaspati is originally an epithet of Indra according to this; the thesis is built up on meagre arguments which are not convincing.

41. Aurobindo, A. K. Coomaraswamy, H. Zimmer; see the Bibliography.

42. *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 333-34, 339; C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Religion: West and East*; Eric Fromm, *The Forgotten Language*, etc.

43. See n. 42.

44. E.g., Fromm's interpretation of the Sabbath, o.c. 241ff, is not verifiable in the absence of itemwise analysis; so is the view of the inner sacrifice in the Vedic ritual as held by the Aurobindo school—*LOV* 25 ff.

45. *HIL*. I, p. 131.

46. *AVP* (Bh). I, p. xxxiii.

47. *AVP*. V. 2 = *AVŚ*. IV. 1 and *AVP*. II. 6 = *AVŚ*. II. 1. See II. 9 below.

48. *HIL*. I, p. 130; p. 124 for 'unbridled wildness'.

49. See II. 3 below.

50. See III. 3-6 below.

51. E.g., See *ORV*, 475 ff. *HIL*. I, 109 ff. etc.

52. *MRE*, pp. 1-2.

53. *Ibid*, pp. 5-6.

54. *HIL*, I, p. 78.

55. See II. 7 and III. 5 below.

56. See III. 3 below.

57. *VMH*. II, p. 73.

58. *RVG*. I, p. 412. Oldenberg and also Macdonell regarded the association of the release of cows with the birth of Agni as of secondary importance. See II. 5. c, d below.

59. *LOV*, p. 7.

60. *VL*, p. 21 ; also see *infra*.

61. Cf. the following remarks in *PPR*, pp. xxvi-xxvii. "There is a room for a criticism about the contents of this book in relation to its title. Practically the book is based on poems selected from the First and the Tenth Books of the Ṛgveda. They are supposed to be the latest among the collections contained in the Ṛgveda. How can they be pre-Vedic or even Vedic ? In the context of dealing with the founders of the religion and philosophy of the Vedas, I will be expected to deal with the earliest portions of the Ṛgveda, which alone can form the foundation. I have never subscribed to the view that the First and the Tenth Books of the Ṛgveda represent the final stages in the development of the Ṛgvedic text... I have included the poems in this book because I am convinced that they represent the early stages in the development of the philosophy of the Ṛgveda."

62. *BRVP*. I, p. iii.

63. *RLB*, p. 25.

64. *RPVU*, p. 433 ; also Gonda, *Change and Continuity* etc. *passim*.

65. The term *cātuṣpadī* is found in ṚV. I. 164. 41 ; CU. III. 12. 5 has *cātuṣpadā gāyatrī*.

66. There is some controversy over the identity of Harivṛṣabhadeva. He has been regarded as not different from Bhartṛhari by K.A.S. Iyer (1965) and C.D. Sastri (1934), and as different from Bhartṛhari by Biardeau (1964). Ancient authorities too are not unanimous (see Iyer). One of the arguments of Biardeau rests on the doctrinal difference between Bhatṛhari and Harivṛṣabhadeva regarding the division of speech. Iyer's argument against this is not convincing. Also see G. Sastri (1959), 68 ff on the position of the ancient commentators and philosophers. I have discussed the matter in a different work (to be published) on the number four in ancient and medieval Indian thought.

67. *Paspaśāhnika*.

68. Dipak Bhattacharya, *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 1978 (6), 2 ff.

69. *Vision in Long Darkness*, pp. 152, 178.

70. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, in *Great Books of the Western World*, Vol. 46, pp. 203, 204 ff, 207-208, 230 ff etc.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BIRTH OF AGNI

1. Ṛgveda IV. 1

The birth of Agni is a very favourite topic with the Ṛgvedic poet. Though there is no special study devoted exclusively to this topic, much of the details collected from Ṛgvedic passages are available in Bergaigne's *La religion védique*, Oldenberg's *Die Religion des Veda*, Macdonell's *Vedic Mythology* and in Anirvan's *Vedamīmāṃsā*.¹

It has not been generally noted that the birth of Agni is not the mere production of fire or light, and that it is a myth—complete and imaginative. A version of the myth appears in ṚV. IV. 1. But the close similarity of some of the events of the myth to the exploits of Indra prevented scholars from recognising the possibility of the existence of an account of the birth of Agni in the hymn.² The hymn is given in translation below :

“O Agni, as the gods with a common intention have ever set you the divine illuminator to work, with this task (for us) have they set (you) to work : ‘Adore the immortal among the mortals, generate every wise Agni as favourable to the gods !’
2. As such, you, O Agni, ever turn to (your) brother Varuṇa, towards the gods with favour, (to Varuṇa) the partaker of the sacrifice, the senior partaker of the sacrifice, the righteous Āditya, the ruler of the people, the king who rules the people !
3. Ever turn, O friend, towards (your) friend as the wheel of the chariot rapidly (follows) the swift (horse), for our sake, O wonderful one, rapidly ! O Agni, find favour with Varuṇa, with the all-brilliant Maruts ! Bless (us), O ever flaming one, for the transmission of the seed, bless us, O wonderful one ! 4. May you, O Agni, the knower of Varuṇa, deprecate for us the god’s anger ! The best sacrificer, the best carrier (of the oblation), intensely flaming, remove you all hatred from us ! 5. As such, you, O Agni, be the nearest god (for being accessible) to us, with your help, the closest one at the shining of this dawn !

Propitiate Varuṇa readily for us, find favour, be easy to call and come to us !

6. The appearance of the prosperous god is most excellent, the most wonderful among mortals. Bright like the warm ghee of the cow, (the appearance) of the god is lovely like the product of the cow. 7. There exist three highest, true and beautiful births of this god Agni ; enveloped within the Infinite, the radiant, bright and intensely shining noble one has come. 8. The messenger, the Hotṛ possessed of a golden chariot, of lovely tongues, of a red horse, of a handsome figure, brilliant (and) ever delightful as (one) in a banquet rich in food, he longs for all the seats. 9. He, the bond of the sacrifice, enlightens man. Him (they) lead with a great rope. While performing (his task) he lives in his (i.e. sacrificer's) dwellings. (Thus) the god attained common proprietorship with the mortal. 10. May that Agni, O bull, who knows lead us towards that treasure of him which is given by the gods, which all the immortals, (which) father Dyaus, the begetter made true through insight.

11. He was born as the first one in the streams, at the bottom of the great Rajas, in its origin, footless and headless, hiding the two ends, intensely drawing towards himself in the nest of the bull. 12. The host came forth first in loud applause, in the origin of Ṛta, in the nest of the bull, lovely, young, of handsome figure and brilliant. The seven (who were Agni's) own ones, were born for the bull. 13. Here our human fathers sat (looking) forward, while aspiring after Ṛta. Invoking the dawns they drove out the cows, easy to milk, whose pen was in the rock inside the cave. 14. They rubbed (themselves) as they were breaking open the rock. Others proclaimed all-over that (deed) of theirs. With the cattle unbound they praised triumphantly. They found the light (which) they had realised by their insights. 15. With their mind after the cows those men, the Uśijes, opened with divine words the preventing consolidated rock, the strong pen full of cows which had been encompassing and holding back the cows. 16. They thought out the first name of the cow ; they found out the three-times-seven highest names of the mother ; knowing this the

hosts acclaimed. The red ones became visible along with the white (milk ?) of the cow. 17. The obstinate darkness disappeared, the sky shone, the ray of the goddess Uṣas rose up, the sun arose over the wide planes beholding the mortals. 18. Then, afterwards, as they woke up they looked around, then they held the treasure, the gift of heaven ; all the gods in all the houses, O Mitra, O Varuṇa, may truth conform to (our) vision !

19. May I utter towards the ever flaming Agni, the priest, the supporter of all, the best sacrificer. (He) perforated as it were the bright udder of the cows (and made the milk flow) purified like the juice extracted from the (Soma)-plant. 20. (He is) the Aditi of all worshipful gods, the guest (*ātithi*) of all men. May Agni, Jātavedas, choosing for us the favour of gods be merciful.”³

The hymn may be divided into five parts. The first verse refers to the setting of Agni to work by the gods ; 2-5 ask Agni to appease the anger of Varuṇa ; in 6-10 the sacrificial fire is described ; 11-18 form an account of the birth of Agni and its consequences ; 19-20 again praise the sacrificial fire, but not without reference to the preceding account.

On metrical grounds Grassmann⁴ believed that the first three verses had been added to the hymn later. Oldenberg⁵ went farther in stating that there are two hymns here, one in 1-5 and the other in 6-20. His reason was that “no allusion occurs to Varuṇa in verses 6-20.” The allusion to Varuṇa was afterwards explained by Geldner,⁶ who did not speak of concoction :

“Partly obscure the hymn starts with a strange prayer and apology. If I have correctly understood the sense, the reason for this is given in the second verse. As the senior most god Varuṇa had the first claim to the sacrifice. But since the hymn is meant for Agni, Varuṇa is forsaken. Hence the prayer to Varuṇa at the outset.”

But Geldner’s explanation does not solve the whole problem of the initial verses. There is no allusion to Varuṇa in the first verse which only speaks of the intention of the gods in setting Agni to work.

The real inconsistency lies here. There cannot be any doubt that one of the main purposes of the hymn is that of giving an account of the myth of the birth of Agni which is understood as setting him to work by the gods in the first verse. Curiously enough in the actual account of the event (11-18) the gods do not enter into the picture. Only the seven fathers, certain cows and Agni are the characters. This gives the impression of attempts at moulding ideas of independent or separate origins into one.⁷

In verses 6-10 and 19-20 the sacrificial fire is the principal object of praise. The motive behind presenting those verses as prologue and epilogue to the birth of Agni, it appears, is that of emphasising upon the integrity of the fire on earth and Agni of the myth. The same idea is implied also in the 13th verse where it is said that while accomplishing the task the ancient fathers sat *here* aspiring after Rta, that is at the place of the ritual on earth. The RV is replete with this idea.⁸

The story told in the hymn may be summarised as follows : Agni was set to work by the gods ; he has three births ; he was first born as a bull in the depth of the great atmosphere, the origin of Rta, the origin of Rajas ; that was coincident with the coming into being of the seven ancestors of men aspiring after Rta ; Agni inspired them to set free the milch-cows encompassed in a strong fortification ; the fathers thought intensely, rent the rock and set free the cows ; they thought out the name and found out the twenty-one names of the cow, the mother of Agni ; the prevailing darkness disappeared, there was light ; the sun arose beholding right and wrong on earth ; the bright udder of the cow was perforated by Agni for milk.

2. Imagery of cow and calf : flow of Rta

The 13th verse speaks of the fathers having aspired for Rta. Obviously this aspiration is fulfilled through their successful attempts at getting the treasures as mentioned in verses 13-18.

The same act preceded by the same desire has been alluded to in RV. IV. 2. 16⁹ : "And, O Agni, (may we do that just) as our farthest ancient fathers, while aspiring after Rta, attained

clear deep-insight as they sang hymns and cleaving the earth disclosed the red rays." I. 68. 3-5 connect the instigation of Ṛta to the birth of Agni and the works performed for that : "3. Indeed, they were all pleased with your wisdom, when you, O god, had been born living from dry (wood). 4. All longed for the godliness, the (god's) name, while serving Ṛta (and) immortality." A gist of the same story seems to have been given in I. 67. 7-8 : "He who knew it, who approached the hidden one, they who set free the streams of Ṛta, serving Ṛta ; then indeed (Agni) promised riches to him." As is evident from I.71. 2-3 the events were also understood as founding or setting into motion the thought of Ṛta : "2. Our fathers broke even the strong fortifications with chants, the Aṅgirasas (broke) the rock with shout. They prepared the passage to the great heaven for us. They obtained the day, the sun and the mark of dawn. 3. They founded Ṛta, moved its thought..." In the same spirit the ancient ones who kindled the ancient Agni are called Ṛta-loving (*ṛtāyávaḥ* V. 8. 1) and are said to have held up Ṛta (*ṛtām yemuḥ* IV. 2. 14).

All these verses appear in hymns to Agni so that setting Agni to work or bringing him to birth seems to have always been understood as inspired by the desire for Ṛta. Consequently there is also the notion of Agni's birth being the cause or the signal for the actualisation of Ṛta.

This is often likened to a sudden flow. The streams of Ṛta get mentioned in I.67.7-8 above. I.141.1 states that when Agni "was born of strength" "they led forward the streams of Ṛta." In I.144.2 the flowing streams of Ṛta come into description in a similar context.¹⁰

The flow of Ṛta comes into vivid description mostly through a particular imagery consisting of a cow and a new-born calf standing for the mother of Agni and Agni himself respectively. The milch-cow of Ṛta gives birth to Agni and Ṛta begins to flow from the udder. Since this imagery appears in quite a number of hymns to Agni it is quite probable that IV.1.16 refers to the white Ṛta-milk (*yaśāsā*) of the milch-cow. The same imagery is implied also when Agni is said to have per-

forated the bright udder in the 19th verse. IV.5.8-10 are obscure but the imagery is discernible :

“8. What is there to be spoken by me of this speech. They secretly discuss the secretly placed riddle of the cows which they opened like a lid ; (Agni) protects.....own summit,¹¹ the footstep (= *padām*) of the bird. 9. This is that ancient great face of the great ones which the milch-cow followed ; I know the secret one resplendent in the abode (*padé*) of Ṛta, running quickly and moving quickly. 10. And shining with his face near his parents, he thought of the secret beautiful (udder) of the speckled cow. Remaining at the highest station of the mother cow (and) near (us), the tongue of the bull, of the stretched out flame (desires the udder).”

The legend and the imagery appear together in IV.3.10-11, “10. Since the bull, the manly Agni had indeed been anointed with Ṛta, the milk of the back,¹² untrembling moved on the vigour-bestower—the speckled bull milked the bright (milk) from the udder. 11. Cleaving the rock with Ṛta they burst (it), the Aṅgirasas shouted together with the cows. Easily did those men surround Uṣas ; the sun became visible when Agni was born.” 1.73.6 also reminds one of the same myth, “The lowing cows of Ṛta, the gifts of heaven were exuberant with their full udders. From afar did the rivers (of Ṛta) break through the midst of the rock while asking for favour”.

It is interesting to note that Agni is himself the bull as well as the calf of his mother-cow of Ṛta. Cf. IV. 3.10 above and V. 12. 1-2, “To the great worshipful Agni, the bull of Ṛta, the Asura, I (bring) this prayer. Like well-clarified ghee in his mouth at the sacrifice do I bring this song favourable to Agni. 2. O, the knower of Ṛta, know verily Ṛta. Perforate (the udder for) the many streams of Ṛta. Not a Yātu (do I serve) by violence, or by falsehood ; I serve the Ṛta of the red bull.” Perforating the udder (cf. IV. 1. 19) implies that Agni is also the calf. This dual aspect also belongs to Apām napāt who is only a form of Agni¹³ : II. 35. 13. “He, the bull, engenders the embryo in them (= the waters) ; he the calf sucks ; him (the mothers) lick.” This is true of the sacrificial Agni, for fire

begets fire ; cf. I.12.6, 'fire is kindled by fire', VS. XIII. 45, 51 etc. But it becomes evident in later philosophical developments (sections 8, 9 below) that there is a distinction between the symbolisms of the prenatal and postnatal Agni.

It may not be difficult to see now that Agni's flames presented as his tongues in IV. 5.10, should be meant for licking the udder of the milch-cow. Similarly, in I. 146. 2 "his reddish flashes lick the udder." "That udder" of Ṛta seems to have been referred to also in IV. 10. 8. In V. 1. 1-3 the flames of Agni reach the sky ; this seems to be nothing other than Agni's approaching the milch-cow Uṣas with his tongues. Also cf. IV. 7. 7. "When the gods rejoiced in the separation of the herbs¹⁴ in that udder of Ṛta, the foundation (of Ṛta), the great Agni to whom oblations are made with adoration, the one who obeys Ṛta might ever see to the (performance) of the sacrifice."

These verses also concern the fire-ritual. The highest station of the mother and the udder near at hand (IV. 5. 10), that is to say the sacrificial fireplace on which Agni consumes ghee are not different. The other verses also indicate like understanding of the myth and the ritual. The idea of identity between the mythical event and the ritual on earth, comes to forefront on many other occasions in the ṚV.¹⁵

What comes out from the above verses is that Agni's birth is understood in them as a phenomenon that signals the flow of Ṛta. Ṛta is imagined as milk ; the mother cow as well as those that are set free are all milch-cows of Ṛta. The birth of the calf Agni is necessary for bringing about that flow of Ṛta.

3. The underlying philosophy and symbolism

The streams of Ṛta (I. 144.2) are, according to Geldner,¹⁶ the streams of sacrificial milk, clarified-butter (Schmalzgüsse) etc. This seems to get confirmation in I. 141. 1 which refers to the same streams (*ṛtásya dhénā*) "when Agni was produced from strength." The latter is a reference to the powerful friction required in producing fire. But the streams of Ṛta which are described through an imagery appear to have been conceived

as the phenomena of a myth, and not merely as a figurative description of the ritual.¹⁷ Secondly, since the sacrifice is itself performed after a myth Geldner's explanation is at best insufficient. Streams of *ghṛtá* might represent streams of *Ṛta* but not vice versa and one does not explain the streams of *Ṛta* by stating that. The latter deserves independent explanation.

Oldenberg understands the streams of *Ṛta* differently from Geldner: "The stream of *Ṛta* seems to mean the stream of blessings (such as rain, ghee, etc.) which flows to mankind according to the eternal laws of *Ṛta*."¹⁸

The milking of concrete materials is a Vedic idea, but this does not seem to be a very old notion. AVŚ. VIII. 10 describes how different types of being milked the cow of Virāṭ for various materials necessary for their sustenance. In AVŚ. II. 1. I. (AVP. II. 6.1) it is said: "this universe did the speckled (cow) yield as milk." Post-Vedic mythology knows many such stories. But such crude depiction of cosmic milking of concrete objects does not seem to have been meant in the *ṚV*. At least so far as the idea of the milking of *Ṛta* is concerned there cannot be any reasonable objection against taking the word *ṛtá* in its primary Vedic sense. *Ṛta* is the moral and physical order of the universe, the inviolable order of things and the law maintaining this order.¹⁹ When one says that the universe is governed by that order one means that it continues to exert its influence upon the universe as it is; hence there is a continuous flow, a stream of *Ṛta*.²⁰

In the myth the flow of *Ṛta* means the beginning of that order. For, the notion of still and unoozing *Ṛta* being made to flow after Agni's birth is implied or even explicitly told in the story (I. 144. 2). The poet seems to tell how the pre-*Ṛta* state of affairs comes to its end with the birth of Agni. This is a kind of first evolution.

The only impediment against such an understanding is the notion that there could be no cosmogonic ideas in early *Ṛgvedic* poetry. And this was the theory of Oldenberg. His views in this regard were noted earlier (Introd. 2a). One may also

compare the following lines in the introduction to the section on R̥gvedic cosmogony in ORV :

“In observing how man stands after gods and demons in the Vedic depiction of the world, a few remarks may be made about the ideas of the gods thereto. For the poet of the R̥gveda these problems do not stand in forefront.”²¹

One may differ.

It is possible to enquire as to how the first flow of the stream of order regulating universal existence could be described through that queer myth. Some of the methods indicated in the introduction may be tested now.

So far as the mother-cow and those that are released are concerned one should attach much significance to the three-times-seven highest names of the mother (IV. 1.16) which the seven fathers thought out. A good deal of mystery surrounds the expression three-time-seven (*triṅ sapta*) which occurs not less than twelve times in the R̥V. It baffled scholars like Oldenberg, Geldner and also Sāyaṇa who showed that even in a single verse the expression lent itself to more than one interpretation.

The twelve occurrences of the expression may be divided into two broad groups, one comprising those where the number twenty-one is associated with the milch-cow or R̥ta or milking, and the other unconnected uses to denote varied objects.

Places of occurrence in the R̥V	Objects denoted
A. IV. 1.16, VII. 87. 4, I. 72.6	—Secret names of certain cow
IX. 70. 1, IX. 86. 21	—milking of soma.
B. VIII. 46. 26	—cows ?
VIII. 69. 7	—abodes of Indra.
VIII. 96. 2	—mountains pierced by Indra.
I. 191. 12, 14	—removers of poison.
X. 64. 8	—rivers.
X. 90. 15	—samidhs of sacrifice.

Such diverse application of the same mystic form of expression, as in the second group above, is quite R̥gvedic. As noted earlier (Introd. 2g) Vedic poets loved to describe different things

similarly. However, when the same expression is associated with different things, it implies a certain degree of popularity, for which, again, we should look into the original use of the expression. Though it is often difficult to ascertain what the original use was, one may get the clue from the more common or major uses. In the present case, at least, the original significance may be suggested from the examination of the symbolism, if any, in such passages in the given list as commonly share some prominent concept between themselves; more precisely, in those verses where the number twenty-one is associated with the names of the cow of Rta.

Two verses explicitly refer to the cow with her three-times-seven secret names : IV. 1. 16, *té manvata prathamāṃ nāma dhenōs trīḥ saptā mātūḥ paramāṇi vindan | tāj jānatīr abhy ānūṣata vrā āvir bhuvad aruṅīr yaśāsā gōḥ ||* This has been translated earlier (II. 1). VII. 87. 4, *uvāca me varuṇo mēdhirāya trīḥ saptā nāmāghnyā bibharti | vidvān padāsya gūhyā nā vocad yugāya vipra uparāya śikṣan ||* “Varuṇa told for me the wise, (that) the cow bears three-times-seven names. The knower of the word told these as mysteries, the wise one while seeking to help the nearer generation.” In the second verse the names of the cow are associated with the mysteries of *padā*. *padā* may mean ‘foot’ ‘foot-print’, ‘word’ etc. Its association with *nāman* suggests here the technical sense in which the term is used in the science of grammar, viz. word (see below).

This is indicative of a similar sense also in I. 72. 6, *trīḥ saptā yād gūhyāni tvé it padāvidan nihitā yajñīyāsaḥ | tēbhī rakṣante amṛtaṃ sajoṣāḥ paśūñ ca sthātṛñ carāthañ ca pāhi ||* Oldenberg²² offers the following translation : “When the worshipful (gods) have discovered the thrice seven secret steps (or, places) laid down in thee, they concordantly guard with them immortality. Protect thou the cattle and that which remains steadfast and that which moves.”

It is difficult to accept the rendering as fully correct. In the two previous verses the ancient fathers knew the secret names. Hence it is doubtful whether gods are to be credited here with

the feat. The fathers also are often called worshipful in the Vedas.²³ Secondly, the word *padā* need not be taken only in the sense of 'step'. These are secret like the names in the previous verses. Hence, *triḥ sapta gūhyāni padā* may be better understood as 'thrice-seven secret words.'

Sāyaṇa offers many possible explanations for the verses. But varied as they are they do not give any clear idea about the sense of the verses. In the commentary to 1.72.6 Sāyaṇa explains the thrice-seven secret words as the twenty-one sacrifices—the seven Pākayajñas, the seven Haviryajñas and the seven Somayajñas. Against this Oldenberg²⁴ observes that "this later system of the twenty-one forms of sacrifice can scarcely have existed at the time of the Ṛgveda Saṃhitā." The other two verses are understood by Sāyaṇa differently. He explains *triḥ sapta nāmāghnyā bibharti* in VII. 87. 4 in three ways, first as speech with the seven metres in the breast, throat and the head, and then secondly as the Vedas with the twenty-one sacrifices, and then as the earth with twenty-one names. The commentator understands the cow as speech also in one of the two explanations of IV. 1. 16. Here also the three-times-seven highest mysteries (*paramāṇi*) are proposed to be the twenty-one metres. But as in the commentary to VII. 87. 4, here also in a second explanation Sāyaṇa proposes the cow as earth. But the twenty-one highest secrets are understood not as the twenty-one names of the earth as in the former verse, but as her twenty-one gems stolen by the Paṇis. We thus get so many explanations from Sāyaṇa for the cow and the twenty-one secret words or names. The cow may be speech or the earth and the twenty-one secret names may be the twenty-one sacrifices, twenty-one metres viewed from two angles, twenty-one names of the earth as told in the Nighaṇṭus and twenty-one gems of the earth.

Those are not pure conjectures; for, almost everytime Sāyaṇa refers to Vedic traditions. These tend to show that any scholar is likely to be perplexed by the difficulties the passages in question offer.

Oldenberg has nothing definite to offer: "there are ever so many possible interpretations of a passage like this."²⁵

Among other scholars the views of Geldner and Gonda are worth noting. On VII. 87. 4 Geldner²⁶ says : "The sense is either that the cow has twenty-one names, or that the word cow has twenty-one meanings. One should remember that the ancient *Nighaṅṭus* begin with the twenty-one names of the earth, and at their beginning stands 'gauḥ'. In any case the passage concerns symbols and the metaphorical language of poetry". This is true, but this does not say what the cow stands for and what its twenty-one names signify. About the significance of the names of the cow discovered by the fathers in IV. 1.16 Geldner²⁷ says, "The secret names of the cow metaphorically mean the poetic language of the ṚV. The deeper sense of the passage is, therefore, that at that time the remembering of the cows took place simultaneously with the birth of poetic spirit or of poetic expression, of the *vaco daivyaṃ* as it is called in the 15th verse." The scholar says the same things—the secret names stand for the language of the poet—while commenting upon I. 72. 6.²⁸

Geldner is certainly right in inferring that symbols and the metaphorical language of poetry are concerned. But it is difficult to follow how the secret names can stand for poetic speech. If the secret names are the language of poetry it is difficult to see what the cow stands for. The names are really attributes of the cow. *nāman* is the sign through which a thing is called or known, it is not the thing itself. Hence it is more plausible that the cow, and not its names, stands for Geldner's language of the poet, or, simply for speech as alternatively proposed by Sāyaṇa.

There are many indications that the cow here stands for speech. Sāyaṇa's explanations indicate the existence of a distinct tradition to that effect. Such a symbolism in the ṚV is also supported by Nighaṅṭu I. 11 (N. II. 22) where *gauḥ* is read among the names of speech. Even in classical Sanskrit the word *gauḥ* is a synonym of speech or language. These indicate an earlier popularity of the imagery of the cow of speech which only could be responsible for the rise of such linguistic conventions later.

Geldner's observations lead us to difficult problems involving confusion between the bearer of the name and the name, between the cow and what belongs to the cow. It will conduce to clarity if another imagery about the sacrifice in I. 164. 3 is compared to the present one : *imāṃ rātham ādhi yé saptá tasthúḥ saptácakram saptá vahanty áśvāḥ | saptá svásāro abhí sám navante yātra gāvāṃ nihitā saptá nāma ||* Geldner's German translation in RVG may be rendered into English as follows, "While seven have rode on this chariot, seven horses draw the seven-wheeled chariot, seven sisters acclaim (him), in whom the seven names of the cow are laid down." Geldner comments on the first three *pādas*, "Play with the number seven ; possibly the chariot of the sacrifice. The riders are the seven priests (VIII. 60. 16 ; IX. 114. 3 ; X. 61. 1), the seven horses the metres, the wheels the basic forms [of the sacrifice, D.B.] (through another imagery in X. 124. 1 *saptátantum*), the sisters the *saptá vāñīḥ* (the seven voices, IX. 103. 3), cf. VIII. 59. 3, 4..."²⁹

Here Geldner distinguishes between the chariot of sacrifice and its component parts divided into several groups each consisting of seven items. That is quite logical. It would have been an error to say that the seven riders or the seven wheels were the chariot of sacrifice and not its parts. But should we doubt that the same distinction is to be drawn between the cow of speech and its seven names referred to in the fourth *pāda* ? Unfortunately here Geldner does not draw the said line of distinction. As with the other verses here also he observes that by the seven names the figurative language itself is meant.

Gonda³⁰ while refuting Geldner seems to be correct in saying, "The sense of these words can hardly be that the word 'cow' has twenty-one meanings ; 'three' as well as 'seven' indicate totality." But Gonda is not correct in saying that these passages do not refer to the "metapherreiche Sprache der Dichter" as held by Geldner. Though as Geldner put it the matter was not quite clear, yet the said symbolism of the cow might indicate that speech is after all concerned.

As to the significance of the number twenty-one expressed as three-times-seven, in VII. 87.4 it has been clearly stated

that it belongs to the names of the cow. In IV.1.16 also it is obvious that the same names are denoted by the number. A good deal of study has been made on the significance of names in the Vedas and other archaic literatures.³¹ Coomaraswamy³² observes a "causal relationship of Vedic *nāma*, 'name' or 'noumenon' to *rūpa*, 'phenomenon' or 'figure'. A name according to that understanding is the form of a thing perceptible to the ears while *rūpa* is the visible form. Both are equally concerned with the thing. The close relationship of the two forms, according to Coomaraswamy, is revealed also in the fact that it is "hardly possible to distinguish the roots *sva* 'to shine' ('whence *sūrya*', sun) and *svṛ*, to 'sound' or 'resound' (whence *svara* 'musical note') and also in some contexts to 'shine' ". Coomaraswamy cites also certain other dual uses of roots like \sqrt{arc} and $\sqrt{bhā}$ whose derivatives can mean both audible and visible forms.

Gonda³³ holds a not too different view, according to which in the Vedas a name is the expression of a part of the personality of a god or an aspect of his essence and an essential part of the bearer's personality. But on the significance of the number twenty-one he does not go farther than stating that " 'three' as well as 'seven' indicate totality" and "the cow is believed to possess this totality—hyperbolically denoted by the phrase 'three-times-seven' of the secret names and words (cf. ṚV. V.3.10), knowledge of which means power over their owner."

The sense of totality in three-times-seven cannot be doubted. But it is doubtful if the number is merely hyperbolic without any real basis. At least with the imagery of the cow of speech, one has to show how the names can get that number. An inkling of what particular aspect of speech is denoted by the three-times-seven *padas* or names of speech may be had from Patañjali's³⁴ explanation of *catvāri śṛṅgā trāyo asya pādā dvē śirṣe saptā hāstāso asya* (ṚV. IV.58.3). According to Patañjali this is a description of the whole body of speech. The seven hands are said to be the seven case-suffixes (*vibhakti*).

Now, each of the case-suffixes is declined in the three numbers (*vacana*)—singular, dual and plural. Is it not possible that the three-times-seven names of the cow are the twenty-one declined forms of a word? Of course, speech is incomprehensible without these three times seven forms. It might have remained a holy secret discovery till the time of the early Ṛgvedic poet, but later grammarians removed the secrecy when the '*guhyāni padāni*' became well-known as *subantapadāni*.

The observations made here are also supported by the first verse of the AVŚ: "The thrice-seven that go about bearing all forms—let the Lord of Speech assign to me their powers..."

The three times-seven milkings of the cows mentioned in IX.70.1 and IX.86.21 seem to be a farther extension of the imagery of the cow of speech. The relevant parts of the the verses read "Thrice-seven times did the cow give for him the true āśir-milk in the ancient empyrean", and, "This soma, milking the āśir-milk thrice-seven times, is extracted for (the pleasure of) the heart, the lovely and the exciting one." It is likely that the thrice-seven milkings are symbolic of extracting the different senses of word through its twenty-one declined forms.

* * *

The symbolism of Agni is, perhaps, a less difficult problem. Agni is typically the all-knowing god (*viśvávedas*, *viśvavid*), the knower of beings or becoming (*jātávedas*), and inspired sage (*kavi*)⁸⁵. These epithets and names imply a certain degree of personification (imagery-making); and further expansion of the imagery makes Agni not only enlightened but also the enlightener of man as in IV.1.9 above. Since these are spoken more of Agni than of any other god these imply an element of enlightenment with Agni. Hence there is a good deal of possibility that Agni symbolises enlightenment, insight, illumination etc. basically.

It is obvious that the symbolism of enlightenment, as distinguished from that of the enlightened god, in Agni would require Agni's presentation also as a passive object without

subjectivity in the myth. An instance of the interchangeability of passive objectivity and active subjectivity centering round the same basic concept is found in Sūrya. According to I.115.1 Sūrya is the eye of gods, while in IV.1.17 he himself sees the straight and crooked deeds of mortals.³⁶ Similarly Agni also becomes a passive object in the myth under discussion. Thus, in I.83.4 the Aṅgiras who release the cows are called *iddhāgnayah*—‘they who had kindled fire’. “Then the Aṅgiras first assumed youth, they who had kindled fire by sacrificial work and skill; together the men got all the goods of the Paṇis, the herd consisting of horses and cows.” The same passive Agni is found in IV.2.17, “Good performers, well-shining and god-worshipping, blowing (it) as (when melting) ore, like gods the generations (of men), kindling fire and praising Indra they went while besieging the stall.” It is not logically impossible that the fire is the fire of enlightenment or insight here. It may also be noted in this connection that *cidvahni* “the fire of consciousness” is a common term in later mysticism.³⁷

However, in India as well as outside India enlightenment is more frequently symbolised in light. Gonda³⁸ observes, “It (= light D.B.) is not rarely used for that illumination of the mind which may at least temporarily lend a divine character to a human being.” This symbolism of light finds expression in BU. I.3.28, CU. III.13.7, in the writings of Plotinus etc.³⁹ Even in relatively modern poetry ‘Lead kindly light’ is not a prayer for physical light.⁴⁰ There was an ancient controversy regarding whether physical light is meant in CU. III.13.7, “Now, the light of the heaven which shines beyond this...” On this Śaṅkara⁴¹ observes, “Whatsoever illuminates something, that is termed ‘light’. As such, the term ‘light’ is quite appropriate for Brahman, because as consciousness it is the cause for the illumination of the whole world.”

Now, it has been noted by Anirvan⁴² as well as Gonda⁴³ that Agni is glorified as light in the RV “not only as the physical light in the universe, but also as the internal light which illuminates seers and poets.” RV. VI.9, for instance, wholly concerns this aspect of Agni.

This makes it appear highly probable that the birth of Agni is the birth of enlightenment—a term itself indicating the still strong influence of the language which we long ago replaced by direct expression in scientific literature. According to the underlying theory of the myth, then, the fire of enlightenment comes into being from the cow of speech, or in our terms, conscious existence proceeds from language.

The myth, however, is not only a theory of being, but it also describes a primeval event at a particular point of time. As speech gave birth to enlightenment it led the ancient founders of the clans (*pitāro manuṣyâḥ* IV.1.13) to the secrets of the cows confined in the mountains. Those confined cows were probably the myriads of expressions and imageries which Geldner liked to see in the twenty-one names. That discovery by the fathers was coincident with the discovery of those names (that is word-declensions) without which expression is impossible.

Now, a problem seems to be created by the fact that the fathers are also said to have discovered light through their insight (IV.1.14). This light is to be distinguished from the fire leading them to the treasure of cows. The 17th verse of the hymn indicates that the said light which dispelled the obstinate prevailing darkness came from the sun which arose as a result of the activities of the fathers. The rise of the sun and the spread of the dawns are quite important events in the myth.

“The notion that the kindling of Agni exercised a magical influence on the sunrise seems not to be entirely absent in the *Ṛgveda*.”⁴⁴ The theory works also in the present myth, but the daily event does not seem to have been meant here by the rising of the sun. Like the first birth of Agni it was the rise of the first sun—which later grew into the idea of the empyreal sun.⁴⁵

So far as its significance is concerned it may be noted that the discovery of the names and the cows, which was a consequence of the birth of Agni and is presented in the hymn as the main event of the myth, was naturally like an expansion

of the first insight whose gain is imagined in the hymn as the birth of Agni. Secondly, it is that discovery of the names and the cows which is connected in the hymn to the rise of the sun and the spread of light. Consequently, it may be suggested that these later events correspond to the *didhiti* (IV.2.16)—the deep insight or enlightenment coming with the discovery while the birth of Agni corresponds to the *dhi*—insight, vision (IV.1.10, 14, 18) which made the discovery possible.

There are of course other possibilities here. For instance, according to not too late a tradition the sun is the eye of gods, of Mitra and Varna and also of Agni (I.115.1). Whether this symbolism of the sun works in the present myth is a matter for enquiry.

One may question now if RV. IV.1 can be considered a cosmogonic hymn. As told earlier scholars do not generally recognise complete cosmogonic ideas in the older part of the RV to which the present hymn belongs. But according to the interpretation proposed here the events in the myth signify the beginning of the operation of law, of language, literature and also of the clans indicated by the birth of the fathers. Without those the R̥gveda and R̥gvedic society are not conceivable.

The beginning was primeval, but the continuity of the process is often indicated in verses like, 'May that Agni, O bull, who knows lead us towards that treasure of him which is given by the gods, which all the immortals, (which) father Dyaus, the begetter made true through insight' (IV.1.10). The language of this verse is so closely similar to the one in the 18th verse which describes the primeval event that the continuity of the process through the ritual is strongly suggested. It is said in another hymn (IV.2.15-16) :

"Now, may we be born from mother Uṣas like the seven seers, the worshippers among men. May we be the Aṅgirases, the sons of Heaven and ardent (like them) break the mountain containing the riches. And, O Agni, (may we do that just) as our farthest ancient fathers, while aspiring after R̥ta, attained clear deep-insight as they sang hymns and cleaving the earth disclosed the red rays."

4. The flow of Ṛta from the obscured mothers of Agni.

(a) *The hypothesis of a biomorphic imagery* : In IV. 1. 11 Agni is said to be born 'in the depth of the great' (*mahó budhné*), 'in the *yóni* of this *rájas*' (*rájaso asyá yónau*), and 'in the nest of the bull' (*vṛṣabhásya nīlé*). According to the next verse, the ancient fathers, too, came into being 'in the next of the bull' and 'in the *yóni* of Ṛta' (*ṛtásya yónā*) along with Agni.

These phrases denote the original receptacle of Agni and of the ancestral septet born with him and, obviously, closely related notions. But their actual sense in this context is not clear and has scarcely been examined in modern researches.

rájas has an interesting semantic history meaning 'atmospheric vapour', 'dust', 'menstrual blood', an inherent force of matter (in later philosophy) etc. *ṛtá* means 'the regular order of the universe', 'the regular process in cosmic, moral, social and other planes', 'true order', 'truth', etc. *yóni* means 'the female genital passage', 'origin', 'root' etc. But the combinations in the above phrases are difficult. *ṛtásya yónau* 'in the womb of Ṛta' (OLD) has some sense, *rájaso asyá yónau* 'in the womb of this air' (OLD) is not clear, nor is the apparent equation of *ṛtá* and *rájas* easy to explain.

Sāyaṇa and Yāska offer many explanations for *ṛtá* and *rájas* in different places.⁴⁶ But in the above phrases Sāyaṇa understands the words as waters and the phrases as indicating the atmospheric receptacle of the lightning form of Agni. He paraphrases *ṛtá* (IV. 1. 11) as *udaka* 'water' and indicates the same sense for *rájas* (IV. 1. 12) in an alternative explanation. Yāska (N. II. 25 on ṚV. III. 33.5) gives the same sense for *ṛtá*. *budhná* is 'atmosphere' after N.X. 44 (on ṚV. VII. 34.16) because waters are 'bound' (*baddhāḥ*) or held (*dhṛtāḥ*) in it. *rájas*, too, is water (N. IV. 19, X. 44).

The suggested reference in the said phrases to the origin of Agni in atmospheric waters gets some support from certain other facts, too. For there are many words or groups of words denoting or relating to the original receptacle or reposing place of Agni. Among these the following ones form a set of similiar

phrases involving Ṛta, Rajas and their substratum—*ṛtasya yōni-* (I. 65. 4, I. 144. 2, III. 1. 11, IV. 1. 12, VI. 16. 35, X. 8.3), *ṛtasya sādasi* (III. 7.2), *ṛtasya padé* (IV.5.9), *ṛtasya dhāman* (IV.7.7.) ; *rājaso visāré* (I. 79.1.), *úparasya yōnau* (I. 79.3), *budhné rájasaḥ* (II. 2.3, cf. *mahó budhné*, (IV. 1.11), *rājasi... ..dāme* (II. 2.4). *rājaso.....yōnau* (IV. 1.11), *budhné nadinām rájaḥsu* (VII. 34.16).

Another set of phrases denote Agni as an embryo of waters or the receptacle of Agni in waters. These are *āpaḥ.....gārbhe* (I. 65. 4). *apām upāsthe* (I. 144. 2, X. 8. 1), *apām sadhāsthe* (I. 149. 4), *apām gārbhaḥ* (III. 1. 12, 13), *apām.....duroné* (III. 25. 5).

A close relation between the two sets of phrases is suggested by their occurrence in the same verse (I. 144. 2.), or in consecutive verses (III. 1. 11, 12, 13), or in adjacent verses in a continuous description (X. 8. 1, 3). In I. 65. 4 the waters rear Agni 'in the *yōni* of Ṛta, in the womb'. According to I. 149. 4 Agni approached all Rajas' 'in the abode of waters' ; in VII. 34. 16 Agni (?) is *abjā* 'born of waters' and is praised as remaining in the '*budhná* of the rivers, in Rajas'. It is so also in IV. 1. 11, 12. Apart from the receptacle with Ṛta and Rajas, Agni's birth-place is indicated also by the word '*pastyāsu*' 'in the homes'. Pischel⁴⁷ argues that it must be understood as the home of waters. Our translation follows this.

Of the various ideas concerned here, the aqueous origin of Agni in the atmospheric region is a well recognised Vedic notion.⁴⁸ But this notion does not apply to the first group of phrases with Ṛta and Rajas. Two problems arise with these. First, the primary sense of '*yōni* of Rajas', '*yōni* of Ṛta' etc. is not clear. Secondly, it is also not clear how Agni as the embryo in waters could lie in the *yōni* of Ṛta. For, unlike waters we do not know of any Ṛta in the atmosphere, so that some relation between waters, Ṛta and Rajas could be thought of. These problems rise particularly in those verses where both the concepts occur together, in IV. 1. 11, 12 above, in III. 1. 11, 12 (see b below) where Agni has been described as having been nourished by the waters in the *yōni* of Ṛta.

Another instance is I. 65. 4. where the very same notion occurs. Again, in I. 65. 9 Agni sits in the waters like a swan while in the next verse he is described as born of Ṛta (*ṛtā-prajātaḥ*). A detailed discussion of these verses is to be made in section b below.

One may question whether there is any myth here in the sense proposed in the Introduction, and therefore, also a full-fledged biomorphic imagery defining the relation between waters, Ṛta and Rajas.

Among the views of the older generation of Western scholars, those of Hopkins (1895) travel beyond the limits of meteorological interpretation. "As a poetical expression Agni in the last form is the 'Son of Waters', an epithet not without significance in philosophical speculation ; for water, through all periods, was regarded as the material origin of the Universe."⁴⁹ Gonda⁵⁰ (1960), too, finds it difficult to deny that here a cosmic process is to be recognised, in which Agni is the germ or original principle of life ('Keim', 'Urprinzip', 'Lebensprinzip') coming into being in primeval, all-encompassing waters.

This means that there is a myth here describing the first manifestation of an important principle of life in the original material substance of the universe, or in matter.

But these scholars do not speak of any imagery, while it seems possible that in such a myth the relation between Ṛta, Rajas and waters can be defined by recognising a full-fledged biomorphic imagery.

Now, according to Sāyaṇa (p. 44 above) *ṛtā* and *rājas* mean waters here. Yāska also records these senses for these words (N. II. 25, IV. 19, X. 44). According to some later lexicons⁵¹ too *ṛtā* means waters. Apparently this is not a convincing explanation. But one could find some justice in these views if the waters had been symbols of Ṛta. We shall deal with the justice of this supposition below (section c). However, the primeval waters are symbols of the material substance of the universe and cannot be a symbol of Ṛta—a property of this universe, viz., its regular and legitimate process in cosmic,

human and all other levels. Moreover the waters are active principles, personified into mothers giving birth to Agni. To suppose them as symbols of the passive and neuter Ṛta, which is never personified in Vedic mythology,⁵² is not convincing. But *rājas* means atmospheric vapour. Their transformation into rains also is a tangible phenomenon. As a regular annual event this may symbolise the idea of Ṛta—the regular and orderly process of the universe.⁵³

On the relation of the rains to the waters, it has to be noted that in a different context Pischel and after him Geldner recognise that the waters are imagined as females with their regular peculiarities, mainly periods.⁵⁴ “The highwaters of rains are regarded as catamenia (*Karmapradīpa* I. 10. 5) and their drying up as menopause”. In the context of the birth of Agni, the rains may symbolise not catamenia, but lochial discharge.

This gives us a symbol-complex with a full-fledged biomorphic imagery consisting of three sets of idea—natural-symbol—imagery series.

The myth describes the appearance of a principle of life, perhaps intellectual clarity⁵⁵ on material basis and the consequent flow of Ṛta—the regular process of the universe enriching man. The appearance of lightning in the all-pervasive waters and the transformation of atmospheric vapour into continuous rains serve as the combination of symbols drawn from nature. The birth of the off-spring from the mother followed by lochial discharge is the biomorphic imagery explicating the appearance aspect of the subjects of becoming.

(b) *Ṛgvedic descriptions of the imagery*: Some of the evidences for the existence of such a myth are to be found in certain hymns of the first Maṇḍala ascribed to Dīrghatamas Aucathya and Parāśara Śāktya (I. 140-164, I. 65-73). Scattered remains exist elsewhere too. Let us take two verses from Maṇḍala I first.

I. 141. 1. “Lo, that beautiful splendour of the god when he was born of strength, has truly come to be a wondrous

sight. Though he slinks away, the prayer goes straight to him. They have led forward the flowing streams of Ṛta.”⁵⁶

I. 144. 2. “They acclaimed the streams of Ṛta which had been encompassed in the *yóni*, in the seat of the god, when he dwelt nourished in the womb of the waters, and drank *svadhās* by which he moves.”

In the first verse the streams of Ṛta flow with the birth of Agni. The aqueous birth is indicated in the fifth verse of the hymn : “He entered into the mothers in whom the bright one grew up wide, unimpaired”. This verse also causally connects the former mothers of Agni to the younger, nearer ones meaning the motherly waters and those represented in the microcosmic ritual : “As he climbed up to the eternally moving (mothers), he also runs into the younger, nearer ones.” Similarly in I. 141. 1. also the birth of Agni and the flowing streams of Ṛta can be conceived both as a primeval event and its ritual representation through the flowing streams of *ghṛtā* (see Ch. III).

In I. 144. 2 the said streams of Ṛta are said to have been encompassed ‘in the *yóni*, in the seat of the god’ when he was nourished in the womb of the waters. In the biological event of birth, the womb (here *upásthā*, elsewhere also *gárbhā*) and the *yóni*—the passage of birth are related terms. One cannot help recognising the same relation here as corroborated by the following ṚV passages.

VI. 16. 35 *gárbhe mātúḥ pitúḥ pitā dididyutānó akṣāre | sídann ṛtāsya yónim ā ||* “In the womb of the mother, the father of (his) father, ever-shining in the undecaying (receptacle), approaching Ṛta’s exit-passage, (such is Agni).”

Agni shines in the undecaying womb of his mother, and there excels his own begetter—the Heaven. But he approaches the *yóni*; the motion in the verb *ā-sídan* ‘approaching’ indicates that *yóni* is a passage of exit and not just a receptacle.

VII. 4. 5. *ā yó yónim devákṛtaṃ sasāda krátvā hy āgnir amṛtām átārīt | tām ḁśadhīś ca vanínaś ca gárbhaṃ bhūmiś ca viśvādhāyasam bibharti ||* “He who approached the god-made exit-

passage, since Agni rescued the immortal ones by intellectual power; the plants and the trees nourish him, the embryo; the earth, too, (nourishes) the possessor of all refreshments."

Here, too, nourishment takes place of the embryo (*gárbha*), i.e. that which remains in the womb, but Agni approaches the *yóni*, i.e., the exit passage and wields intellectual power to rescue the gods.

In X. 8. 1 Agni grew up in the womb of the waters, while X. 8. 3 mentions the '*yóni* of *Ṛta*' as Agni's 'flight', 'course', 'descent' (*pátman*) indicating it as a passage for a movement of Agni. Similarly, in AVŚ. V. 1.2, *dhāsyúr yónim prathamá ā viveśa* 'eager to be placed in, he first entered into the receptacle (*yónim*)' the propriety of the word *yóni* instead of *gárbha* (womb) lies only in the motion *into* it as implied by the verb *viveśa*.

The existing translations of these phrases are obstacles to the comprehension of the imagery of birth. I. 144. 2^{ab} runs as : *abhīm ṛtasya dohānā anūṣata yónau devāsya sādane pāriṅtāḥ* "They have greeted with shouts the streams of *Ṛta*, which were hidden at the birth-place (*yónau*) of the god, at his seat" (OLD). But should not the streams of *Ṛta* pass through a passage? Then 'at the birth-place of the god, at his seat' is to be changed to 'at the exit-passage, at the seat of the god' so that the first word (*yónau*) may be related to *Ṛta* (*ṛtasya*).

ṛtasya yónau as 'in the womb of *Ṛta*' (OLD. III. 11. 1) or 'im Schoss des Weltlaufs' (Geldner, VS. I. 157), *apām gárbhaḥ* as 'the son of waters' (III. 1. 12) or as 'der Spross der Gewässer' (Geldner, *l. c.*) are even more misleading.

III. 1. 11, 12 run as follows :

11. *uráu mahām anibādhe vavardhāpo agnīm yaśasaḥ sām hi pūrvīḥ | ṛtasya yónāv aśayad dāmūnā jāminām agnīr apāsi svāsṛṇām ||*

12. *akró ná babhriḥ samithé mahínām didṛkṣéyaḥ sūnāve bhāṛjikaḥ | úd usriyā jānitā yó jajānāpām gárbho nṛtamo yahvó agniḥ ||*

OLD. "The great one has grown up in the wide unbounded space. The waters (have made) Agni (grow) : for many glori-

ous ones (have come) together. He lay in the womb of Ṛta, the domestic (god) Agni in the work of the uterine sisters.

“Like a horse that carries (the prize), in the assembly of the great (waters), visible to his son, he whose...light : he who as father begat the ruddy cows, he the son of the waters is the most manly restless Agni.”

Oldenberg takes *gárbha* as ‘son’ and *yóni* as ‘womb’. So does Geldner, too (RVG). But these are distinct terms and their known senses are different. *gárbha* does not mean ‘son’ ; it means ‘embryo’ or its receptacle, viz., ‘womb’. Unlike ‘son’ *gárbha* invariably denotes pre-birth entity. The rendering ‘son of waters’, instead of ‘embryo of waters’, apart from ignoring the primary sense of the terms obstructs the comprehension of the imagery of birth.

In the first half of III. 1. 11 the growth of Agni in the great atmospheric space is described. This is pre-birth growth. In the second half, on the other hand, the birth has become imminent and Agni lies in the *yóni* of Ṛta, i.e. the exit-passage of Ṛta and his own birth-passage, ‘in the work of the uterine sisters’. So far as the biomorphic aspect of the description is concerned, the ‘work of the sisters’ is that of midwives active in helping the child being born. Hence Agni is not growing in this half but lying in the *yóni*.

III. 1. 12^{ab} describes Agni who is just born. In the second half he is the father as well as the son. This double entity is explained by Geldner as referring to the heavenly fire, namely sun and the earthly fire. But Geldner understands *gárbha* as ‘off-spring’ (Spross). But only the ‘seed’ of the father and therefore the embryo is indicated in the half-verse, which deals with the becoming of Agni—a distinct function.

The error in the cited translations of *gárbha* and *yóni* will be apparent also from the following.

I. 65. 4 *várdhantīm ápaḥ panvā súśiśvim ṛtasya yónā gárbhe sújātam* //

“In the lap, in the womb of Ṛta, the waters nourish the fine child with praise, him who is well born.” (OLD)

Here *gárbha* is translated as 'lap' and not as 'son' ! The apparent reason is that Oldenberg could think of only 'womb' for *yóni*, so that the sense of 'womb' so suited to the context could not be given for *gárbha*. The following translation is preferable "The waters nourish the fine child with praise in the womb, him who is well born in the exit-passage of Ṛta."

To come back to the relation between Agni, Ṛta and the waters in these passages, the phrase *ṛtásya yóni* is meant for the flow of Ṛta as well as the birth of Agni. Secondly, there are two substrata for the yet unborn Agni—the womb belonging to the mothers and the Ṛta encompassed (I.144.2) evidently at the same place. One may easily discover the similarity of Ṛta to embryonical fluid. The stream of Ṛta coming with the birth of Agni is similar to the flow of fluid taking place with child-birth.

The imagery throws light on the propriety of certain words in connected passages. I. 144. 2^{cd}, for instance, states that in the womb of the waters Agni drank *svadhás* by which he moves. Oldenberg⁵⁷ explains: "*svadhá* means 'the inherent power' 'the power of moving according to one's own will', and then the drink which confers this power on a being, especially on the dead ancestors." The scholar translates the word as 'draughts'. But how could the yet unborn Agni realise the draughts? The idea is most probably one of the embryo taking its nourishment inside the womb. The etymological sense of *svadhá*—'self-impelled' is justified here by the natural and automatic character of the passage of the drink to the foetus in the womb.⁵⁸

In IV. 1. 11 it has been said that Agni was born headless, footless, hiding both his ends and intensely drawing towards himself, that is while remaining in an intensely contracted posture (*āyóyuvānaḥ*). The perfect beauty of this description is revealed when we remember the position of the foetus in the womb.

A few remarks may be made here on the semantic history of *rájas*.

In modern translations of the ṚV *rájas* is understood as

'aerial space' 'atmospheric region'—one of the three divisions of the universe in Vedic cosmology. This sense disappears in classical Sanskrit. The senses of the word recorded in the *Amarakoṣa* are 'menstrual blood' (II. 6. 21), 'dust' or 'pollen' (II. 8. 98) and a force in matter (III. 3. 231). The explanation offered by modern linguistics⁵⁹ for this change is that *rājas* is a homonym meaning both 'atmosphere' and 'dust' or 'dirt'. The sense of menstrual blood should be an off-shoot of the second sense according to this opinion.

Now, in IV. 1. 11, 12 *ṛtāsya yónau* and *rājaso yónau* appear as synonymous phrases. The sense of atmospheric space hardly suits here, as, evidently, a substance is meant. Yāska (N. IV. 19, X. 44) understands *rājas* also as water, and Sāyaṇa (on ṚV. IV. 1.11, I. 79. 1 etc.) often follows this. But as a cosmic element this may mean atmospheric vapour which turns into rain.

But Yāska (N. IV. 19) also says that *rājas* means blood (*asṛk*). Durgācārya explains this as menstrual blood.

It is worth enquiring into whether this sense, too, is conveyed by the word in IV. 1. 11, I. 79. 1, 3, II. 2. 3 etc.

From later descriptions one can infer that the waters, as the material substratum of the universe (Bṛhad. Upan. III. 6. 1.) or as a primeval substance generating truth or Agni (Bṛhad. Upan. V. 5. 1, ṚV. X. 129. 2, X. 121. 7), are conceived as all pervasive. *Rajas*—atmosphere or atmospheric vapour relates to the lower mid-portion of this universe as understood in the Vedas. Hence in the imagery it is located in the abode of menstrual blood of the all-encompassing mother, while the thing is visible as cloud.

One may cite in this connection I. 79. 3, an obscure and grammatically difficult verse: *yád īm ṛtāsya páyasā píyāno náyann ṛtāsya pathíbhī rájīṣṭhaiḥ | aryamā mitró varuṇaḥ párijmā tvácam pṛñcanty úparasya yónau ||*. It states that Aryaman, Mitra and Varuṇa swelled Agni with Ṛta and led him through the paths of Ṛta; they fill the skin at the *yóni* of the lower region (*úpara*). OLD understands *úpara* as the lower atmosphere. The filling up of the 'skin' in the *yóni* in the

lower region reminds one of Vedic embryology in which the *jarāyu* or *úlva* is the membrane enveloping the embryo.⁶⁰ Somewhat similiar is RV. I. 62. 6^{cd}.: *upahvaré yád úparā ápinvan mádhvarṇaso nadyàś cátasraḥ*. Geldner⁶¹ understands *upahvará* here as the female organ, i.e. as *yóni* as understood in our imagery. A more similar ease in IV. 17. 14^{cd}, *á kṛṣṇá im juhurāṇò jigharti tvacó budhné rájaso asyá yónau*: “the shaping and reshaping dark (cloud), sprinkles at the bottom of the skin (i.e. embryonic membrane in the imagery) at the origin (exit-passage—*yónau*) of this atmospheric vapour.” Said of an obscure activity of Indra, this lends support to the imagery of I. 79. 3. In this verse the filling up of the skin at the *yóni* is the conception of Agni. The whole verse is a biomorphic description of clouds and rains meant to explicate the emergence of Agni as inheriting the qualities of the three Ādityas, viz., Aryaman, Varuṇa and Mitra, who historically preceded Agni as superior gods.

According to this analysis, *rájas* may be regarded as atmosphere, atmospheric water and also as the menstrual blood of the all-pervading mothers.

But menstrual blood was regarded in ancient embryology as one of the ingredients of the embryo⁶², and after this it is not materially different from lochial blood—the imagery of Rta in these descriptions.

The following facts also may be considered.

In III. 1 Agni is imagined as the child of waters who is nursed by some seven sisters. In III. I. 3^{cd} it has been said that Agni was found in waters; in the next verse the birth of the child finds description. And in III. 1. 5 Agni is said to have spread Rajas:

“III. 1. 3^{cd} The gods found Agni gleaming in the waters, in the work of the sisters. 4. The seven young (females) increased the charming (thing) born white (but) red by greatness; they went forward (upto Agni) like mares upto a foal that has been born; the gods gazed at Agni at his birth. 5. Spreading Rajas with his bright limbs, purifying the intellect

with wise purifications, clothing (himself) in light, the vital-energy in the waters, he unfolds mighty, undiminishing beauty.”

What can be the sense of *rājas* in the fifth verse? The prominence of the imagery of child-birth does not warrant the sense of mere aerial space as understood by Oldenberg, Geldner and others. The classical sense of the word best suits the context.

The Greek and Gothic cognates of *rājas* are *ērebos* and *riqiz-a* respectively; they express the sense of ‘a place of nether darkness’. The eventual degradation of the suggested original sense of the world in all societies⁶³ should explain how the glorious substratum of Agni in the ṚV. could have turned out to be a place of nether darkness in sister languages.

Agni is sometimes called *ṛtāsya gārbhaḥ* (VI. 48. 5.)—‘the embryo of Ṛta’. While *apāṃ gārbhaḥ* means ‘the embryo belonging to the waters’, the phrase *ṛtāsya gārbhaḥ* seems to indicate the sense of ‘the embryo meant for Ṛta’. In this sense it may mean Agni.⁶⁴

(c) *An historical note on symbolism*: Yāska, Sāyaṇa and some lexicons⁶⁵ know *ṛtá* as a synonym of waters. Yāska had the Nighaṇṭu before him which reads *ṛtá* as a synonym of waters.

One of the reasons for rejecting this equation is its absurdity. Later developments speak against it. *ṛtá* becomes very rare in classical Sanskrit, *dharma* having replaced it as a more convenient word. The Amarakoṣa does not record the word *ṛta*. But *an-ṛta*, ‘non-truth’, ‘falsehood’ is recorded (Amarakoṣa II. 9. 2, 3). Only the sense of truth is denoted here. ‘*ṛtu*, ‘seasons’, ‘menses’ too can be related only to the sense of regularity. We find no trace of the sense of water in these.

The author of the Nighaṇṭu as well as Yāska could comprehend that *ṛtá* as water could solve some exegetical problems. But they were Etymologists. The Etymologists left no word unexplained; but their main concern was to make a word relevant to the context by finding out an appropriate sense through a convenient etymology from a verb-root. Yāska

enjoins (N. II. I) that even in a difficult or absurd case the desired sense should be adhered to and a convenient verb-root should be found out. If necessary, the grammatically plausible derivation should be ignored, but in no case should one refrain from finding out an etymological equation. Yāska found nothing irrational in this. He believed that all words are derived from verb-roots and that roots often leave little trace in derived words. With *ṛtá* he had little problem. $\sqrt{ṛ}$ means 'to go, to send forth', *ṛtá* 'that which goes'. Waters run and are *ṛtá*.

This approach may raise the problem of the absence of conformity between the conventional sense and the supposed etymology (*rūḍhi* and *nirukti*) of a word. Later Indian commentators marked the problem and it came to the notice of Geldner⁶⁶ also. The problem rises with the word *ṛtá*.

The crux of the problem is that Yāska understands only equation—a word may only directly express a sense. The approach of symbolic analysis is different and presupposes the recognition of synecdoche—*lakṣaṇā*.⁶⁷ In India the idea of literary symbolism was only incipient. Śankara⁶⁸ recognises the universal use of the word *jyotiḥ* 'light' in the sense of that which illuminates and in the sense of consciousness. But Śankara, too, regards *jyotiḥ* as a synonym of Brahman. For, as consciousness Brahman illuminates. Sāyaṇa goes farther on X. 121. 7^{ab} explaining fire produced in the primeval waters as an *upalakṣaṇa*, a sign, for all that is produced. By the time of Sāyaṇa *lakṣaṇā* had become fully recognised. The expression of the sense of something related to the primary sense of a word through the latter is a distinct property of word. The relation between the two senses is called *lakṣaṇā*. A common illustration of *lakṣaṇā* is *gaṅgāyāṃ ghoṣaḥ*—'the milk-man's village on the Ganges' where 'Ganges' carries the sense of the bank of the river. Symbolism is based on *lakṣaṇā*—the relation between the conventional sense and the object to be symbolised. But this is not mere synecdoche. Symbolism, as proposed here, is distinguished by its wide occurrence in the context of a weltanschauungliche problem.

Fromm⁶⁹ distinguishes between three kinds of symbols—conventional, accidental and universal. Words in their conventional sense, pictures, written signs etc. are conventional symbols; symbols limited to individuals are accidental. “The universal symbol is one in which there is an intrinsic relation between the symbol and that which it represents.”

Vedic symbolism is to be included in the third category of Fromm. But Fromm’s definition does not distinguish between synecdoche and symbolism. It should be added that symbolism occurs only in the context of the expression of a problem of world-outlook.

The symbolism in the rain-waters of the regular and legitimate process of the universe is universal and expressive of a fundamental Vedic concept. Somerset Maugham’s *Rain* where the title is defended only by the main theme of the story—the legitimate indomitability of the sex-impulse—is not methodologically distant from the thought process noted here. The ideologies are different.

5. The Aṅgirasas and connected problems

(a) *Origin* : In the given translation of ṚV. IV. 1 (II. 1 above) it has been assumed that the host (*śárdhah*) and the group of seven (*saptá priyásah*) of verse 12, the human fathers (*pitáro manuṣyáh*) of vs. 13 and the hosts (*vráh*) of vs. 16 equally mean the seven Aṅgirasas. Those Aṅgirasas bring many problems with them. They are the principal actors in the myth. But the fact that there have been historical Aṅgirasas—Brahmins belonging to the Aṅgirasa gotra—has naturally produced researches into their historical origin.

The Aṅgirasas as well as the Atharvans are usually regarded as of Indo-Iranian origin and as ancient priest-magicians.⁷⁰ But there is little science in the marking out of particular groups of ancient priests as practisers of magic; for, some form of magic is to be found in every pre-modern religious practice.

D. D. Kosambi’s views are different. Comparing the Ṛgvedic seven priests with seven figures inscribed on two Harappan

seals and, at the same time, relying upon some Mesopotamian parallels Kosambi concludes, 'At the very least, we can say that they are pre-Aryan associates of a mother-goddess in creation. The goddess survives later as Uṣas, daughter of the sky, after being smashed up by Indra as an evil-plotting female (IV. 30. 8-11).'⁷¹ About the relation of the Aṅgirasas and the Atharvans he says "The Atharvan is the proper fire-priest of one Aryan group, and association with him was the means whereby the Aṅgirasas and the Bhṛḡus climbed into Vedic priesthood."⁷² In another place Kosambi says that the Aṅgirasas "claim affinity with the light deities."⁷³ His views can be summarised as follows. The seven Aṅgirasas—originally light-deities—had been the associates of a mother-goddess in creation in a pre-Vedic Harappan myth. The cult of the mother goddess came into clash with the cult of Indra—the war god.⁷⁴ She diminished in importance with the rise of Indra and survived meagrely in the Vedic goddess Uṣas. The Aṅgirasas eventually received honourable place in Vedic culture.

There is nothing to doubt that the deciphering of the Harappan script may unveil many secrets of the origin of the Indian civilisation as well as of Ṛgvedic mythology. Kosambi's theory and the points brought to our notice by him indicate the same. But his observations also bring into forefront some problems.

For example, it is curious that the host (*śárdhaḥ*) of IV.1.12, evidently the fathers,⁷⁵ are mentioned in IV.1.16 as *vráḥ*—a feminine form. Bergaigne⁷⁶ and Pischel⁷⁷ take the word to mean females. In III.1 also there appears a group of females—the seven sisters—taking part in the event of Agni's birth. The gods found Agni in the work of those sisters (III.1.3), Agni lay in the exit-door (*yóni*) of Ṛta in the work of the uterine sisters (III.1.11), the seven young females made the propitious Agni grow (III.1.4). The propitious seven mothers of Agni have been mentioned also in I.141.2. In I.71.1 the sisters are mentioned, the Aṅgirasas come into the picture in verse 2, and the thirstless active females who strengthened the birth of Agni are mentioned in verse 3. The propitious smiling females, with

whom Agni came, are mentioned in I.79.2 and also in X.8.6. They are mentioned as the seven sisters in I.164.3, X.5.5 etc.

It is to be noted that the sisters were active and their 'work' was important for the birth of Agni. The 'work' was apparently that of increasing Agni. In the imagery of the waters and the child Agni their work, thus, seems to be that of nurses or midwives.

Now, Kosambi holds the opinion that in the evolution of the myth of Uṣas, the mother goddess went to the background with the rise of the warlike god Indra, that "patriarchy had conquered finally."⁷⁸ Thus he comes to the conclusion that "a pre-existing matriarchal form of society shows itself through the myth of several mothers jointly giving birth to a god with an equal number of heads or faces. These mothers, as representatives of local tribes or gentes, are later replaced by eponymous Brahmin ancestors, the ṛṣis."⁷⁹

Kosambi's full thesis is not clear. But he regards the seven mothers as of Harappan origin. And since the seven figures on the seals are noted as male figures⁸⁰ the obvious implication is that the said replacement took place in Harappan mythology. But the seven mothers are quite Ṛgvedic. And Kosambi himself avers that the seals show male figures and not females. So we face the problem of the parallel replacement of the mothers by the fathers in Harappan as well as Ṛgvedic mythology. This shows that it is very difficult to go beyond pointing out the existence of the idea of the seven fathers in Harappan as well as Ṛgvedic mythology and also of possible connections. Hence so long as our knowledge remains limited to the depicted figures on the seals, it is better to accept the seven mothers or sisters as of proto-Ṛgvedic origin. How the seven fathers are preferred to them and eventually replace them are matters of Vedic and post-Vedic mythology.

The word *vrāh* might be a vestige of the older form of the myth in which the mothers play the part of the Aṅgirasas.

One may now speak of three possible traditions finding their way into ṚV. IV. 1.

One relates to mother Uṣas and her seven male associates—

a Harappan creation myth about the release of the sun according to Kosambi.

Another relates to the motherly waters and seven females active in bringing about Agni's birth. This might be of proto-Rgvedic origin. It is found in a ruinous state in the RV, but might be reconstructed in its outline as follows.

The motherly waters encompassed the entire universe. In their womb—that is in the atmospheric region—there was Rta which did not flow. In Rta lay Agni as embryo. Rta passed into Agni strengthening him in the womb. Agni was born and seven young sisters or mothers nursed the child ; they acclaimed the streams of Rta flowing from the womb of Agni's mother following the birth of Agni and, perhaps, represented by the transformation of atmospheric vapour into rains. The bright streams of Rta universally expanded. There was light.

There was another story, perhaps originally different, in which the mothers would tend to become cows or a cow, Agni would be her calf and the fathers would replace the sisters. Agni was also the bull, and Rta was no more the blood of the mother but became the milk of the cow. The bull-cum-calf Agni first engendered the embryo in the womb of the mother. After this Agni himself became the embryo and was born as the calf. The calf perfectly perforated the udder of the cow and Rta began to flow.

In IV.1 those ideas are combined into one myth but remnants of older forms remain scattered here and there in the account.

The seven females of the second myth are called *saptá vāñih* (III.1.6). Though their relevancy is not fully clear, as seven speeches (metres ?) they certainly fit into an account of the emergence of intellectual clarity on material basis as proposed for the second myth above (II.4a).

But it is difficult to accept that as the symbolism of the Aṅgirasas also ; for, the released cows are sufficient to depict the emergence of different forms of speech. Kosambi speaks of the original nature of the Aṅgirasas as light-deities—a vague term. The many sided problems which those beings bring with

them do not warrant equations with objects of nature though such equations seem to remove all obscurities once for all.

It is better first to appreciate what one finds in the RV. The fathers play the main role in the myth of the release of cows from obstructing mountains. The event is often mentioned as an exploit of Indra when the fathers usually appear as Aṅgirasas; but 'Indra assumes a less prominent position than the Aṅgirasas in the myth of the cows.'⁸¹ The special connection of the Aṅgirasas with Agni is known from more than one Rgvedic passage. They discovered Agni (V.11.6); Agni is himself an Aṅgiras—the foremost Aṅgiras (*āṅgirastama*); the Aṅgirasas were also born with Agni.⁸² Since Agni is himself often called an Aṅgiras, perhaps, we get here an inkling of the prevailing notion among those belonging to the family of the Aṅgirasas of their igneous origin.

The Aṅgirasas are also the first wise beings (*prathamā vedhāso* IV.2.15).⁸³ This is the import of also IV.1. In conformity with the proposed significance of the myth, the Aṅgirasas may be said to represent the first enlightened human beings. The epithet *prathamō vedhāḥ* also belongs to Prajāpati in classical Sanskrit literature.⁸⁴ But there is an important difference between Prajāpati and the Aṅgirasas. The Aṅgirasas are not gods. There is clear reference to them as "our most ancient fathers", as "our human fathers" (IV.2.16, IV.1.13) and presumably as the founders of the clans.

(b) *The supersession of the Aṅgirasas by gods and the anomaly of RV.IV.1-3*: This brings us to another problem mentioned earlier (II.1). RV.IV.1 begins with the statement that gods set Agni to work so that men might worship Agni as favourably turned towards them. In the given account of the event (11-18), on the contrary, it is not gods but human beings who play the main role.

As the concerned verses present the matter, setting Agni to work means instituting the fire-ritual among men so that Agni may carry the oblations of the sacrifice to the gods. This setting Agni to work is quite a Rgvedic idea.

On this one may refer to Bergaigne⁸⁶ who regarded Vedic mythology to have been closely connected with the Vedic sacrifice ; the rites are invariably imitations of celestial phenomena understood in the RV as celestial sacrifices which happen to be related in myths consisting of anthropomorphic or zoomorphic figures. Accordingly the scholar came to hold the opinion that the birth of Agni was the kindling of fire taking place in the celestial region as well as on earth. The celestial kindling of fire meant sunrise or storm, producing lightning. This celestial sacrifice was instituted on earth to be imitated by man as the terrestrial sacrifice. The gods supplied man with a model to be copied on earth.⁸⁶ RV. IV. 1 describes a terrestrial sacrifice performed by ancient forefathers in imitation of the said celestial sacrifice. The terrestrial sacrifice was deemed to influence the celestial phenomenon which it sought to imitate. Hence the terrestrial sacrifice of the hoary antiquity is glorified as having given rise to the sun.⁸⁷

Bergaigne did not comment on the relevancy of the first verse. But according to him the institution of sacrifice on earth was an act by gods. Hence there should be nothing unnatural in the account of an important terrestrial sacrifice being introduced with a statement of the institution of the ritual among men by gods.

A full review of Bergaigne's theses, specially those concerning the celestial sacrifice by gods and its imitation by men, can be made only in Ch. III below dealing with the representation of the birth of Agni in the Agnyādheya. However, it is possible to enter into a few details here without referring to the fire-ritual.

The events of the myth do not describe the institution of the fire-ritual. Secondly, the hymns concerned do not confirm that the wise ancestors imitated the gods. The Aṅgirasas coming into being with Agni, breaking the rock and releasing the cows find certain descriptions,⁸⁸ but no where is it stated that any imitation of gods was meant. On the contrary, in IV.2.15-17 it is the present poet who aspires to be equal to the Aṅgirasas by doing what they did. The two ideas—one of the gods setting

Agni to work and the other of the Aṅgirases setting the cows free after the birth of Agni etc. have not been consistently moulded into a single theme in IV.1.

Now, as stated earlier (II.1 above) the incongruous nature of the initial verses was noted by three scholars. On metrical grounds "Grassmann believed that the first three verses are the fragment of one hymn and that verses 4-20 form a second hymn. His reason was that verses 1-3 are composed in metres similar to Atyaṣṭi, (Aṣṭi, Atijagatī and Dhṛti, D.B.) while the rest are composed in Triṣṭubh." Oldenberg⁸⁹ slightly modified Grassmann's opinion on other grounds. He remarked that in 1-5 Agni is invoked to appease the anger of Varuṇa while no allusion to Varuṇa occurs in 6-20. Hence he believed that the first hymn had consisted of verses 1-5 and not of 1-3 as believed by Grassmann.

Oldenberg was wrong in stating that in 1-5 Agni is invoked to appease the anger of Varuṇa. For, though verses 2-5 concern this, the theme in the first verse is that of setting Agni to work among men by gods.

Geldner⁹⁰ saw the matter differently. He gave a logical explanation for the prayer to appease the anger of Varuṇa in 2-5, which he did not mention as fragments of another hymn or later addition.

But this does not solve the problem of the first three verses. It is to be noted that the first three verses are composed in three uncommon and similarly lengthy metres while 4-20 are composed in the more usual Triṣṭubh. Even accepting Geldner's view that the prayer to appease the anger of Varuṇa is not irrelevant one may note that verses 4-5 are sufficient for appeasing the anger of Varuṇa. But two extra verses (2-3) serving the same purpose and in uncommon metres precede them. Hence it is difficult to rule out the possibility of verses 2-3 having been later additions. Moreover, Geldner did not comment on the relevancy of the first verse which is not only composed in an unusual metre but also has a theme absolutely different from the one in the rest of the hymn.

Since so many opinions have been expressed on the initial

verses one more may be added here. Two positive things come out from the discussion. First, the prayer to appease the anger of Varuṇa is relevant. But the first three verses do not fit well into the hymn. So what one has still got to answer is the necessity of two extra verses (2-3) in unusual metres to appease the anger of Varuṇa and the unique theme of the first verse. Now, the first verse aims (II.1) at giving, or rather, adding a new meaning—that of the institution of the fire-sacrifice among men by gods—to a current story involving Agni, the Aṅgirasas and the consequent events. So this could be the first addition to the hymn which had originally consisted of verses 4-20. In this form the hymn consisted of verses 1 and 4-20 of the present hymn. But this left the hymn with an initial verse whose theme and metre were both different from the rest of the hymn so that the later superimposition of the theme was palpably clear. This palpable incongruity was sought to be removed later by the addition of two extra verses (2-3) composed in the same class of metre as the one of the new addition (1) but having the theme of the original initial verses (4-5) appeasing the anger of Varuṇa. Similar to verse 1 in their metres, and similar to verses 4-5 in their theme verses 2-3, thus, served as a bridge between the added first verse and the original hymn (4-20). There could be no better way than this of removing the uncomfortable conspicuity of the first verse. The success of the plan is proved by the erroneous remark of Oldenberg that in verses 1-5 Agni is invoked to appease the anger of Varuṇa, indicating his failure to note the difference in the theme of the first verse. The incongruity of the first verse could go unnoticed even by Geldner.

The addition means that the ideas about the origin of Agni still went on changing even after the main part of the hymn (4-20) had been composed. Was it gods who played the main role in the birth of Agni and the institution of the fire-ritual on earth, or, it was our fathers who were born with Agni and performed the model act after which the present ritual is arranged? As indicated in IV.1.10, 13, IV.2.15-17 etc. the act of the Aṅgirasas was regarded as model. Side by side with this the idea

of the origin of Agni among gods and that of his establishment and institution by them also grew. These two ideas gave rise to the divine model deemed to be imitated on earth which became more prominent than the events of RV. IV.1 by the end of the R̥gvedic period.⁹¹ The trend is perceptible in the addition of the first verse to RV. IV.1. Further discussion of the historical relation of the idea of the divine model and its institution to that of the myth of IV.1 is reserved for section 7 and Ch. III below.

(c) *Scholars on traditions about Agni's origin*: The foregoing discussion would have it made clear that there are certain other ideas about the origin of Agni in the RV which cannot be fully explained by IV.1. The first modern discussion on some of these was initiated by Adalbert Kuhn in his *Herabkunft des Feuers und des Göttertranks* about the middle of the last century. As the title indicates the work is concerned more with the fetching of fire and drinks on earth than with the birth of Agni. At present it carries only historical value. Bergaigne whose views were noted above gave a new meaning to the stories which he bound into a single theme. Oldenberg⁹² made the most significant service to the study by sifting the ideas and applying the historical method. The views of the scholar are given below. The discussion may at first seem to reach beyond the scope of this section. But it will finally bring us to the main topic—Agni and the Aṅgirasas.

According to Oldenberg there are four traditions about the origin of Agni—the birth of Agni or the appearance of Agni in different places, the fetching of Agni to earth by Mātariśvan, the institution of the fire ritual by the Bhṛgus and the finding out of Agni by the gods.

Agni is one of the least anthropomorphised gods. So there is little scope for the growth of myths about Agni. Agni means fire and the birth of Agni means the generation of fire on earth, or, that of light in the sky. "Where there is no fire, I do not know of the R̥gveda having spoken of the presence of the deity. One hears of Agni hidden in waters or plants, but here also the

fire is not lost sight of; the fire is now thought of as held latent in water or wood. When one produces the sacrificial fire through the kindling sticks it is not that one first generates the ungodly element and then asks the god to enter into that, but one generates the god or brings about his birth."⁹³ There are two general births of Agni that is light in heaven and earth. The heavenly Agni is kindled by the gods. This theme originates in the idea that the gods should kindle fire like men, as well as from the idea that the heavenly light—sun and lightning—should have been produced by somebody. The aqueous origin of Agni concerns the water in plants which, as wood, kindles Agni. The idea sometimes also pertains to fire thought to be latent in water in general—including that in cloud, river and pond—which by virtue of its fire-extinguishing property, seems to be capable of absorbing and conserving fire.

“Between the descriptions of Agni’s various births and those of his descent on earth, or rather, his fetching here lies a certain difference. There it is an earthly birth attributed to Agni, as entitled to the same authenticity as of his heavenly birth, here his earthly origin is derived from the heavenly one. There it is Agni—a god born, here—at least according to the original plan—a passive object is fetched down.⁹⁴ Perhaps this means the production of earthly fire from lightning.⁹⁵ The myth of Prometheus makes it possible that the story of bringing fire to earth goes back to Indo-European antiquity. It arose at a time when the element had not yet been deified. The Indian Prometheus is Mātariśvan. Of course, the Vedic presentation makes a poor comparison to the universal tragedy to which the ‘deep pathos of the Greek spirit’ raised the story.

The story of the diffusion of fire on earth through the Bhṛḡus is different from the previous one. “There the scene of the event is basically the universe,.....here it concerns rather the dissemination of fire, specially the ritual fire, in human abodes by an ancient legendary family of priests.”⁹⁶ Sometimes Mātariśvan is said to have brought the fire for the Bhṛḡus (I. 60. 1). But this is a confusion.

There is still another story, that of the gods having found

out Agni from hiding: "The gods are naturally not less interested than the priestly beings that Agni should remain active with the sacrifice. So they also seek him and find him out."⁹⁷

Oldenberg himself was not much interested in this story and just cited parts of RV. X. 51-52 in translation as the principal account of the event.

It will be interesting to note how Oldenberg saw the myth of IV. 1. In the section on Agni in ORV the setting of Agni to work by gods is not even once mentioned, nor even the birth of the Aṅgirasas along with Agni and the consequent events. IV. 3. 11 has once been cited in a different context.⁹⁸ The idea of the connection between certain fire-rituals and sunrise has been noted. And under the influence of this notion, it has been said, the Indra myth of the winning of the sun managed to find a place in certain Agni-hymns. Obviously the scholar did not recognise RV. IV. 1 as an account of the birth of Agni. This is further confirmed by the fact that no such understanding is to be noted in his English translation of the hymn and accompanying notes in SBE. XLVI.

The relation between the Aṅgirasas and Agni is told incidentally in course of a discussion on whether Agni was considered the father of the human race: "The idea of Agni as Aṅgiras, as the most distinguished Aṅgiras (*āṅgirastama*) is far more strongly established in the tradition than the one of (him) as the father of men."⁹⁹ The equation is explained: "Aṅgirasas are, of course, not the ancient most human beings in general, but as the ancestors of the historical families of priests they are the ancient most priests. However, the priest par excellence, and, naturally the ancient-most priest is Agni. So he had to be an Aṅgiras."¹⁰⁰

The whole story of the Aṅgirasas releasing the cows was analysed by Oldenberg in the section on Indra.¹⁰¹ The story, it is noted, is mostly connected with Indra though Indra has the least part to play in it. It may be doubted whether the act of winning the cows originally belonged to Indra. A Greek story of Heracles killing the three-bodied Geryon and stealing

his cattle might indicate the possibility of the origin of the story in Indo-European antiquity. Secondly, there is a story of Trita Āptya, inspired by Indra, releasing the cows of the three-headed Viśvarūpa, the son of Tvaṣṭṛ. This has got an Avestan parallel. The Paṇis, Saramā, Vala and the Aṅgirasas along with Indra are Indian developments.

Agni steps in due to a typical Ṛgvedic tendency to bind two gods in pair. When one thus honours Indra and Agni in common, also the tendency to extend the activities of one god to the other rises. Agni is no drinker of Soma but becomes one in Indra's association ; he becomes a killer of Vṛtra, the wielder of the vajra ; like Indra he also becomes the winner of the sun, cows and morning rays. The significance of the story is didactic—one should not deny the priestly class their treasure, the cow. It is also possible, perhaps probable, that the cows mean the morning rays.

There cannot be any objection to Oldenberg's classifying the different traditions about the origin of Agni. But the setting of Agni to work by gods among men is a definite Ṛgvedic notion.¹⁰² This has not been clearly recognised. The theory of the Indo-European origin of the story of the release of cows, though interesting, has nothing to do with the origin of the Aṅgirasas. Oldenberg spoke of possibilities only. In this regard the archaeological evidences collected by Kosambi, though not conclusive, also are not negligible. Oldenberg (1854-1920), of course, could not be aware of the enormous Harappan civilisation looming in the background of Indian history. But more serious is the implied notion in Oldenberg's theses that there is no independent and full-fledged myth about the birth of Agni and also that the association of the Aṅgirasas with the birth of Agni is only occasional. For, the two ideas seem to be connected, the second one being the basis of the first.¹⁰³

It is true that the Aṅgirasas are very often said to have been led by Indra for the release of the cows so that it looks natural that the Indra-myth could have been the original Vedic story of the release of cows. But, as shown above, Agni also

TABLE OF THE AṄGIRASES

NOTE: The initials generally indicate the name of the deity of the hymn or of the verse concerned. The figures 1/1, 1/3 etc. indicate case-endings and numbers. When the deity with whom the Aṅgirasas are associated (Group I), or the deity or the person who is addressed to or mentioned as Aṅgiras etc. (Group II), is not the deity of the verse or hymn concerned, the latter is indicated in parentheses. These are classed as mixed references in the Analysis (70 ff below). The mixed nature of certain other references has been clarified in the Analysis.

ABBREVIATIONS: A = Agni, Ad = Ādityas, Aśv = Aśvins, B = Bṛhaspati, D = Dadhikrāvan, G = Gāvaḥ, H = Hiraṇyastūpa, I = Indra, M = Maruts, P = Pracetas, S = Soma, Sa = Savitr, SP = Saramā and Papis, T = Tvaṣṭr, U = Uṣas, V = Viśvedevāḥ, Y = Yama.

RV BOOK	GROUP I—62 references										aṅgirasvat (adv)
	aṅgiras			aṅgira		aṅgiras-tamah	aṅgirasān				
	1/1	1/3, Voc/3	3/3	4/3	6/3	7/1					
I	139.9-AI 62.2-I 71.2-A		62.5, 100.4-I	51.3, 132.4-I 139.7-A	62.3-I 127.2-A 107.2-I(V) 121.1,3 (I or V)? 20.5-I	83.4-A(I)			62.1-I 31.17,45.3,78.3-A	18	
II			15.8-I						17.1-I 31.19-I	3	
III		53.7-I					51.4-U			2	
IV		2.15, 3.11-A	16.8-I							4	
V	45.7-V	11.6-A 45.8-V								3	
VI		65.5-U	18.5-I	11.3-A						5	
VII		42.1-V 52.3-Ad	44.4-D						35.5-I	3	
VIII				14.8, 63.3-I					49.11-M (V)	4	
IX				62.9, 86.23-S					43.13-A 40.12-AI	2	
X	92.15-V	14.6-Y 62.1-5-AI(V) 67.2-B 78.5-M 108.8, 10-SP 169.2-A(G)	14.3, 4, 5-Y 111.4-I	70.9-T (Āprī)				62.6-A(V)		18	
	3	21	10	7	8	1	1	1	1	9	62

GROUP II—40 references

RV BOOK	āṅgiras		āṅgirastama		āṅgirasá		āṅgirasvant	
	Voc/1	1/1						
I	1.6, 31.17, 74.5-A 112.18-Aśv 23.18-B	31.1.-A	31.2(1/1), 75.2 (Voc/1)-A 100.4, 130.3(1/1)-I				11.20(1/1)-I	9 2 1 3
II								
III								
IV	3.15, 9.7-A	31.7-I			40.1(6/1)-B(D)			
V	8.4, 10.7, 11.6 A 21.1							4 4 2
VI	2.10, 16.11-A				73.1(1/1)-B		17.6(1/1)-I	4 4
VII			75.1, 79.3(1/1)-U					2
VIII	60.2, 74.11, 75.5 A 84.4, 102.17		23.10(2/1) 43.18, 27; 44.8 (Voc/1) A 107.6 (1/1)-S				35.14(1/2)-Aśv	10 1
IX								
X							164.4(1/1)-P(Duḥsvapna) 47.6(1/1)-B(I) 68.2(1/1)-B 149.5(1/1)-H(Sa)	4 6 6 6
	18	2	11	3	6	11	40	

has got a place in the myth according to certain accounts.¹⁰⁴ Hence we are faced with a problem which calls for the application of the methodology indicated in the Introduction.¹⁰⁵ It has got to be decided whether the poet is describing two things almost through the same imagery or, the association of the Aṅgirasas with the birth of Agni and the consequent events comes occasionally as secondary traits in the character of Agni as maintained by Oldenberg and various other scholars.

(d) *The Aṅgirasas, Agni and Indra*: The independent nature of the place of the Aṅgirasas in the myth of the birth of Agni is indicated by the general picture of the association of the Aṅgirasas and Agni in the ṚV. The stem *āṅgiras* occurs in the ṚV 102 times in singular, plural and derivatives. These are classified in the table on pages 68 and 69, and the analysis thereof is given below.

ANALYSIS OF TABLE

General

The 102 instances of the use of the stem *āṅgiras* (twice *āṅgira*, see below) are divided into two groups. The first group comprise 62 direct references to the mythical Aṅgirasas collectively, or to individual mythical Aṅgirasas. Generally, the simple stem is used in declension in this group, but *taddhita*-derivatives also occur. Declined *taddhita*-derivatives are *āṅgirasān* and *āṅgirastamaḥ*; the adverb, *āṅgirasvāt* is not declined. The declined forms generally occur in plural (*āṅgirasah*, 1/3, voc./3 *āṅgirobhiḥ* 3/3 etc. < *āṅgiras* 46 times; *āṅgirāḥ* = *āṅgira* 1/3, ṚV. I.83.4, once; *āṅgirasān*, VI.35.5, once) indicating the mythical personages collectively. Singular forms occur 5 times. They are *āṅgirāḥ* (= *āṅgiras* 1/1, I.139.9: epithet of Dadhyañc; V.45.7: personage of that name; X.92.15: personage not specified), *āṅgire* (= *āṅgira* 7/1, IV.51.4: epithet of Navagva or Daśagva), *āṅgirastamaḥ* (X.62.6: epithet of Navagva or Daśagva). The adverb *āṅgirasvāt* 'like the Aṅgirasas'—occurring 9 times always alludes to the deeds of the ancient Aṅgirasas. The term generally qualifies the present

worship of the poet as he hopes to be equal to the mythical beings by invoking the deity after their manner (I.45.3, I.62.1, I.78.3, II.17.1, III.31.19, VI.49.11, VIII.40.12, VIII.43.13). Once (I.31.17) the adverb qualifies the mode of favouring the poet by the god when the poet asks Agni to come to him as he did to the Aṅgirasas. The references in this group give a picture of the association of various deities with the mythical personages.

The second group comprise 40 instances of the use of the stem *āṅgiras* in declension (18 in vocative singular, 2 in 1/1), or of its adjectival derivatives (*āṅgirasá* 6, *āṅgirastama* 11, *āṅgirasvant* 3) as epithets of particular deities or seers of hymns. The grammatical number in this group is always singular excepting in VIII.35.14 where the Aśvins are meant. The second group of examples, unlike those of the first group, do not at first indicate the association of the deities with the mythical personages ; but these are significant, (see the sequel of this discussion).

Group I

Of the 62 references in this group 18 do not concern Agni or Indra ; in 29 the references to association exclusively concern Agni or Indra (among gods) and are certain ; in the remaining 15 they are mixed or uncertain.

(a) 18 references not concerning Indra or Agni :—

V.45.7,8, VII.42.1, X.62.2-4, X.92.15 (general); IV.51.4 (Uṣases), VI.49.11 (Maruts), VI.65.5 (Uṣases), VII.52.3 (Ādityas) ; IX.62.9, IX.86.23 (Soma) ; X.14.3-6 (Yama), X.78.5 (Maruts).

(b) 29 clear references to Indra or Agni as classified below :—

(i) 11 clear references to the association of Agni with the Aṅgirasas : I.31.17, 45.3, 71.2, 78.3, 127.2, 139.7 ; IV.2.15, 3.11 ; V.11.6 ; VI.11.3 ; VIII.43.13.

(ii) 18 clear references to the association of Indra with the Aṅgirasas : I.51.3, 62.1, 2, 3, 5, 100.4, 132.4 ; II.15.8, 17.1, 20.5 ;

III.31.19, 53.7 ; IV.16.8 ; VI.18.5, 35.5 ; VIII.14.8, 63.3 ; X.111.4.

(c) 15 mixed or uncertain references :—

(i) X.62.5. Part of the hymn (1-6) belongs to the Aṅgirasas. The Angirases were born from Agni.

(ii) X.62.6. See previous instance. *āṅgirastama* (best Aṅgiras)—an epithet of Daśagva or Navagva born from Agni.

(iii) VIII.40.12. Indrāgnī hymn. Adverb.

(iv) X.169.2. Hymn of cows. The Aṅgirasas created the cows by fervour ; Agni knew their names.

(v) VII.44.4. Hymn of Dadhikrāvan. Dadhikrāvan remains at the front of chariots with wisdom gained along with Uṣas, Sūrya, the Ādityas, the Vasus and the Aṅgirasas. Dadhikrāvan the divine horse seems to be a form of Agni.

(vi) X.70.9. Āpri-hymn.¹⁰⁸ Tvaṣṭṛ became the friend of the Aṅgirasas.

(vii) X.67.2. Bṛhaspati-hymn. The Aṅgirasas first devised the foundation of the sacrifice, presumably inspired by Bṛhaspati (cf. X.67.3). For the affinity of Bṛhaspati to Agni and the Aṅgirasas and the part played by him in the subsequent development of the ideas contained in RV. IV.1 see below and II.6, 8, 9.

(viii) I.139.9. Hymn of various deities. The verse is dedicated to Indra and Agni. Dadhyañc, mentioned along with other fathers, is called an Aṅgiras. Indra and Agni are both praised.

(ix) I.83.4. Indra-hymn. The verse has nothing to do with Indra. The Aṅgiras (*āṅgira*, 1/3) who are said to have gained the cows etc. of the Paṇis are called *iddhāgnayah*—‘they who had kindled fire.’

(x) X.62.1. Part of the hymn (1-6) belongs to the Aṅgirasas. The Aṅgirasas got Indra’s friendship.

(xi, xii) 1.121.1,3. Hymn of Indra or All-gods (*viśve devāḥ*). Meaning and significance of the verses are obscure.

(xiii, xiv) X.108.5, 10. Paṇi-hymn. In 8 the Aṅgirasas are referred to generally. In 10 the Ghora Aṅgirasas and Indra are referred to.

(xv) I.107.2. Hymn of All-gods. Indra is asked to come praised by the sāmans of the Aṅgirasas.

Comments on Group I references

To the 11 clear references to Agni's association with the Aṅgirasas X.169.2 and X.62.5, 6 also may be added. These make a total of 14 references. Again, each of I.139.9, I.83.4 VIII.40.12 partly concerns Indra and partly Agni. These might make for one more reference and a half to Agni and Indra each. To the 18 clear references to Indra, apart from the one and a half just worked out, three others, viz., I.107.2, X.62.1 and X.108.10 might be added. These make $22\frac{1}{2}$ references for Indra and $15\frac{1}{2}$ for Agni. Of the remaining 6, three (VII.44.4, X.67.2, X.70.9) seem to favour Agni and three (I.121.1, 3, X.108.8) Indra. These may be classified as undetermined. The final position is as follows :

<i>Deity</i>	<i>No. of. ref.</i>	<i>%</i>
Agni	$15\frac{1}{2}$ and 3 undetermined	25 + 4.85
Indra	$22\frac{1}{2}$ and 3 undetermined	36.3 + 4.85
Others	18	29
Total	$56 + 6 = 62$	$90.3 + 9.7 = 100$

It is to be appreciated here that the association of Agni with the Aṅgirasas is often alluded to also without any mention of the term *aṅgiras*. In such cases they are simply referred to as ancient fathers, wise-men (*vīprāḥ kavāyaḥ* etc.), seven wise-men, Uśijes etc. In the lengthiest account of the association of the Aṅgirasas with Agni (IV.1.11-18), with which the present study begins, the name of the Aṅgirasas is not even once mentioned, not even anywhere in the whole hymn. Such references seem to have been made also in I.69.10, I.72.2-6, I.73.5, III.31.3, VII.1.9, X.45.11, X.46.2 etc. The number in the list can be increased. And the same is true for Indra, too. The total picture thus drawn may only show a reduced percentage of the references in the third row (Others) and a substantial increase in that of those to Agni and Indra.

Group II

Of a total of 40 references 8 do not concern Agni or Indra, 27 clearly mean or concern one of the two deities and in 5 the use is mixed or uncertain.

(a) 8 not concerning Indra or Agni :—

I.112.18, VIII.35.14 (Aśvins), VII.75.1, VII.79.3 (Uṣases), IX.107.6 (Soma), X.149.5 (epithet of eponymous Hiraṇyastūpa in hymn of Savitr̥), VI.73.1, X.68.2 (Bṛhaspati).

(b) 27 clear occurrences as epithets of Agni or Indra :—

(i) 23 for Agni as classified below :—

17 declensions of *āṅgiras*., 16 in voc. and 1 (= I.31.1) in 1/1 : I.1.6, 31.1, 17, 74.5 ; IV.3.15, 9.7 ; V.8.4, 10.7, 11.6, 21.1 ; VI.2.10, 16.11 ; VIII.60.2, 74.11, 75.5, 84.4, 102.17.

6 of *āṅgirastama* : I.31.2 (1/1), 75.2, VIII.43.18, 27, 44.8 (voc.), VIII. 23.10 (2/1).

(ii) 4 for Indra as classified below :

2 as *āṅgirastamaḥ* : I.100.4, 130.3.

2 as *āṅgirasvān* : II.11.20, VI.17.6.

(c) 5 mixed or uncertain references :—

(i) IV.40.1. Dadhikrāvan-hymn. Epithet of Bṛhaspati praised along with Dadhikrāvan, waters, Agni, the Uṣases and Sūrya.

(ii) II.23.18. Bṛhaspati hymn. Epithet of Bṛhaspati associated with Indra.

(iii) X.47.6. Indra-hymn. Epithet of Bṛhaspati.

(iv) X.164.4. Hymn against bad dreams. Epithet of seer Pracetas. Indra also is addressed.

(v) III.31.7. Indra-hymn. Sense not clear.

Comments on Group II references

Of the five mixed or uncertain references IV.40.1 associates Bṛhaspati with Agni, and among the rest, three seem to associate Bṛhaspati or the seer of the hymn with Indra, and one is an obscure reference in an Indra hymn (III.31.7). The words are not epithets of Agni or Indra and may be classified as undetermined.

The final position is as follows :

<i>Deity</i>	<i>No. of ref.</i>	<i>%</i>
Agni	23 and 1 undetermined	57.5 + 2.5
Indra	4 and 4 undetermined	10 + 10
Others	8	20
Total	35 + 5 = 40	87.5 + 12.5 = 100

[Analysis concluded]

* * *

From the references in Group I one thing becomes sufficiently clear. Though the association of Agni with the mythical Aṅgirasas is less frequent than that of Indra, it is far more prominent than that of any other god, and cannot be brushed away as a secondary trait in the character of the god.

What is more important is that the nature of their association with the Aṅgirasas is not the same for the two deities. Indra leads the Aṅgirasas in a battle or a heroic feat,¹⁰⁷ while with Agni it is otherwise. In 1.83.4 the Aṅgiras (<*āṅgira*) are said to have kindled Agni before gaining the cows etc. of the Paṇis. In 1.71.1 the kindling of fire finds description while in the next verse the feat of the Aṅgirasas is mentioned. The same event is related in IV.2.15-16 while in the 17th verse it is stated that the Aṅgirasas had kindled Agni while besieging the stall of cows. In IV.3.11 the events follow the birth of Agni. Lastly according to IV.1. 11-18 also the birth of Agni precedes the feat of the Aṅgirasas.

This explains why Indra twice gets the epithet *āṅgirasvān* (adjective, lit. possessed of the Aṅgirasas, II.11.20, VI.17.6) meaning that he had the Aṅgirasas with him while doing his work, while Agni is never so called. Agni is not called *āṅgirasvān* because it was the Aṅgirasas who possessed Agni and not Agni who possessed them.

Again, on the other hand, Agni is 17 times called an Aṅgiras while Indra is never so called. Indra incidentally twice gets the term *āṅgirastama*, but Agni is 6 times so called. In total Agni is called *āṅgiras* or *āṅgirastama* 23 times, Indra 4

times. Obviously being an Aṅgiras is a primary trait of Agni and not of Indra. These indicate that Agni and the Aṅgiras share certain common traits,

But Agni and the Aṅgiras are not equal. Agni is not only an Aṅgiras but the first seer Aṅgiras (*prathamó aṅgirā ṛṣih*, I.31.1), the senior Aṅgiras (*jyēṣṭham aṅgirasām*, I.127.2). This can be explained only by an emphasis added to the precedence of the birth of Agni to the same of the Aṅgiras. Now, since the exploits of the Aṅgiras follow the birth of Agni, it may be presumed that the Aṅgiras come into being just after Agni and before their great discovery.

This is a significant feature of the myth. There are also certain direct allusions to the birth of the Aṅgiras just following the same of Agni. The coming into being of Agni and the same of the Aṅgiras are described in two consecutive verses (11, 12) of IV.1. Agni comes into being first and then the group of fathers for him. In IV.2.15 the birth of the Aṅgiras is remembered and praised as just preceding the event of the release of the cows; it may be presumed that Agni had already come into being. The two births are praised as equally great and presumably also as near coincident in III.31.3^c—*mahān gárbho máhy á jātám eṣām*: 'Great is the embryo (= Agni), great is their (= of the Aṅgiras) birth'. And according to X.62.5-6 the Aṅgiras are born from Agni.

This should be natural. For, Agni is the enlightened god while the Aṅgiras as the ancient most fathers are the first enlightened mortals, human beings. Mortals follow gods in their course.

This is why Agni can be called an Aṅgiras, the senior Aṅgiras or the Aṅgiras par excellence. They are all primordial enlightened beings or, the Primordial Enlightened Beings—one among them is god and the rest are mortals. The word *aṅgiras* is not an adjective for Agni, but a noun used as an epithet; and this use is the best indicator of the nature of Agni's association with the Aṅgiras which is quite different from the same of Indra.

How deep the notion of the near connascence of Agni and the Aṅgirasas had struck its root into Vedic tradition may be seen in later developments in the tenth and the first Maṇḍala of the ṚV as well as in the Atharvaveda where the tradition is not only maintained but is carried to its philosophical height. In ṚV. X.121.7, 8 the Aṅgirasas are replaced by Hiraṇyagarbha who, too, comes into being with Agni. In AVP. V. 2. (AVŚ. IV. 1) Bṛhaspati takes the place of the Aṅgirasas in an account of the birth of *bráhmaṇ* (sacrifice) from Brahman, comes into being with the latter and sings chants for him. It is also said in the hymn that the god (= Brahman) had been born with many (*eṣá jajñe bahúbhiḥ sākám itthá*, AVP. V.2.5, AVŚ. IV.1.6) reminding one of the early Ṛgvedic plurality of the Aṅgirasas. The emergence of the Aṅgirasas just after Agni's birth seems to have been reflected also in ṚV. X.129.3-4 which speak of the presence of certain wise beings (*kaváyaḥ*) when, 'That One was born.'¹⁰⁸

These new developments which can be traced back to the myth of ṚV. IV. 1 speak for the independent nature of the Agni-Aṅgiras relation and for the fact that this myth was different from the Indra myth which so much smacks of heroism. In the light of what one gets in the above mentioned new developments of the AV and ṚV. X, one may perhaps even conclude that the myth under discussion foreshadows later and developed speculations upon absolute consciousness (Brahman) and its relation to the primordial conscious subject (Īśvara). Of course, this is not the theme of ṚV. IV. 1 in which the Aṅgirasas, who are many and not one, seem to be the first enlightened *mortals* deriving their existence and enlightenment from Agni, the enlightener who comes into being from abstract, (presumably non-objective non-subjective) primordial speech. But later their plurality and mortality are got rid of as the Aṅgirasas are raised to divinity through Bṛhaspati and Prajāpati, while Agni also is replaced by other notions.¹⁰⁹ Hence the trend is towards the subsequent rise of subtle speculations upon Brahman and Īśvara.

The role of Indra in the myth of the release of cows is essentially different from that of Agni. Indra's feat has been described in various ways in the *ṚV.*¹¹⁰ He has been mentioned as having released the cows of Vala. According to another version he recovered the cows stolen by the Paṇis. In many cases only the cows have been mentioned. Whatever may be the form of the myth, its essence lies in Indra's valour, in his might whereby he could have won the cows. Indra performed a heroic job in killing Vala or in vanquishing or deceiving the Paṇis.

"Cows and horses are the goods which Indra, like other gods, is most often asked to bestow (I.16.9, 101.4, etc.), and it is chiefly to him that the epithet *gōpati*, 'lord of cows' is applied. His combats are frequently called *gāviṣṭi*, literally 'desire of cows' (VIII.24.5 etc.) and his gifts are considered the result of victories (IV.17.10, 11 etc.)."¹¹¹

Such things are alien to Agni.

The warlike character of Indra is so prominent in the *ṚV* that R. N. Dandekar observes that "the naturalistic or cosmic elements could not have been either the basic or the primary elements in Indra's character. They clearly produce the impression of having been superimposed on the original personality of the god."¹¹² By this Dandekar means to say that Indra could not have been originally a sun-god or a rain-god. D. D. Kosambi¹¹³ also contradicts the theory that there is only nature-myth connected with Indra. He does not categorically say that Indra had been an historical personality but maintains that in those descriptions of his heroic feats there are allusions to the actual performances of the Aryans against the Harappans. Coomaraswamy also contrasts the 'childish' character of Indra to that of Agni maintaining that they represent temporal and spiritual powers respectively.¹¹⁴

The characteristic features of Indra are revealed also in the story of his winning the sun. The sun is a prize of battle won by Indra. "The god is invoked to slay *Vṛtra* and win the light (VIII. 78.4). When Indra had slain the dragon *Vṛtra* with his metallic bolt, releasing the waters for man, he placed the sun

visibly in the heavens (I. 51.4, 52.8). Indra, the dragon-slayer, set in motion the flood of waters to the sea, generated the sun, and found the cows (II. 19.3). He gained the sun and the waters after slaying the demons (III. 34.8, 9). When Indra slew the chief of the dragons and released the waters from the mountain, he generated the sun, the sky and the dawn (I. 32.4, VI, 30.5). The sun shone forth when Indra blew the dragon from the air (VIII, 3.20)¹¹⁵ Even when the dragon slaying is not mentioned the matter is presented as Indra's winning the sun, and the essence lies in his valour. Oldenberg¹¹⁶ puts the matter as follows: "Perhaps it is only, or after all primarily, Indra's all-surpassing might for which these works (cow-winning and light-winning D.B.) tend equally to be attributed to him. Has not one to be the mightiest among the mighty in order to wrest the best properties of the enemy and give those to men, to set the most powerful beings like sun and sky in their places?"

Agni's connection with the appearance of the sun is of different nature. Agni does not win the sun but the sun becomes visible at his birth. There is clear indication in the *RV* as to how the idea grew independent of the Indra-myth of winning the sun. There is a notion in the *RV* that the kindling of fire facilitates sunrise. The reflection of this notion and the symbolism of the event in *RV*. IV. 1 were noted earlier (II. 3). Macdonell correctly states that this 'trait of the Agni myth resembles the winning of the sun in the Indra myth, but the original point of view in the two cases is clearly different.'¹¹⁷ Oldenberg puts the matter differently by maintaining that the said connection between the fire-ritual and the rising of the sun helped Agni in having a share in the Indra-myth.¹¹⁸ This is evidently a wrong assessment based on pre-conceptions about Indra. The two myths are generally different throughout the *RV*.

If, in addition to the two Indra-myths and two Agni-myths noted above, also the myth of Indra's dragon fight resulting in the release of huge mass of waters is brought into consideration, it may appear that one is getting three groups of myths or associations, each group consisting of two different associations

both drawing from the same source. Indra fights a successful battle to release a huge mass of waters : Agni is born in the primeval all-encompassing waters resulting in the constant flow of the streams of *Ṛta*. Indra wins the sun : the sun appears when Agni is born. The *Aṅgirases* help Indra in his heroic feat of releasing and winning cow : they release the cows after Agni is born.

For the two myths in the first group the source is untraceable. As Dandekar and Kosambi note, Indra's exploits are reminiscent historical events.¹¹⁹ The myths in the second group seem to have developed from an originally Agni-myth ; the contemporary superiority of Indra could bring him the extra glory of winning the sun. These as well as the third group of myths might partially be traced back to Harappan antiquity which seems to have known the seven sages. The truth of much of these, which may now pass just for speculation, may be, perhaps, tested by further spadework at Harappan sites and more co-ordinated examination of the available seals aided with facts supplied by Vedic mythology.

As to how two sets of parallel myths could come into being the possibilities have been indicated in the foregoing discussion.¹²⁰ The heroic traits in Indra's character reflect the urge of the Vedic people militarily to fight against their opponents, many of whom they had, and then to come to dominance in the Indian scene. The wise, fatherly Agni is, on the other hand, the symbol of enlightenment—which the Vedic Indians aspired after in consolidating the sacrificial cult.

Indra's association with the myth of the release of cows makes the beginning of things a heroic feat. But the spiritual aspect is not forgotten in that the *Aṅgirases* and Agni find place in it. When the second aspect has to be brought to prominence Indra disappears. This has happened in *ṚV. IV. 1*.

6. *Bṛhaspati* as anthropomorphised wise Agni

It is unlikely that the Vedic myth could pass into oblivion in subsequent ages. The Purāṇic legend of *Nārāyaṇa* lying on waters and *Prajāpati* *Brahmā* awakening him from primeval

slumber for the purpose of creation^{1 2 1} has points of similarity with the Vedic accounts of Agni's birth. The primeval sleep (*yoganidrā*) on the ocean of chaos (*pralayavāridhi*) is reminiscent of the pre-natal repose of Agni in the womb of the motherly waters. Prajāpati also is not functionally different from the chanting Aṅgirasas. But the link between these Vedic and Purāṇic accounts seems to have been served by certain other major developments within the Vedas. These are concepts like Bṛhaspati, Viṣṇu etc. These have been examined in the present and the following sections.

Like Agni, Bṛhaspati also is said to have been the first-born of Ṛta (VI. 73. 1 ; cf. III. 29.15, X. 5.7, I. 65. 10, I. 36. 11 etc.). He rent the rock along with the Aṅgirasas or as an Aṅgirasas, and released the cows.

Cf. X. 67.2-4 : "2. Chanting Ṛta, having the right visionary insight the valiant sons of the mighty heaven—the Aṅgirasas, first devised the foundation of sacrifice while holding the wise position (*padām*). 3. Breaking the rocky bindings (or, darting weapons made of stone) with friends babbling (= uttering chants continuously) like swans, Bṛhaspati thundered, also uttered praise towards the cows, (and) the wise one also chanted. 4. Desirous of light in darkness Bṛhaspati released the milch-cows ; he uncovered (in) three (ways) the cows hidden at the bridge of unrighteousness—those (staying) below with two (prayers) and those above with one."

So in IV. 50. 4-5 :

"4. Bṛhaspati who was first born from the great light in the highest heaven, the seven-mouthed one, the one of manifold birth, the seven-rayed one blew away darkness with (his) roar. 5. He, along with the well-chanting and the ṛk-reciting band (of Aṅgirasas) broke open the obstructive Vala with (his) voice ; Bṛhaspati let loose the oblation-yielding, lowing milch-cows himself making a thunderous noise."

VI. 73. 1 and 3 also are reminiscent of the Agni myth :

"1. Bṛhaspati, who is the breaker of the mountain, the first-born one possessed of Ṛta, the descendant of Aṅgiras, rich in oblation, (who is) seated at the heated (vessel), who has two-

fold gait (in the two worlds), (he) our father roars in Heaven and Earth." "3. Bṛhaspati won riches, this god (won) the great stall full of cows ; desiring water and the sun the unresisted Bṛhaspati slays (his) foe with flames."

We need not go into further details of description. It has been observed by some scholars that Bṛhaspati, being 'an aspect of Agni', has got a firm footing in the myth of breaking the mountain, releasing the sun and winning cows.^{1 2 2}

As to the particular aspect of Agni represented in Bṛhaspati his Ṛgvedic epithet *bráhmanaspáti* occurring about fifty times as well as the epithet *vācáspáti* 'Lord of Speech' generally occurring in the younger Vedas and post-Vedic mythology are sufficiently convincing indications. Bṛhaspati's visionary wisdom is mentioned in X.67.1.^{1 2 3} Another characteristic feature of the god is his priestly nature.

Now, his symbolism of enlightenment proceeds so far as to make Agni also characteristically the wise god, the knower (*prajānán, cikitvān* etc.) and the priest. The priestly aspect and the aspect of wisdom, integrated in Agni, thus, seem to have been appropriated by Bṛhaspati at first. But the following points should be noted.

Bṛhaspati is also different from Agni. He is not the natural fire and, unlike Agni, is more or less anthropomorphised. The three elements of a full-fledged myth in him, thus, appear to be enlightenment or enlightened being (basis), fire (symbol) and anthropomorphism (imagery). But the symbol has gone to the background here which reduces the development to a perfection of the archaic mode of expression. For this reason notions which could find expression only through the imageries noted in sections 2-4 above are not prominent features of Bṛhaspati.

Secondly, Bṛhaspati, unlike Agni, has got also certain warlike features. He opened the stall, won the cows, won the sun thereby removing darkness. These heroic traits might partly be accounted for by the presumable current influence of the warlike character of Indra with whom Bṛhaspati often gets himself associated.^{1 2 4} But this is far better explained

by the affinity of Bṛhaspati and the Aṅgirasas. It is the Aṅgirasas who hold the most important position in the myth of the release of cows. It is they who chant songs, open the stall and release the cows and not Agni. Unlike Agni and like the Aṅgirasas Bṛhaspati also chants, songs, opens the stall and releases the cows. In the description of the event Bṛhaspati is sometimes mentioned as having been accompanied by the Aṅgirasas¹²⁶, but usually he himself accompanies Indra and replaces the Aṅgirasas in the process. This seems to be indicated also in his being *saptāsya* and *saptāraśmi* (IV.50.4).

From the point of view of symbolism Bṛhaspati, thus, appears to be quite a complex figure. In his essential nature, as the enlightened divinity, he is a development upon one of the most important features of Agni—an anthropomorphised form of the symbol of wisdom and wise being. But, in the myth of the release of cows, Bṛhaspati replaces the Aṅgirasas absorbing some of their functions in the myth.

The Aṅgirasas too are enlightened beings. However, that does not make it necessary to see Bṛhaspati as a development from these beings only. For, certain descriptions betray his origin in the natural fire.¹²⁶ Secondly, even in his developed form he is essentially distinguished from the mythical fathers in being a god and not a mortal.

With reference to the philosophy of the myth this mixed development is significant. First, by replacing the many Aṅgirasas by one first-conscious-subject it seeks to get rid of the plurality involved in first enlightened becoming. Secondly, it also facilitates the replacement of human elements in cosmogony by a divine element. The full effect is to be found later (II.8, 9 below).

7. Viṣṇu and the three stations of Agni

(a) *Introductory* : As stated above the Ṛgvedic notion of Viṣṇu also is a link between the early Ṛgvedic myth of IV.1 and the Purāṇic cosmogonic myth of Prajāpati and Nārāyaṇa. But Viṣṇu is quite different from Bṛhaspati. While Bṛhaspati is known as the Lord of Speech (*brāhmaṇaspāti*, *vācāspāti*),

Viṣṇu is characterised by his three wide-strides and also by his highest step or station. Macdonell¹²⁷ refers to these essential features of the god in the following words: "The essential feature of his character is that he takes (generally expressed by *vi-kram*) three strides, which are referred to about a dozen times. His epithets *urugāya*, 'wide-going' and *urukrama*, 'wide-striding', which also occur about a dozen times, allude to the same action. With these three steps Viṣṇu is described as traversing the earth or the terrestrial spaces. Two of these steps or spaces are visible to men, but the third of highest step is beyond the flight of birds or mortal ken (I.155.5 ; VII.99.2)."

Now, while most of the scholars agree that Bṛhaspati is related to Agni, the same has not been claimed for Viṣṇu. The prevailing notion is that "the solar nature of the deity is reasonably plain."¹²⁸ But the origin of Viṣṇu should be sought in Agni instead of in the sun. For, the idea of the triple nature of Agni (three births, three stations, three faces etc.) seems to have gradually grown into the idea of the three stations, steps etc. (*padá*, *vi-kram*) of Viṣṇu with the highest *padá* of Agni being regarded the highest *padá* of Viṣṇu. Macdonell¹²⁹ himself makes the latter observation, "The highest place of Viṣṇu is regarded as identical with the highest place of Agni, for Viṣṇu guards the highest, the third place of Agni (X.1.3) and Agni with the loftiest station of Viṣṇu guards the mysterious cows (probably=clouds : V.3.3)." However, Macdonell does not find it necessary to infer the existence of any historical relation between Agni and Viṣṇu from this.

(b) *Twofold and threefold Agni* : It is generally acknowledged that the three births of Agni as sun, lightning and fire take place in the heaven, atmosphere and earth respectively. Hopkins¹³⁰ remarks that "in Agni is found the first triality, which, philosophically, is interpreted as a trinity. The fire of the altar is one with the lightning, and, again, one with the sun. This is Agni's threefold birth." But, though this idea is more

or less a fixed notion in later Vedic literature, there is a great deal of discrepancy in the various enumerations made of the three births or stations of Agni in the RV. The following table of the places of Agni will reveal the inconsistency of the given accounts :

I. 95. 3.	VIII. 44.16.	X. 2. 7.	X. 45. 1.	X. 45. 3.
Waters (Terres- trial ?)	Earth	Waters (Terres- trial ?)	Ourselves	Samudra (Terres- trial ?)
Heaven	Heaven	Heaven & Earth	Heaven	Heaven
Samudra (Atmo- spheric ?)	Waters (Atmo- spheric ?)	Tvaṣṭṛ	Waters (Atmo- spheric ?)	Rajas

Each of these accounts partially contradicts the other ones. The confusion is revealed also in I. 146. 1 where Agni is possessed of three heads and, at the same time, sits in the lap of his parents, namely Heaven and Earth. In another vague and confusing account (III. 17. 3) Agni is said to have three births from Uṣas. In an even more curious description (I.141.2) the three forms of Agni are his three stages of coming into being—"The mighty one, wondrous, abundant in food (and) true, reposes ; the second one among the seven kind mothers ; the third one of this bull is for milking ; the young females generated the one with tenfold care." Agni reposes in the womb of the waters (II. 4 above). This he does in his first form. The seven kind mothers must be the seven sisters who increased Agni. This is the second stage of Agni's coming into being. When he is born at the sacrifice it is the bull-Agni which becomes the calf for the milking of Rta. This is his third form. What we get from this is not a description of Agni distributed in the three worlds.

These instances tend to suggest that though the RV-poet was quite familiar with the triple nature of Agni, it was not always the consistent notion of his being distributed in the heaven, earth and atmosphere. The various interpretations put

forward in the RV to explain his triality represent some faltering attempts made to arrive at a coherent notion of that kind.

It may not be possible to find out the original significance of Agni's triality with exact precision. The following suggestions regarding a possible course of development may be taken for what they are worth.

The idea of the twofold existence of Agni, built on the basis of the twofold division of the universe, also, is well-known to the RV. This idea of the twofold nature of Agni has been expressed in the references to the celestial and the terrestrial existences of Agni (I. 59. 2), to his existences in the upper and the lower regions (I. 128. 3), to the hidden and the open births of Agni (I. 95. 4, 5) etc.

Now, it is an ancient notion that Heaven and Earth (*dyāvā-pṛthivī, rōdasī*) are Agni's parents. And the idea of the twofold nature of Agni based on the twofold division of the universe seems not to be unconnected with the idea of Agni as the son of Heaven and Earth. Thus, in I. 59. 2 Agni is the summit of the sky and the navel of the earth ; he is also the illuminator (*arati*) of Heaven and Earth ; and in I. 59. 4 he is the son of Heaven and Earth. In III. 5. 8 Agni rests in the lap of his parents and in the next verse (III. 5. 9) he shines on the summit of the sky and the navel of the earth. In VI. 7. 1 Agni is the summit of the sky and the illuminator of the earth, and his parents in whose lap he is born are mentioned in VI. 7. 4 and 5. These verses only point to the close relation of the idea of Agni as the child of Heaven and Earth to that of his twofold existence. Some interesting examples of how the idea of the twofold existence of Agni follows that of his being the child of Heaven and Earth are given below.

"I. 146. 1. I invoke the three-headed, seven-rayed and perfect Agni, sitting in the lap of his parents, (in the lap) of this which moves and which stands, (Agni) who filled up all the lights of heaven. 2. The great bull grew out up to these two, ageless (Agni) stood towering up helping from here. He places his feet on the surface of the spacious (earth), his reddish (flashes) lick the udder." In the first verse the three-headed

Agni sits in the lap of his parents while in the second he pervades these two. According to III. 3. 11^{cd} 'Agni was born exalting both his parents, Heaven and Earth who are rich in seed.' This looks like a commentary to the previous verse (III. 3. 10) where Agni fills up the worlds, the sky and the earth as soon as born : "O Vaiśvānara, I desire your qualities (in me), by which, O far-seeing one, you came to find the sun. As soon as born you filled up the worlds, the sky and the earth, O Agni, you yourself encompass them all." A causal connection between 'being born of' and 'spreading through' or 'filling up' (*pr*) seems to be implied also in III. 6. 2 : "As soon as born you filled up the two worlds. And, O the desirer of offerings, you even exceeded them. O Agni, may your horses with seven tongues move along by the greatness of Heaven and Earth." The implied causal relation evidently springs from Agni's inheriting the qualities of the parents. Cf. III. 2. 2^{ab} "He illuminated both the worlds by his birth ; he became the *praise-worthy* son of his parents."

The instances given here indicate the close connection of the idea of the two existences of Agni with that of his being the child of Heaven and Earth. The ingredients of the myth—the conjugal relation between the sky and the earth and the resulting parental nature of those elements go back to Indo-European antiquity.¹⁸¹ So does the cult of fire.¹⁸² But the presentation of the parental nature with particular reference to Agni and the latter's power to exalt, illumine and then to spread through the parents are Vedic developments. Barring this shift of the point on which emphasis is to be laid and thereby also implying a reassessment of the values of the bases of symbolism,¹⁸³ the basic ingredients of the myth of Agni's two stations are Indo-European and then Vedic and suggest a linear course of development.

This much for the two births of Agni. The history of the other important idea—that of the triple character of Agni does not appear to have been of a similar nature. It has been shown that though the triality of Agni was a definite RV-concept, there was no unanimity about its true significance and that only

a trend to interpret the triality of Agni on the basis of his universality is perceived in the RV. This makes it appear that the notion of the numeral three as associated with Agni might have been borrowed from external sources and that the original significance of the triality of Agni is lost. It may seem tempting to suggest that the triality of Agni might have internally grown out of his three births—two in the heaven and earth and one in the atmospheric depth.¹³⁴ But this does not seem to have been the case from the very beginning. The main reason for maintaining that the idea of the threefold nature of Agni was at first independent of the notion of his two births and aqueous-atmospheric origin, that it was borrowed from external sources, is that it neither contradicts nor does it seem to have grown at the cost of the idea of Agni's two births, though these two ideas mutually exclude each other.

In VII. 5. 4, for instance, Heaven and Earth follow the threefold deed of Agni. Again, in I. 140. 2, Agni who is twice-born attains threefold food. The conception of the three-headed Agni also was independent of his being the child of Heaven and Earth (I. 146. 1). In all these cases there is not any trace of the triality being based on the three births of Agni in the three divisions of the universe. It appears that the twofold nature, the aqueous origin and threefold nature of Agni were originally separate ideas not related to each other. This gives the impression of an external origin, untraceable at present, for the threefold nature of Agni.

A compromise between the three notions, Agni's twofold nature, original triality and aqueous origin, seems to have consciously been effected in I. 149. 4: "He who is of twofold birth, the flaming one approached the three luminaries, all the atmospheric particles. The priest is the best sacrificer in the abode of waters."

Whatever their actual history, the guiding motive behind these developments is the presentation of Agni as universal light. His pervading Heaven and Earth indicates the trend to regard Agni as something distributed throughout the universe. Again, in that the initial independent nature of the triality of

Agni was lost when the idea of his being distributed in the three worlds also developed, though inconsistently, that very tendency to conceive Agni as a universal object is markedly prominent. The prevalence of this idea is attested for by various other RV-passages also, such as those in which Agni has been called *vibhú* (I. 65. 10, IV. 7. 1, etc.), or those where he is equated to all other gods. The new interpretation of the triality of Agni with reference to the deity's universal distribution gave the notion a perfect place in the mainstream of Vedic thought.

The universality of Agni would tend to be explained at first by the existence of light in the three regions of the universe. But the continuous streams of *Ṛta*, which are understood in the myths of Agni's birth as the basis of becoming, do not seem to have been logically unrelated to the concept of Agni's universality. For, the being whose becoming brought about the primal flow of *Ṛta* must have itself become universal in order to make becoming a universal, regular phenomenon. Hence, as soon as born Agni had to fill up the sky, atmosphere and earth. This seems to have been the language of the Vedic poet to express the unity of the universe and of enlightened becoming. This is Vedic monism.¹⁸⁵

(c) *The tradition of atmospheric supreme station in RV. IV. 1*: The three traditions finding their way into RV. IV. 1 (II. 5a above) do not include that of the twice-born Agni with two stations in the heaven and the earth. Verse 7 mentions three supreme births, but there is no indication in the hymn as to how the three births are to be understood. Even if the composite form of the fully developed theory of the three births of Agni in the heaven, atmosphere and earth was known, the atmospheric birth was the most important birth of Agni in the hymn. For, the actual account of the birth of Agni and the seven fathers (11, 12) pertains only to the atmospheric womb of waters. It was Agni's first becoming and consequently his birth par excellence. And as verse 13 suggests, the idea of the aqueous-atmospheric origin of Agni was meant to be reflected also in the ritual.¹⁸⁶

The superiority and ritual connections of the atmospheric station seem to have come as closely related concepts in the notion of Agni's aqueous-atmospheric origin. The entire hymn III. 1, for instance, relates to the atmospheric origin of Agni and the ritual on earth.¹³⁷ The glory of the aqueous atmospheric station of Agni is also expressed *hōtā yájiṣṭho apāṃ sadhásthe* (I. 149. 4) and in VI. 16. 35 where the womb of the mother is the undecaying abode of Agni. According to this tradition the aqueous atmospheric station is also the 'supreme station' (*paramá padá*) of Agni. The use of this term in this connection is found in II. 35. 14 : "The young waters carrying ghee as food for the son surround him, staying in this supreme station, ever shining with spotless (flames) and clothing himself in garments." Since this is said of the Son of Waters it may be presumed that *paramát sadhásthāt* of Agni in VIII. 11. 7 is not different from *apāṃ sadhásthe* of I. 149. 4.

(d) *The empyrean as the supreme station of Agni and Viṣṇu* : Certainly different from the above comprehension is another in which the heavenly form of Agni gets magnified ; cf. X. 45. 1 : 'From heaven Agni came into being first, Jātavedas was born for the second time among us ; the third time among waters....' Here the aqueous origin is given the lowest position, the main emphasis being put on Agni's celestial origin. The celestial origin is given priority also in X. 88. 10 : 'With praise did the gods produce Agni in heaven, filling up the two worlds with (his) powers. Him did they make three-fold for well-becoming...' So far as Agni is understood as a passive object in relation to the other gods, the celestial origin involves a new notion—the gods generating Agni in heaven as the sun. Like his atmospheric station this heavenly station of Agni also is called supreme (*parama*). Cf. I. 72. 2 : "All the clever immortals while seeking did not find with us the calf staying around (?). Wearying themselves, following (his) footsteps and bestowing vision (the gods) stood at the beautiful supreme station of Agni."

Now, Viṣṇu also has three stations with one highest station

in heaven (I. 22. 18, 20, 21, I. 154. 4-6). One may ask if the highest station of Agni in heaven is the same as that of Viṣṇu there. The Ṛgvedic evidences for this are noted by Macdonell who, however, does not find the origin of Viṣṇu in Agni (p. 84 above). Bergaigne¹⁸⁸ utilised the evidences in a different way :

“It is...easy to show by different proofs that the supreme place of Viṣṇu is identical with the supreme place of Agni. Nothing is more significant in this regard than the comparison of the two passages : ‘Viṣṇu protects the third place, the supreme place of Agni’, X. 1. 3,—‘By the superior footstep of Viṣṇu, thou protectest, O Agni, the mysterious form of the cow,’ V. 3. 3. We can even conclude from this that Viṣṇu does not differ essentially from Agni. Viṣṇu is Agni, conceived as living in the place of mystery, but also as issuing out of it in order to manifest himself in heaven and on the earth. The identification between Viṣṇu and Agni may also be deduced from the following passage : ‘Priests hasten to *kindle* the supreme place or the supreme *trace* of the foot of Viṣṇu,’ I. 22. 21....And finally, we might add that Viṣṇu has been described by the usual epithet of Agni and of Soma, *triśadhasṭhā* ‘who has three dwelling places,’ I. 156. 5, and that VII. 100. 6 refers, in terms which are unfortunately very obscure, to these different forms.”

But it is not correct to say that Viṣṇu is the heavenly form of Agni that is the sun. It is the new importance attached to the heavenly station by regarding it as the supreme station that makes Viṣṇu appear like the sun. But so far as Viṣṇu traverses the universe by his three strides like Agni, he also belongs to his three stations in the three divisions of the universe. That is to say the development of the concept is based on the universality of Agni,¹⁸⁹ but, unlike in the old myth of Agni’s three stations with the greatest one in the atmospheric receptacle, here the supreme abode is in heaven where the deity is manifested as the sun.

The development, on the one hand, underlies a decline of the glory of the womb of the motherly waters. The atmospheric region is the middle region, the highest one being the sky

or heaven. But the former one is also the womb of the motherly waters where Rajas is held. Though that is not the highest region, the inherent glory of Rajas and the womb of the mother was the reason for that place having been considered the highest, or rather, the greatest abode. But the ancient motherly waters had been losing their glory in Vedic thought ; the idea of the greatness of the womb of the waters also waned. Little justification was left for considering the highest or greatest birth of Agni to have taken place in the atmospheric region which is not spatially the highest region, in relation to the earth, where gods reside and the sun shines. On the contrary, the spatially highest region in relation to the earth, namely the heaven or empyrean would be considered the proper region for the supreme birth of Agni.

The positive notions underlying the development, thus, pertain to the growing importance of the heavenly station—the abode of the gods and of the ritual activities of the gods for the production of the celestial Agni. The idea of the divine model seems to have depended upon this development.¹⁴⁰

(e) *The prevailing theories and Yāska :* In the prevailing theories, an account whereof is given below, the whole thing has been assessed from a different angle of vision.

Macdonell notes (7a ante) that the three stations of Agni are in the earth, air and heaven, but he cannot find any link between them and the three footsteps of Viṣṇu. On the contrary, he recognises the first Indian trinity in them. This earliest Indian trinity is important, for on it is based much of the mystical speculation of the Vedic age.¹⁴¹ This view is based upon Hopkins' who says, "The fire of the altar is one with the lightning, and, again, one with the sun", and, "in Agni is found the first triality, which, philosophically, is interpreted as a trinity."¹⁴² The later Indian trinity, according to Hopkins, "has a real if remote connection with the triune fire of the *Rig Veda*, a two-thirds connection, filled out with the addition of the later Brahmanic head of the gods."¹⁴³

Some details from Hopkins are given. "Of how great importance was the triune god Agni may be seen by comparing his three lights with the later sectarian trinity, where Vishṇu, originally the sun, and (Rudra) Śiva, the lightning, are the preserver and destroyer."¹⁴⁴ The nature of the "two-thirds connection" mentioned by Hopkins is revealed here. However, this "two-thirds connection" was achieved in a complex process. Rudra-Śiva developed out of the lightning aspect of Agni, but later "it is plain that one has Rudra-Śiva in process of absorbing Agni's honours."¹⁴⁵ Viṣṇu too, is not the simple personification of the solar aspect of the triune fire. The idea of the Vedic triad of Fire, Wind or Indra and Sun (this is not threefold Agni, D. B.) as the gods of earth, atmosphere and sky respectively was later given a pantheistic touch. The three are encompassed by Viṣṇu in the TS where "the three places of Vishṇu are not, as in the Rig Veda, the two points of the horizon (where the sun sets) and the zenith, but 'earth, air and sky'. That is to say, in the Brahmanic period Vishṇu is already a greater god than he had been."¹⁴⁶

It was possible for Hopkins to make out so much in order to discover the source of the universality of Viṣṇu, but the direct growth of Viṣṇu's universality from the same of Agni was not mentioned even as a possible alternative, though that would have saved much of the labour required for building up those theses. A failure to appreciate the idea of the universality of Agni seems to have prevented Hopkins (and many other Western scholars) from making more judicious utilisation of the facts supplied by the ṚV.

The same preconception about Viṣṇu and the sun haunts Macdonell. Macdonell speaks of the illustrious three steps of Viṣṇu as the essential features of his character, and also observes that the highest station of Viṣṇu is regarded as identical with the highest place of Agni (p. 84 above). But Macdonell fails to see any relation between the triple character of Agni and the same of Viṣṇu. He maintains that the three steps of Viṣṇu represent the "course of the solar deity

through the three divisions of the universe."¹⁴⁷ But what can be the sense expressed through these words? It is Agni, and Agni alone, who is stated, though inconsistently, to have been distributed in the three worlds; it is he and not the "solar deity" who is born in the three worlds. Macdonell unjustly remarks that the view held by him "prevails throughout the younger Vedas, the Brāhmaṇas, as well as post-Vedic literature, and was supported by Yāska's predecessor Śākapūṇi." This is a wrong presentation of facts. The matter stands in the *Nirukta* as stated below.

While explaining the word *viṣṇu* Yāska (N. XII. 19) has cited the following verse—*idam viṣṇur vi cakrame tredhā ni dadhe padam | sāmūḥham asya pāṃsuré ||* (RV. I.22.17). For the first two *pādas* Yāska mentions some explanations offered by his predecessors Aurnavābha and Śākapūṇi in the following words—*yad idam kiñ ca tad vikramate viṣṇus | tridhā nidhatte padam tredhābhāvāya pṛthivyām antarikṣe divīti śākapūṇiḥ | samārohaṇe viṣṇupade gayaśirasīty aurnavābhaḥ ||* It may be noted that Yāska makes no mention of the 'solar deity' but only speaks of the three footsteps of Viṣṇu in the three divisions of the universe. It was left to the commentator Durgācārya to identify Viṣṇu as Āditya. But, the RV-verse partially cited by Durgācārya in support of his view depicts the sun as a form of Agni distributed in the three worlds: *stōmena hi divi devāso agnim ājījanañ chāktibhī rodasiprām | tām ū akr̥van tredhā bhuvé kām sá ḁśadhīḥ pacati viśvārūpāḥ ||* (X. 88.10). It is the irony of the situation that a verse, cited as an evidence for the supposed representation of the sun in the three steps of Viṣṇu, should depict the sun itself as a form of Agni distributed in the three worlds.¹⁴⁸ This is, perhaps, sufficient to confirm that to the R̥gvedic poet it is the three-stationed Agni, with special reference to his solar form, that is represented in Viṣṇu with his three strides.

As mentioned by Yāska, Aurnavābha held that the three steps of Viṣṇu represented the three positions of the sun in the rising point, in the zenith and in the setting point. Hopkins and many others support this view while Macdonell rejects it

and supports the views of Śākapūṇi. But, as we have seen, Macdonell also understands Viṣṇu as a solar deity.¹⁴⁹ But Śākapūṇi's opposition to the solar theory of Aurnāvābha loses sense if the solar deity is given such a place in his theory. It appears that Śākapūṇi's opposition to Aurnāvābha might have originated in his inability to accept the idea of Viṣṇu as the sun which is not mentioned as scattered in the three worlds in the ṚV.

It is true that in later Indian tradition Viṣṇu is often imagined as a personified form of the sun. Durgācārya's view is a positive evidence for this. But it is difficult to see eye to eye with Macdonell when he says that the entire later Indian tradition supported the solar theory. For example, Sāyaṇa identifies Viṣṇu as Agni while commenting upon X. 1.3^a .

The hard conviction that Viṣṇu must have been an aspect of the sun, perhaps, originated in the failure to appreciate fully the authenticity of the Vedic idea of the sun as a form of Agni. The very existence of this idea could not be denied. Macdonell¹⁵⁰ says that "the conception of the sun as a form of Agni, is an undoubted Vedic belief", and still maintains, "The solar aspect of Agni's nature is not often mentioned, the sun being too individual a phenomenon to be generally conceived as a form of fire". Macdonell likes to differentiate between an "undoubted belief" and a "general conception". However, the two are not necessarily exclusive to each other. Keith repeats Macdonell, "But this side (i.e., the solar side D.B.) of the nature of Agni is little referred to ; the sun was too great and prominent a deity to be treated merely as a form of Agni".¹⁵¹ Both the scholars must have taken the idea from Oldenberg : "Die Sonne war doch allzusehr eine Potenz für sich, als dass die Auffassung von ihr als Feuer erheblichere Bedeutung hätte haben können."¹⁵²

These are reflections on the subjective capacity of the Vedic poet who is far removed from us by time. It has been overlooked in these that, in speculations about Agni and his relation to the universe, the sun *was* comprehended as a form of Agni, and that that was not little referred to. The sun as a form of

Agni appears in IV. 13, 14. The idea pervades also the whole of X. 88. Whenever Agni's celestial birth or birth among the gods is mentioned the solar aspect of Agni seems to have been emphasised ; cf. I. 36.4, I. 143. 2, X. 45.8. This is also the case when Agni is said to be the summit of the sky ; cf. I. 59.2, III. 2.12, 14, III. 5.9, VI. 7.1, VIII. 44.16, etc. One of the best illustrations of the sun as an aspect of Agni is found in X. 7.3 : "The adorable face of the great Agni is the worshipful white (disc) of the sun in heaven". Here the sun is only the face of Agni.

In this connection it may be noted that the similarity of this idea to a Brahmanical legend of Viṣṇu goes against one of the arguments adduced in favour of the view that Viṣṇu is an aspect of the sun. In the Brāhmaṇas Viṣṇu's head when cut off becomes the sun.¹⁵³ So it has been maintained that "the evidence appears to justify the inference that he was originally conceived as the sun, not in his general character, but in the personified swiftly moving luminary, which with vast strides traverses the whole universe."¹⁵⁴ This observation seems to be wrong. The sun is not said to be Viṣṇu himself, but is his head, i.e. a part of Viṣṇu. This means that the sun is a partial aspect of Viṣṇu and this does not mean that Viṣṇu was originally the sun. Let us also mark that in X.7.3 the sun is the adorable *face* of Agni. Its similarity with the Viṣṇu-legend of the Brāhmaṇas cannot be overlooked. This description in the Saṃhitā of the sun as the face of Agni suggests itself as the origin of the Brāhmaṇic legend where Viṣṇu with the sun as his head has only replaced Agni.

We may also note that the idea of the greatness of Agni in relation to the sun had been so strong that the extremely important ritual of Agnihotra which was meant to make the sun rise, had been based upon it.¹⁵⁵ It could not have been so without the idea being a general conception.

In the words of Macdonell cited above Viṣṇu had been originally conceived as the sun "which with vast strides traverses the whole universe". Now, it is true that Viṣṇu makes vast strides in the ṚV. But it is not necessary to discover the sun

in him for that. For, the idea of Agni traversing is not infrequently met with in the ṚV. Agni passes through Rajas on the best paths (I.58.1), he traverses the paths quickly like thought (I.71.9), he goes around what is earthly in a moment (I.128.3), ageless Agni also wanders through time (I.144.4), places his feet on the surface of the wide earth (I.146.2), he wanders around the earth (I. 79.3, III. 2.9), he goes to the heights and the depths (III. 2.10).

One may also refer to VI. 9.2^{cd} (Agni-hymn) : *kásya svít putrá ihá váktvāni paró vadāty āvareṇa pitrá*, "Whose son should, indeed, utter above speeches of this place (after being taught) by the father of the lower (world) ?" Sāyaṇa understands the father as Agni and the son as the sun. He also mentions the prevailing tradition of interpretation which put forward that understanding.¹⁵⁶ In VI. 9.3^d the sun above is the eye of Agni below : *avás cáran paró anyēna páśyan*, "moving below (but when) above seeing through another." These should be compared to I. 155.3^{cd} (Viṣṇu-hymn) : *dádhāti putrób 'varam pāram pitúr nāma tṛtīyam ādhi rocané diváh*, "The son assumes the lower name (= form) of the father as the higher name (in him)—the third one in the luminous region in heaven". Here Viṣṇu is the son and the higher name that of the sun. After VI. 9.2, 3 the lower form should belong to Agni who is, then, also the father of Viṣṇu.¹⁵⁷

The rejection of the idea that Viṣṇu represented the sun and not Agni is not intended merely to show some errors in order to make anthropomorphism stand on its true foundation. With the replacement of Agni by Viṣṇu the form of the original myth went through a radical change. The idea of the universality of Agni grew into the concept of Viṣṇu in whom the natural traits of the former god were less perceptible. The natural traits of Agni could be discarded only through such a process. Hence this marked a stage of development in which it was possible, to an extent, to step over the crudities involved in expressing monism and the unity of the universe through objects of nature.

The doing away with the element of nature is evident also

in the development of the notion of Bṛhaspati.¹⁵⁸ But in both cases the 'accretions' resulting in the change are not alien to the original symbol. The possibility of the developments remained in the very comprehension of Agni as wise and universal; Agni was potentially Bṛhaspati and Viṣṇu. Hence the 'dissociation' looks somewhat like casting off the slough and means growing out, to a certain extent, of an archaic mode of thought and expression through the replacement of the symbol by imageries more expressive of the basic concepts. It is an advancement made in literary language and style and the truly mythological side of the development now reaches its culmination.

8. Ontological problems and new forms of the myth in Book X.

A matter-cum-spirit unity is perceptible in the ideologies of the myths under discussion.¹⁵⁹ However, there is occasional variation as to where the emphasis is to be put. For example, when the cow of speech replaces the waters—the material primal substratum of Agni, there is a certain shift. This is a general tendency corroborated by various types of speculations about the position of the waters (see below). The problem with a compromise appears in I.161.9: 'One said that the waters are most abundant, the other said that fire is most abundant, one gave the thundertime (?) the preference over many.'¹⁶⁰ If the translation is correct the solution is indicated by the synthesis of fire and water in thunder-storm. This may be debated, but there should be no doubt regarding the truly ontological character of the problem which is put forward in the archaic language of myth—is it matter or spirit which is to be regarded as the greater one?

In Greece the problem arose later, after Thales (6th century B.C.), whose theory of the aqueous origin of substances, it has been observed, "contained a germ of scepticism which was destined sooner or later to come to maturity of growth."¹⁶¹ A full theoretical statement of this older point of view was given in the RV long before Thales in the cautious

utterances of the *Nāsadāsīt* hymn (X. 129),¹⁶² 'What covered over all and where, and for whose well-being? Were there Waters, impervious and deep?(1^{cd})'. The Waters were not the substance found on earth, 'In the beginning, Dark-Inert was hid by Dark-Inert. This all was fluid, indeterminate (3^{ab})'. With this 'That One breathed by intrinsic-power (*svadhāyā*), none other was, nor aught there-beyond (2^{cd})' is strongly reminiscent of 'when he dwelt reared up in the womb of the waters and drank the natural juices (*svadhā*) by which he moves' (1.144.2^{cd}). Agni is replaced in X.129 by 'That One' which was, after all, born: 'That One was born by the all-might of intention (3^d)'. The Aṅgirasas are not totally absent from this new account of evolution, 'Searching the heart thoroughly by thought wise-singers found there the kin of Existence in the non-existent (4^{cd})'. These are mortal wise beings and are only once referred to. The one divine conscious subject¹⁶³ also is once referred to, but his knowledge has been doubted, 'He who is Over-Eye thereof in uttermost Empyrean, he knows indeed, or knoweth not (7^{cd}) !'

The myth of the birth of Agni along with the waters appears differently in X.121.7-9.

"7.Lo, when the great waters entirely pervaded all, carrying the embryo, generating Agni, thence came up the One Breath of the gods...8. He who verily by His greatness beheld the waters, carrying Dakṣa, generating the sacrifice, Who was the One God above the gods...9. May He not harm us Who is the creator of the earth, and Who having the True Ordinance created the heaven, and Who created the great charming waters..."

The beginning and the end of the account are contradictory. It looks like a riddle that he who arose along with Agni from the waters should himself have generated the charming waters. But this is not a prosaic ontological statement, the author is a poet. It is possible that the queer presentation is meant to underline the final statement which rejects the primordially of the material substratum provisionally stated first.

It is also to be noted that while Agni retains his place, perhaps to symbolise the sacrifice,¹⁶⁴ it is the Aṅgirasas (or rather Bṛhaspati), who come to be replaced by Hiraṇyagarbha—the deity of the hymn—coming up with Agni. Hiraṇyagarbha is the witness of the first evolution (verse 8). This is a characteristic feature of Vena in the AV, and of Prajāpati Brahman in the Purāṇas¹⁶⁵ and is a farther projection of the integration of the first wisdom of the Aṅgirasas and the divine wisdom of Agni in Bṛhaspati.

The active functionaries of RV. IV.1 namely the seven ṛṣis are, thus, perceptible in Hiraṇyagarbha in X.121. The functions were both intellectual and physical. In RV. IV.1 the seven seers were connascent with Agni, they thought and found out the three-times-seven highest names of the mother, chanted and broke the rock. The connascence and seerhood find full expression in X.121.7-8. The other functions of the Aṅgirasas, namely, their priestly adventures are here replaced in verses 1-6 by crude creation—a function originally belonging to Indra. For this reason certain scholars have found the genesis of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika doctrine of the creation of the universe from uncreated matter by God in X.121 and two other hymns of similar nature.¹⁶⁶ But while the symbolism of the Aṅgirasas is carried up here to a new philosophical height, the more or less passive subject of the original myth, viz. Agni, is comparatively ignored in X.121. In X.129, on the other hand, Agni becomes 'That One' and is more important than the 'Over-Eye' whose knowledge is doubted. Also in a few creation hymns of the Atharvaveda (next section) both the trends are found.

9. Two Atharvavedic hymns

While the parts of the R̥gvedic hymns discussed above retain only fragments of the original myth, there are two Atharvavedic hymns one of which looks like a recast version of the complete myth. These hymns are AVP. II.6 (AVŚ II.1) and AVP. V.2 (AVŚ. IV.1).

AVP. II.6¹⁶⁷ – AVŚ. II.1.

Text

*venas tat paśyat paramaṃ padaṃ
yatra viśvaṃ bhavaty ekanīḍam |
idaṃ dhenur aduhaj jāyamānāḥ
svarvido abhy anūṣata vrāḥ || 1.*

*pra tad voced amṛtaṃ nu vidvān
gandharvo dhāma paramaṃ guhā
yat |
trīṇi padāṇi nihitā guhā 'sya
yas tāni veda sa pituṣpitā 'sat || 2.*

*sa no bandhur janitā sa vidhartā
dhāmāni veda bhuvanāni viśvā |
yatra devā amṛtam ānaśānāḥ
samāne dhāmann adhyaira-
yanta || 3.*

*pari viśvā bhuvanāny āyam
upātiṣṭhe prathamajā ṛtasya |
vācam iva vaktari bhuvaneṣṭhā
dhāsyur nv eṣa nanv eṣo agniḥ || 4.*

*pari dyāvāṛthivī sadya āyam
ṛtasya tantuṃ vitataṃ dṛṣe kam |
devo devatvam abhirakṣamāṇaḥ
samānaṃ bandhuṃ vy apṛcchad
ekaḥ || 5.*

Translation

Vena saw that highest station where all become of one abode. This the cow yielded as milk, the emerging hosts who knew the (empyrean) sun acclaimed.

May Gandharva who knows the immortal proclaim that abode which is the highest secret. Of this, three feet are laid in secret. He who knows those becomes the father's father.

He is our connection, (our) progenitor; he, the sustainer, knows all becomings and beings,¹⁶⁸ where gods moved in the equal abode while eating (the food of) immortality.

I have encircled all the beings. Remaining in the beings I, the first-born of Ṛta, approached (that which is) like speech in the speaker. This one is, indeed, eager to be placed in; is it not Agni?

In an instant I have encircled Heaven and Earth for beholding the stretched out thread of Ṛta; the God protecting godlines, the one asked for an equal connection.

Verse 1.

AVŚ variants—a : (*paramam*) *gūhā yād* ; b : *ékarūpam* ;
c : (*idam*) *pṛśnir*.

(i) *paramam padam yatra viśvam bhavaty ekaṇiḍam* 'The supreme station where all become of one abode'.

The supreme station of the AVP is the supreme secret in the AVŚ. Both, then, refer to the supreme secret station. Historically this is the abode of the empyreal sun—the supreme station of Agni or Viṣṇu.¹⁶⁹ In the present hymn an additional characteristic is given—everything becomes of one form (AVŚ) or of one abode (AVP) in it. 'Becomes of one form' means 'remains unmanifested'. This is not a new concept¹⁷⁰ but the form of expression—direct statement—is new. The implication here is not only of a point in space, but also of the pre-manifestation state when everything, according to later terminology, remains undifferentiated or unmanifested (*avikṛta*, *avyakta*).

Gonda remarks, "The adjective *viśvam* refers to the phenomenal world, the fundamental unity of which in the highest principle is seen by the seer" (= Vena).¹⁷¹ *viśvam* may be understood as *viśvā bhuvanāni*, (verses 3, 4) 'all beings'—beings not in the sense of existence which is generally referred to by *√as* and which is a function of the highest principle, but in the sense of 'that which has become'. *viśvam*, perhaps, comprises mortals as well as divine beings who also get names¹⁷² that is to say get characteristic appellations from the original Seer. They remain as unmanifested possibilities in the highest secret station or state.

The use of the word *pada* may be viewed even in a bit different light. *pada* may mean 'foot', 'foot-step', 'state' and also 'word'. It does not seem that a clear distinction between the last two senses is intended in the verse.

paramam padam is the ultimate word, i.e. unmanifested Vāk—the original, pre-manifestation verbal form of things. But what about the things which it denotes? The reply is given in the second quarter, 'where everything becomes of one

abode' (AVP) or one form (AVŚ). The diversification of word and its sense (*pada* and *padārtha*) is still not realised. Hence the word and its denotee are the same; and *pada* is the ultimate word as well as the undifferentiated state of the would-be phenomenal world. This is reminiscent of the mountain in which the cows were confined. But that imagery is not in sight.

The next stage is described through imageries in the second half of the verse.

(ii) *idam dhenur aduhat* 'this the cow yielded as milk'. *dhenu*-(AVP) and *prśni*-(AVŚ) taken together imply that the cow is speckled, i.e. possessed of a sign of variety. This cow is Speech in its ultimate form with hundredfold possibilities for the future. The imagery of the milk-yielding cow explicates the process of the becoming of the world so long incipient in the ultimate word.

The cow is Agni's mother in ṚV. II.2.4 and also, perhaps, in ṚV. IV.5.7 and 10. But unlike there what she yields as milk is not Ṛta but *idam*—according to Sāyaṇa 'this phenomenal world'. This explanation deserves notice. In the ṚV. the flow of Ṛta means the manifestation of the regular process in worldly and heavenly affairs. But later the primeval milking of concrete materials forms the contents of a myth in AVŚ VIII.10 which minutely describes how various beings milked herbs, cultivation, poison etc. from the cow of Virāj. The verse under discussion, too, leaves out the Ṛta theme from the story of milking.

(iii) *jāyamānāḥ svarvido abhy anūṣata vrāḥ* 'the emerging hosts who knew the sun acclaimed'

While in the first half the ultimate word and the world-in-one-form are undifferentiated, in the second half which explicates the birth of the world from the original principles, the cow i.e. Speech at the time of its diversification has the empyreal sun as the imagery of the visual form of the source of all. The two imageries of the cow and the sun stand in the relation of word and its sense. The description relates to

the stage just preceding the parallel diversification of speech and the things denoted by speech.

The empyreal sun described here is termed Brahman in the other AV-hymn of similar nature (see below). Since this is the ultimate non-verbal form of what has ultimate Speech as its verbal correlative, one may say that the poet maintains the Ṛgvedic standpoint 'As far as is Brahman diversified so far is Vāk' (ṚV. X.114.8). But as the first half of the AV-verse shows, this principle does not apply to the pre-manifestation state where no differentiation between Brahman and Vāk occurs.

The position of the 'hosts'—*vrāḥ* is anomalous in our hymn. In ṚV. IV.1.16 they acclaimed knowing of the discovery of the first name of the cow. In ṚV. I.69.10 all beings shouted at the sight of the sun. According to ṚV. I.66.10 the cows lowed at the same sight. In ṚV. IV.3.11 also the Aṅgirases shouted with the cows while breaking the rock and as the sun arose with Agni's birth.

In the present AV verse a more precise comprehension of the phenomenon of creation is perceptible and as may be seen below, the hosts are replaced by a single figure, viz., Vena who is also termed Bṛhaspati. The justice of this replacement of the seven Aṅgirases by a single divinity was noted above (II. 6). Hence the presence of the hosts here looks like a lingering archaism.¹⁷³

(iv) *venas tat paśyat* 'Vena saw that'.

The witness of this evolution was Vena.¹⁷⁴ He is the archetypal seer and as such resembles Agni, the Aṅgirases, also their combination in Bṛhaspati and lastly Hiraṇyagarbha.¹⁷⁵ It may be mentioned here that in the other Atharvavedic hymn of similar nature (below) Bṛhaspati and Vena have been given identical functions.

As the witness of the primordial evolution that is to say as the archetypal divine seer this Vena is the forerunner of the Purāṇic Prajāpati awakening Anantaśayāna Nārāyaṇa (next AV-hymn below), of the omniscient Īśvara of the

Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad¹⁷⁶ and of the Dharmakāya Buddha explaining Suchness before Bodhisattvas.¹⁷⁷

A pertinent question is if Vena also comes into being or not. The answer should have been in the affirmative as indicated by AVP. V.2.3 (below). This is logical. The Aṅgirasas came into being with Agni, so did Hiraṇyagarbha ; and Īśvara is secondary to Brahman in MU. 6-7. It is only natural that Vena also should come into being with the appearance of the empyreal sun here. But the hymn is silent on this.

Verse 2.

No significant variant in AVŚ.

(i) *pra tad voced amṛtaṃ nu vidvān gandharvo dhāma paramaṃ guhā yat* 'May Gandharva who knows the immortal proclaim that abode which is the highest secret'.

Gandharva instead of Vena has been said to have known the highest secret. Evidently the two are not different ; this is Sāyaṇa's interpretation too. But Gandharva also proclaims the secret to mortals. Now, in later times Gandharvas are celestial singers. Hence the appellation here emphasises this aspect and projects Gandharva as the archetypal poet or singer.¹⁷⁸

Pischel¹⁷⁹ interprets *gandharva* as *garbha*. If this sense is correct it should mean that Vena like Agni (later Īśvara) comes into being as the first seer.

(ii) *trīṇi padāni nihitā guhā 'sya*, 'Of this three feet (= quarters) are laid in secret.'

The highest station is laid in secret (second pāda) ; so are the three feet, quarters or stations. This obscure combination of expressions is unique.

It has been said that they belong to 'this' (*asya*). But what can 'this' mean ? The possibility of the three feet belonging to the cow is eliminated by the non-feminine form of declension in *asya*. It seems unlikely that they belong to Gandharva. For, there is also reference to the knower of the three feet.

This must refer to Gandharva who knows and declares the highest secret. Gandharva should not be meant to know his own feet. On the other hand, if the three feet (*padāni*) belong to the highest station (*padam*) then it is a self-contradictory notion, an apparently impossible proposition in Sanskrit. Nor is such an idea anywhere met with in Vedic literature. The three hidden feet are generally conceived as belonging to certain divine being (cf. X.90.3, 4 ; 1.164.45). The three footsteps of Viṣṇu and the three stations of Agni also are well-known.

Equally difficult is the ontological significance of the three secret stations. What appears to be their historical background is as follows.

The notion of the highest footstep or station of Agni arose within the concept of his three stations, births, footsteps etc. (II. 7b-d above). But Agni was also conceived as a bull and a calf. As a bovine animal Agni possessed four feet, while as the universal being he had three stations one of which was the highest one. The fusion of the two ideas—one of the three stations with one highest station and the other of the four-footed being is accomplished in AVŚ. VIII. 9.2-3 :

“2. He who made the fluid to resound in greatness after having devised it as the origin (of everything), while lying three-fold ; he (as) the calf of the desire-yielding Virāj made (his) forms secret afar. 3. The great ones which there are, the fourth of which one distinguishes by employing as (human) speech, by fervour may the inspired poet know this in which one (form of speech) is employed and (that) in which another (form is employed).”^{179a}

The characteristic feature of this depiction lies in the effort to apply a formula of four—one may call it the three-and-one formula—according to which, of the four feet three are hidden and the fourth one is open and belongs to man. It has been thus applied in the illustrious Puruṣa-hymn (X. 90) : “X. 90.3^{cd}. One of Its feet is all beings, three of Its feet are immortality in heaven. 4^{ab}. Puruṣa with three feet arose upwards, one foot again became this (world)”. Here, three feet of Puruṣa have

been mentioned as immortal and divine, and the other foot as worldly. The same formula has been applied in I. 164.45 : "Vāk is measured in four quarters, priests who are wise know them. The three (quarters) set down in secret do not move. The fourth (quarter) of Vāk men speak."

These instances make it clear that the notion of the three hidden and immortal feet and one human foot of the supreme being—be it Vāk, Puruṣa or the calf of Virāj—was firmly established in the late Ṛgvedic period and also in the Atharvaveda. In all these cases a modification of the original theme is evident. The one highest secret station is altogether discarded. Instead the single station or foot becomes open or unhidden, while the three feet are contemplated as divine, as beyond the visible world and as secret. These all belong to some supreme being. In this way the concept of the four-footed being, viz., Agni-Vatsa and that of his three stations, one of them being in the highest region, have been fused into one through partial modification of the original ideas. This scheme was in full use in the late-Saṃhitā period.

The present AV-verse (AVP. II. 6) seems to supply a link between those two forms of expression of the universality of the supreme being. The poet speaks of the highest secret station which is non-phenomenal and unmanifested. The three stations which are next mentioned also are hidden. Such co-existence of the notions of one highest secret station and three secret stations is unique and not elsewhere met with.¹⁸⁰

If the recognition of the three hidden quarters also implies that of the fourth human quarter, as in the other instances of the late-Saṃhitā form of the quaternary series, then it may appear that the implied fourfold scheme is an expression of universal becoming as it appears to us from below. Then *trīṇi padāni* should mean the three Vedic forms of speech—*ṛk*, *sāman* and *yajus*.¹⁸¹ They are hidden that is sacred. Worldly speech is not secret. This is the human world. And all these come out of the original undifferentiated One.

asya may mean that one, original principle with reference to its future universal manifestation. Otherwise it is difficult

to explain the co-existence of two apparently contradictory notions—one secret highest station and three secret stations.

In the present hymn the empyreal sun is less important than Agni in ṚV. X. 1.3 or V.3.3, where his supreme station is identical to that of Viṣṇu, or ṚV. IV. 1 where Agni is the main inspiration and subject of the hymn. In any case the empyreal sun is not a very prominent concept in the present hymn which is mainly a glorification of Vena, of Īśvara and not of Brahman.¹⁸²

The ontological significance of the threefoldness of the secret part posed difficult problems for later philosophers. For this reason the scheme had thoroughly to be reshaped afterwards. It was, in fact, *reversed* in the Maitrī and the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad. And it is in its reversed form that the scheme of four got a very firm footing in Vedānta and certain other philosophical systems. According to this in its highest state the self is Brahman which manifests itself as the self in three stages. The theory is further elaborated in the *Vedāntasāra* where the states of manifestation are termed Īśvara, Hiraṇyagarbha and Virāṭ in their universal forms and Prājña, Taijasa and Viśva in their individualities in the descending order. In the reversed form of the scheme the enumeration of the states is always from below so that unlike in the Saṃhitās the highest state is called 'Fourth' or Turiya (contrast ṚV. I. 164.45), the third, second and first states being more and more away from truth by degrees.¹⁸³

Now, in one of the explanations offered by him Sāyaṇa says that in the present hymn the three feet mean Virāṭ, Hiraṇyagarbha and Īśvara. Obviously this is said under the impression that the classical Vedantic scheme in its reversed form had been anticipated in the AV. This is very much unlikely. For, at least in the early Upaniṣads, namely the Chāndogya and the Bṛhadāraṇyaka the reversion was not yet accomplished though the trend is perceptible. The reversion did not take place before the *Maitrī* which is decidedly much later. The *Māṇḍūkya* also is based on the reversed doctrine, but its date is quite controversial and its ideas could have been

influenced by Maitreyañātha's philosophy.¹⁸⁴ And even this Upaniṣad does not use the three terms used by Sāyaṇa, presumably from the Vedāntasāra.

(iv) *yas tāni veda sa pituṣ pitā 'sat* 'He who knows those becomes the father's father'.

tāni means the three quarters and their knower is, naturally, the seer par excellence in the hymn, namely, Vena-Gandharva. The term *pituṣ pitā* indicates a break of tradition by the transference of certain aspect originally belonging to a higher divinity to a lower one. In ṚV. VI. 6.35 Agni is *pituṣ pitā* which means that he is himself the creator of Dyaus—the traditional father of gods.¹⁸⁵ The term may also mean superior intelligence. Cf. ṚV. 1. 164.16, *kavir yāḥ putrāḥ sā im ā cikēta yās tā vijānāt sā pituṣ pitā 'sat*, 'The son who is a seer he knows those. He who might know those should become the father's father'. Geldner (RVG) comments, "Father's father is...still more intelligent than the father who was the natural teacher". Comparing this to 1.155.3^{cd} and VI. 9.3^{cd} one may see here (ṚV. 1.164.16) transfer of wisdom from the lower father Agni to the higher son Viṣṇu.¹⁸⁶

In the present verse (AVP. II. 6.2) the term *pituṣ pitā* means Vena Gandharva. Vena Gandharva is called the father in the 3rd verse of the hymn. But since he is himself the father's father, his being the degraded father is absurd. However, in the other hymn of similar nature (AVP. V. 2.1) the sovereign Goddess is said to have approached the father for first creation (*prathamāya januṣe*). According to the nature of Agni in the original myth—his being the consort and the child both—the father here should be the empyreal sun. For this reason the original principle is termed *janitā* in the 7th verse of the same Atharvavedic hymn. One may also note that the rise of the notion of Viṣṇu underlines the growing importance of the empyreal sun.¹⁸⁷ The present hymn (AVP. II. 6) breaks this tradition by presenting the witness and knower of the first evolution as *pituṣ pitā* that is as superior to the empyreal sun or the original principle. This, on the whole, conforms to the general tone of the hymn.¹⁸⁸

The other three verses of the hymn are even more obscure than the first two. The difficulties have been increased by the presence of some textual problems here. The Śaunakiya versions of these verses are given below for the sake of comparison.

AVŚ. II. 1.3-5.

*sá naḥ pitā janitā sá utá bándhur
dhāmāni véda bhúvanāni víśvā /
yó devānām nāmadhá éka evá
tām sampraśnām bhúvanā yānti
sārvā ||3*

*pāri dyāvāpṛthivī sadyá āyam
úpātiṣṭhe prathamajām ṛtasya /
vācam iva vaktāri bhuvaneṣṭhā
dhāsyúr eṣá nanv eṣó agniḥ ||4*

*pāri víśvā bhúvanāny āyam
ṛtasya tántum vítatam dṛśé kām/
yātra devā amṛtam ānaśānāḥ
samāné yōnāv ádhy áirayanta ||5*

He is our father, (our) progenitor, he is also the connection, (he) knows all becomings and beings. All beings go on enquiring after him who is the sole nomenclator of the gods.

In an instant I have encircled Heaven and Earth. Remaining in beings I approached the first-born of Ṛta, (which abides in Ṛta) like speech in a speaker. This one is eager to be placed is it not Agni ?

I have encircled all the beings for beholding the stretched out thread of Ṛta where gods moved in the equal origin while enjoying immortality (like food).

Verse 3

The first half of the AVP-version of the third verse is more or less similar to the Śaunakiya one. But the second half is quite different. It is worthwhile to note that the Śaunakiya verse is almost identical to RV. X. 82.3 where the deity is Viśvakarman. The contents of the two Atharvavedic versions show that in the AVP the first half seeks to describe Vena-Gandharva as creator and the second half describes the abode of gods where they enjoy immortality, while, on the other hand, in the AVŚ the paternal being has been alone described and the abode of

gods is not at all mentioned. Again, the second half of the AVP-verse is identical to the second half of the fifth verse in the AVŚ. Now, let us turn to the fifth verse in the AVP. Here also the first half of the AVP-verse is more and less similar to that of the AVŚ-verse, but not the second half. And, while in the AVP the first half seeks to describe the spread out thread of Ṛta and the second half describes the one god protecting godliness, in the AVŚ the spread out thread of Ṛta and the abode of gods (= the original place of Ṛta) have been described. The confused nature of the AVP verses added to which is the identity of AVŚ. II. 1.3 and ṚV. X. 82.3 speaks for the conflation of the two halves of two different verses in the AVP. So our comments on the third verse and the fifth verse concern the AVŚ-versions.

The description in this verse (AVŚ. II. 1.3) gives the image of a conscious active subject, or rather, the Conscious Active Subject—Īśvara, and not of Brahman in whose state subjectivity and objectivity are lost (*yātra viśvaṃ bhāvaty ékarūpam*, verse 1). Obviously the verse is a glorification of Vena. This as well as the fact that in ṚV. X. 82.3, which is nearly identical to the present verse, the deity is Viśvakarman, again points to the close relation of Vena to the Purāṇic Prajāpati-Brahmā; for, the affinity of Prajāpati with Viśvakarman is wellknown.¹⁸⁹

Verse 4

- (i) *pari viśvā bhuvanāny āyam* 'I have encircled all the beings'.

According to Sāyaṇa one who has known the ultimate truth is the speaker here. But is the speaker the poet himself or Vena? Probably this is an ādhyātmikī ṛk and Vena is himself speaking, like Indra in ṚV. X. 48 and X. 119, or Vāk in X. 125.¹⁹⁰ For, encircling all beings implies more than what mortals can achieve. The subsequent descriptions further imply that the poet is temporarily acting for Vena that is to say representing him in the ritual which intends to represent the myth.

- (ii) *upātiṣṭhe prathamajā (AVŚ prathamajāṃ) ṛtasya vācam iva vaktari bhuvaneṣṭhā(h).*

These offer certain text-critical problems. *prathamajā ṛtasya (AVP)* and *prathamajāṃ ṛtasya (AVŚ)* express different senses.

Sāyaṇa's explanation of the Śaunakiya verse does not clarify the matter. He says that here, the one who has known the ultimate truth is the speaker—*jñānottarakālam tattvavid brūte*. Sāyaṇa reads *prathamajāḥ* for *prathamajāṃ* and *upātiṣṭhet* for *upātiṣṭhe* and brings in another completely new sentence which is said to be understood in the verse—*prathamajāḥ bhūtabhautikaprapañcajātāt pūrvam utpannaḥ sūtrātmā.....upātiṣṭhet sa yathā samaṣṭirūpeṇa kṛtsnam jagad vyāpya avatiṣṭhate tadvad aham asmī'ty arthaḥ*. This explanation is more confusing than the original text.

The given translation of the AVP version may show how difficult it is to find a sense in *vācam iva vaktari* after *prathamajā ṛtasya* in the Paippalāda version of the verse. Its translation as given above is only provisional. The translation of the Śaunakiya version of the verse is made after the following prose order : *vaktari (sthitām) vācam iva (ṛte sthitam) ṛtasya prathamajāṃ upātiṣṭhe*.

As to the identity of the first-born of Ṛta whom Vena approaches, the clue seems to have been given in the 4th *pāda*.

(iii) *dhāsyur nv eṣa nanv eṣo agniḥ. dhāsyú*, an uncommon word, occurs also in AVP V. 2. 1 = AVŚ IV. 1.2 (see below) and AVP. VI. 2. 2 = AVŚ V. 1. 2. Whitney¹⁹¹, after BR, understands *dhāsyú* as 'thirsty' or 'eager'. The derivation is supposed to be from *√dhe* 'to drink' (*dheṭ pāne Dhātup. I. 902*); but then the form should have been **dhāyasyú < √*dhāyas-y < dhāyas < √dhe*. Lindenau¹⁹² is close to Sāyaṇa in proposing the sense of 'schaffend' and the root *dhā*. Sāyaṇa paraphrases *dhāsyu* as *poṣaṇecchāvān* with the following explanation on AVŚ II. 1. 4 : *ḍu dhāñ dhāraṇapoṣaṇayoḥ ity asmāt sarvadhātubhyo 'sun (Uṇādi 628) iti bhāve asun-pratyaye dhā iti rūpam. dhāḥ dhāraṇam poṣaṇam jagata icchatīti chandasi parecchāyām api (Vārtika on P. III. 1.8) iti kyac, kyāc chandasi*

(P. III. 2. 170) *iti u-pratyayah*. The proposed intervening noun **dhās* is theoretically possible from the the Uṇādisūtra cited by Sāyaṇa and also cf. *jñās*, *bhās*, *dāsvant*. But we can do without *parecchā*. The authenticity of the Vārtika (on P. III. 1. 8), which enjoins this additionally in the Vedas, is debated.¹⁹³ The sense then will be 'desirous of *dhās* for himself.' With the primary sense of the root *dhā*—'to place in'—the sense of *dhāsyú* will be 'desirous of placing for himself', 'eager to be placed in'.

Now, it has been asked here if the one eager to be placed is Agni. Agni is placed in the fireplaces in the Vedic fire-ritual. The main ceremonial of the Agnyādheya consists of that act.¹⁹⁴ Hence we should not be unjustified in rendering the fourth pāda as 'This one is indeed eager to be placed (in the fireplaces), is it not Agni?'

From the present verse as well as from the other instances of the occurrence of the word *dhāsyú* in the AV, it appears that it is used for one who is born, or is going to be born. Cf. AVP. V. 2. 1 (AVŚ. IV. I. 2). 'The sovereign (Goddess) approaches the father at the beginning for the first birth.....let them mix the hot milk of the first one eager-to-be-placed-(in-the-fireplaces = *dhāsyoh*, see below p. 115); also AVŚ. V. 1. 2 *dhāsyúr yòniṃ prathamá ā viveśa*, 'eager to be placed in he first entered into the receptacle.' These indicate not only that the birth of Agni looms in the background of the present hymn, but also that the Agnyādheya—the main ritual of placing the fire in the fireplaces—intends to represent the birth of Agni.¹⁹⁵

In any case Agni (fire) represents the first-born of Ṛta in the ritual where the priest (who is the poet himself) is expected to play the part of Vena who approaches the first-born of Ṛta in the myth. This completes the representation of the myth in the ritual.

However, the full identity of the first-born of Ṛta is still not clear. For, in this hymn Agni (fire) figures in ritual connection but does not figure independently in the myth. It has been asked in the verse, 'Is it not Agni?' This is equal to

saying, "Is not the first-born of Ṛta of the myth represented in the fire of the ritual?" Hence one may further enquire as to which figure of the myth is identified, very cautiously though, as the ritual fire? Who is the first-born of Ṛta in the myth which is first conceived independent of the ritual fire in the hymn?

The first-born of Ṛta in the myth should be one of the five figures or principles mentioned in the previous verses—Vena, the highest secret station or state, the cow with future possibilities, 'this' universe and the empyreal sun. Vena cannot be the first-born of Ṛta here for he himself approaches it. The highest secret station, as indicated above, is the state of non-phenomenality or the ultimate form of word. It is not born. The speckled cow as the imagery of the ultimate form of word cannot be born. Neither this nor the cows (?) that are born (*jāyamānāḥ vrāḥ*) should be expected to be represented by fire in the ritual. 'This' universe also, with its three divisions, is represented by the three fireplaces in the ritual and not by fire.¹⁹⁶ It is the empyreal sun which is now left. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the empyreal sun which is a concept derived from Agni and is still sometimes understood as Agni in the tenth Maṇḍala of the RV¹⁹⁷ should be the first-born of Ṛta in the myth to be proposed as represented by fire in the ritual.

But this gives an unsatisfactory ontology. For, the empyreal sun is also the male correlative of the mother cow. Hence the mode of its evolution here is as ambiguous as in the original myth. There it was Agni who was conceived as his own father, here it is the empyreal sun which seems to be the first principle as well as the first-born of Ṛta. Its nature is ambiguous which conforms to the general character of the hymn which adventurously concerns itself almost solely with the first conscious subject—Vena, ignoring the ontological difficulties springing from the vague presentation of the other sides of evolution. The poet is perhaps conscious of his limitations. It is remarkable how cautiously, rather how vaguely, the notion of the first-born of Ṛta has been given a place in the hymn. The

*brahma jajñānaṃ prathamam
purastād
vi śīmataḥ suruco vena āvaḥ |
sa budhnyā upamā asya viṣṭhāḥ
sataś ca yonim asataś ca vi
vaḥ ||2.*

*pra yo jajñe vidvān asya
bandhum
viśvāni devo janimā vivakti |
brahma brahmaṇa uj jabhāra
madhyān
nīcād uccā svadhā abhi+ pra
tasthau ||3*

*mahān mahī askabhāyad vi jāto
dyāṃ dvitah pārthivam ca rajah |
sa budhnyād āṣṭra januṣā 'bhy
agram
bṛhaspatir devatā tasya
samrāt ||4*

*nūnaṃ tad asya gavyaṃ hinota
mahō devasya pūrvyasya mahi |
eṣa jajñe bahubhiḥ sākam itthā
pūrvādardād avithuraś ca san
nu ||5*

*sa hi divaḥ sa pṛthivyā rteṣṭhā
mahī kṣāman rajasī vi skabhā-
yati |
ahar yac chukram jyotiṣo
'janiṣṭā+
'dhā dyumanto+ vi vasantv
ariprāḥ ||6*

Vena unclosed from the well-shining edge Brahman that was first born earlier ; he unclosed the depths (and the) nearer shapes of it, the origin of the existent and the non-existent.

He who was born knowing the connection of this ; he the god, (thus) relates all the creations : "Brahman arose from Brahman ; it spread out by svadhā from below, from above and from middle."

The great one (when he was) born fixed the two wide ones —twice the heaven and (also) earthly space. By generation he has attained from the fundamental depth unto the summit. Bṛhaspati, the universal ruler, is his divinity.

Certainly did that (Brahman) inspire his (= Vena's) vision, the great power of the ancient god ; it was thus born along with many ; and formerly it had been in deep sleep, remaining unhurt.

He, indeed, remaining in the Ṛta of the heaven, he of the earth fixes up the two great spaces while supporting (them). As the bright day was born of light, now let the shining sinless ones clothe (him).

evā 'tharvā pītaraṃ viśvadevaṃ Atharvan Bṛhaspati uttered
bṛhaspatir namasā vocad accha+ | unto the father, the god of all,
tvam viśvasya janitā dhāsy agre with homage in this way : "The
kavir devān na dabhāva svadhā- generator of all, you become
vaḥ ||7 eager to be placed (in the fire-
 places or the three worlds) at
 the beginning ; the wise one,
 the possessor of svadhā, may
 you not harm gods !"

mūrdhnā yo agram abhyarty May the gods seek to win
ojasā Bṛhaspati who rises up to the
bṛhaspatir mā vivāsantu devāḥ | summit with (his) head ; he
bhinad valaṃ vimṛdho dardarīti broke Vala, he rends the forts,
kanikradad gāḥ svar apo · thundering he won cows, the
jigāya ||8 heaven and waters.

There are certain text-critical problems in the hymn. So far it has been known only from the AVŚ and AVP(K). The published portions of the new edition of the AVP¹⁹⁸ based on Orissa MSS do not cover this hymn. MS variants and explanation of signs have been given in the Appendix.

Verse 1

The first half of the verse presents a male and a female principle of creation. The female principle, the Sovereign Goddess (rāṣṭri) is Vāk who calls herself rāṣṭri in RV. X. 125.1. She is, of course, uncreated and unborn. The 'father' must be the male correlative and is praised as the God of All (*viśvadeva*) in the 7th verse ; but in the first verse it is passive and is better understood as the 'neuter' correlative of the Goddess, the unexpressed sense of yet-to-be-explicit language.

The second half concerns ritual representation. As in the previous verse here also the first principle which is going to be born is 'eager to be placed in the fireplaces or the three worlds' or, perhaps also in the womb of the Goddess.¹⁹⁹

hvārá is obscure. Geldner²⁰⁰ takes the word in RV. II. 2.4 to be the sun as a bird, and presented as the son of the speckled cow. The sun-bird in the highest station (*padám véh*) also appears in RV. IV. 5. 8 and is perhaps the son of the speckled cow mentioned in RV. IV. 5. 7 and 10. The connection with the empyreal sun seems to be implied if this understanding is correct.

But there are other possibilities too. \sqrt{hv} carries the sense of 'kauṣilya' (Dhātupāṭha I. 931). *kauṣilya* is generally taken to mean 'crookedness' but this may also mean 'bend' and, hence *hvārá* may mean the round-shaped Gārhapatya fireplace where the fire is first placed in.²⁰¹

Verses 2 and 3.

brahman is born first and Vena discloses it. Like the empyreal sun (previous hymn, vs. 1) this *brahman* is passive and neuter. The word is accented on the first syllable²⁰² and hence should be understood as the rituo-philosophical complex—sacrifice, prayer, holy speech, mantra and, obviously, all sacred human dealings. No other passive object like 'this' universe of the previous hymn has been described here as having come into being. The only other figure that is born is the active Vena who discloses and explains the 'birth' of the first principle (see below).

But the first principle (*brahman*) has got two sides. Vena is said to have disclosed the depths and the nearer shapes of it. These may be understood not as the archetypal and the terrestrial forms, but as the pre-phenomenal and the phenomenal forms of being of the first principle. The 'depths' should be the unmanifested pre-phenomenal form of Brahman and since it is also 'born' as *brahman* (see below), the terrestrial ritual dealings and hence the entire objective side of evolution should be the nearer forms.

This explanation of the distinction between the depths and the nearer shapes mentioned in the second verse is supported by the third verse. Here Vena relates the story of creation, '*brahman* arose from *brahman*'. The *brahman* that comes into

being is the rituo-philosophical complex as mentioned above. But the other *brahman* is non-phenomenal and should be translated as Brahman. Thus the 'fundamental', unmanifested Brahman of the depth is distinguished from the phenomenal 'nearer' brahman. This makes a great advancement upon the symbolic representation of creation as self-projection through the depiction of the self-produced Agni in the original myth and the uncomfortable silence of the previous hymn on this. The 'fundamental' form of Brahman of this verse is an historical link between the empyreal sun and the Upaniṣadic Brahman. Other evidences have been produced by some scholars to show that the Upaniṣadic Brahman is foreshadowed in the Atharva-veda.⁹⁰⁸ The present hymn certainly favours that view.

The two verses equally magnify the non-phenomenal Brahman, the phenomenal rituo-philosophical complex which is the objective side of creation and Vena who is the first conscious subject. The latter *comes into being* according to the third verse (*pra yo jajñe*).

The evolution described here is called 'birth'. This is 'birth', for the poet is yet to overcome all linguistic limitations of the mythological past, but birth means the first becoming. Yet no primeval becoming at a particular point of time seems to have been meant. Most probably this is a process ever continuing, ever repeated in the microcosmic plane and is somewhat similar to the Sāṅkhya idea of myriads of universally occurring contacts of Prakṛti and Puruṣa disturbing primordial equilibriums, or the endless series of expression of meaning through speech.

Verse 4.

Here Vena is not only spiritually active but also active as the agent of creation. Compare verse 3 of the previous hymn and also the nature of Hiraṇyagarbha (II. 8).

The fourth pāda says that Bṛhaspati is his divinity. This is historically true, for, no cult of Vena is known while Bṛhaspati is a god. In the seventh verse he is called Atharvan Bṛhaspati.

Verse 5.

This verse is extremely obscure and difficult also from the text-critical point of view. Its importance for post-Vedic mythology cannot be substantiated without some discussion of the problem of critical reconstruction.

The different readings are as follows.

- Or. *nūnaṃ tad asya gavyaṃ hinota
maho devasya pūrvyasya mahi |
eṣa yajño bahubhiḥ sākam itthāt
pūrvādarād avithuraś ca san nu ||*
- K. *nūnaṃ tasya gavyo hanoti
maho devasya pūrvasya pahi |
eṣa jajñe bahubhis sākam itthā
pūrvādarād aviduraś ca sahnūḥ ||*
- AVŚ. IV. 1. 6 *nūnāṃ tād asya kāvyo hinoti
mahō devāsya pūrvyāsya dhāma |
eṣā jajñe bahūbhiḥ sākām itthā
pūrve ārdhe viṣite sasān nū ||*

Only a few of the emendations suggested by the editors of K are now authenticated. They replaced *tasya* by *tad asya*, *hanoti* by *hinoti* and *pahi* by *mahī*: *mahī* used against *gavyaṃ* or *maho* in Or, which are both neuter forms, may be preferred to *mahī*; *hanoti* of K might have come into being as a result of the misplacement of *h(i)*, and so, *hinota* may be tolerated, though not without reservations. *yajño* and *itthāt* of Or may be rejected since *jajñe* and *itthā* appear in both K and the AVŚ; for the same reason, *pūrvasya* of K should be sacrificed for *pūrvyasya* of Or; *gavyam* (Or) derived from *go*—‘speech’ (under the imagery of cow) may mean ‘the power of speech’ and, by an extension of meaning, ‘visionary power.’ Thus, we arrive at the following restoration of abc: *nūnaṃ tad asya gavyaṃ hinota maho devasya pūrvyasya mahi | eṣa jajñe bahubhiḥ sākam itthā.*

In d the readings of K, Or and AVŚ have little in common. The AVŚ-reading, *pūrve ārdhe viṣite sasān nū* has been rendered

by Edgerton²⁰⁴ into English as : 'though still asleep when the earlier part was opened up'. Whitney offers a bit different translation : 'sleeping now in the loosened eastern half'. The 'earlier part', perhaps, is the mysterious, unknown state before creation. The reference to sleep here is worth noting. The idea of the first-born-one in deep sleep is not frequently met with in the Vedas. But this is a very popular Purāṇic theme relating to Nārāyaṇa. The search for a sense similar to the one in the AVŚ encourages us to infer the existence of the root *drā*—'to sleep' (*drai svapne* Dhātup. 1.905) in *pūrvāardād* of Or. The root is rarely used in that sense in the Vedas and, in a way, also in Classical Sanskrit. The word *nidrā* appears in one Ṛgvedic verse (VIII. 48. 14). The root *drā* has been used in the sense of 'sleeping' in AVŚ. VIII. 1. 13, *bodhāś ca tvā pratībodhāś ca rakṣatām asvapnāś ca tvā 'navadrāṇāś ca rakṣatām*, and also in *Kāṭhaka* XXXVII.10. *pūrvād adrād > pūrvād ardād* is not impossible in the Or manuscripts which sometimes misplace -r- within a word. The form may develop also out of *pūrvād adadrād* as haplology is not uncommon in the manuscripts.²⁰⁵ *pūrvād* is unsatisfactory, but this word occurs for *pūrvasmād* of AVŚ. XI. 5. 6 in AVP. XVI. 153. 6.

These conjectures are partly justified by a verse occurring in another hymn, viz., AVŚ. IX. 10. 9 (AVP. XVI. 68. 8), *vidhūṃ dadrāṇāṃ salilāsya pṛṣṭhē yūvānaṃ sāntaṃ palitō jagāra | devāsya paśya kāvyāṃ mahitvā 'dyā mamāra śa hyāḥ sāmāna ||* This, too, is a difficult verse. It occurs in a number of Vedic texts,²⁰⁶ and this fact indicates its ancient popularity. The table below will show that Indian commentators and also European interpreters are divided in their opinion about the sense of this verse.

Words occurring in the verse	Commentator/ Interpreter	Interpretation
<i>vidhūṃ</i>	Sāyaṇa (RV, TA)	<i>vidhātāram</i>
	Bharata (SV)	do.
	Mādhava (SV)	<i>dhārayitāram</i>
	Whitney (AV)	the shaker apart
	Keith (AA)	the lonely one

<i>dadrāṇam</i>	Sāyaṇa (RV)	<i>drāvakaṃ</i>
	Bharata (SV)	do.
	Sāyaṇa (TA)	<i>bhūyaḥ pravartamānam</i>
	Mādhava (SV)	<i>dārayitāram</i>
	Whitney (AV)	running
<i>palito</i>	Keith (AA)	wandering
	Sāyaṇa (RV, TA)	<i>jarā</i>
	Bharata (SV)	do.
	Mādhava (SV)	<i>vṛddhaḥ (aham)</i>
	Whitney (AV)	the hoary one
<i>jagāra</i>	Sāyaṇa (RV, TA)	<i>nigīrṇavān</i>
	Bharata (SV)	<i>girati, grasati</i>
	Mādhava (SV)	<i>staumi</i>
	Whitney (AV)	swallowed up

To the various interpretations here, we may add one of ours suggesting the derivation of *dadrāṇam* from √*drā* 'to sleep' (perfect participle) and of *jagāra* from √*gr* 'to praise, to awaken' (Dhātup. IX. 26, *gr śabde*). The first half of the verse, then, may be translated as follows: 'the grey-haired-one praised the lonely youth—existent and deeply sleeping on the back of the waters'. It should be admitted that this verse, too, contains in it some of the themes of the Nārāyaṇa-Brahmā legend of the Purāṇas.

The emendation suggested in *pūrvadadrād* and our interpretation of *vidhūṃ dadrāṇam* etc. are complementary to each other. The sleep indicates the non-phenomenality of the first principle (Brahman). In RV. X. 129. 2 the same state is described through another similarly expressive imagery, 'That One breathed breathless by intrinsic power...'

The Atharvavedic imagery has, indeed, some elements of the Purāṇic legend of Nārāyaṇa lying on the primeval ocean (cf. *salilāsya pṛṣṭhé* above) in Yoganidrā and being praised by Prajāpati Brahmā, as may be apparent from a comparison with the following description by Kālidāsa in Raghuvamśa, XIII. 6 :

*nābhiprarūḍhāmburuhāsanena
saṃstūyamānaḥ prathamena dhātrā |*

*amum yugāntocitayoganidrah
samhṛtya lokān puruṣo 'dhiṣete ||*

In the second half of the AV-verse the first principle is said to have been born with many. This shows how deeply the old myth in which Agni was born with the seven seers cast its shadow over the present hymn. But this plurality of the con-nascent beings is no more a reality to the poet who can do with Bṛhaspati alone as the first conscious subject. The poet hastens to add the word *itthā*, 'it was *thus* born' that is to say in the way described in the present hymn.

Verse 6.

It partly concerns Bṛhaspati whose activities are described in the first half. With the birth of the bright day in the third quarter of the verse the poet for once runs into the imagery of the empyreal sun. The fourth quarter is also indicative of the ritual theme. For, Agni is often said to have been clothed which means equipping him²⁰⁷; cf. ṚV. I. 140. 1 *vāstreṇeva vāsaya mānmanā śuci*, 'clothe the bright (Agni) by prayer as by garment'.

Verse 7.

The parallel verse AVŚ. IV. 1. 7 runs as follows :

yò 'tharvāṇam pitāram devābandhum bṛhaspátim námasāva ca gáchāt | tvám vlśveṣām janitā yáthāsaḥ kavir devó ná dábhāyat svadhāvān || 'Whoso shall approach (?*ava-gam*) with homage father Atharvan, relative of the gods, Bṛhaspati—in order that thou mayest be generator of all, poet, god, not to be harmed, self-ruling (? *svadhāvānt*)' (Whitney). This is an incomplete sentence without sense. Unlike in the AVŚ verse in the AVP Atharvan Bṛhaspati²⁰⁸ is different from the first born principle whom he is praising. Again Atharvan, as the poet, is identified as Bṛhaspati. This is in tune with the general theme of the hymn. An emendation *dhāsyasy agre* is implied in the translation ; cf, on AVP. II. 6. 4 above.

Verse 8 = TS. 2.3.14.6. An AVŚ parallel is lacking.

This is the only verse in the hymn where the 'divinity' (verse 4 above) has been eulogised alone. The verse relates the Ṛgvedic exploits of Bṛhaspati as in the myth of the release of cows. This is not without significance ; the theme of the present hymn is historically connected with the myth.

In the second pāda *bṛhaspatir mā*, instead of *bṛhaspatim ā* as in the TS, is unsatisfactory. The translation is based on the TS version.

10. Concluding remarks

In the foregoing pages I have tried to describe what appears to me as one of the mainstreams of Vedic thought. No emphasis has been laid on the possible IE, IIr or Harappan origin of the myths. It seems futile to me to speculate about origin when the main problem should be what the myths meant to the Vedic people who have presented us with the ideas.

Developments in parallel societies however bear much significance and should be compared for better results. There is not much scope for that here ; notice is being brought to a few Mesopotamian developments.

Asaru, originally a minor deity of the water cult at Eridu and the son of the great water god Enki, later grew into the supreme deity of Babylon, namely Marduk whose title lays special emphasis upon his solar aspect and means the young bull (*vatsa* ?) or sun, (cf. Agni-Viṣṇu and the empyreal sun, 7 above). One may also note the following characteristic features of Babylonian mythology :

“Water is the first principle of all things, and the gods themselves descended from the primeval water. Consequently all their philosophic thought centres about the water god of Eridu and his sons Nabū and Marduk. The creative principle residing in water is called *mummu*, ‘word, creative form’, (cf., the cow in the ṚV and AV) and the deities of the water cult are identified with this creative word or *logos*.”²⁰⁹

The end of the development in the Saṃhitās took place probably in early first millennium B.C. But the progress of Vedic thought could not stop here. In the subsequent periods it was no more possible to hold philosophy and myth together in metaphysical speculation and systematic thought. Hence the myth seldom appears in the Upaniṣads which took up the task of fulfilling the philosophical possibilities of the later speculations in the Saṃhitās while the mythological side was handled by the Purāṇakāras and poets.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. *BRVP*. I, pp. 10-144; *ORV*, 105 ff; *VMM*, 90 ff; *VMA* II, 369 ff. Hillebrandt's observations (*VMH*. II, pp. 67-154) pertain more to the fire-ritual than to the Agni-myth. They have been referred to mostly in Ch. III below.

2. Most of the scholars understand the main event in the hymn—the release of certain confined cows—as a form of the well-known Vala-myth and Paṇi-myth in which Indra leads the Aṅgirases; cf. Geldner's introductory remarks on the hymn in *RVG*; also see I.2g above and II. 5c infra.

Perhaps, this accounts for the fact that there exists no special study of the hymn. Only Bergaigne seems to have had some special concern for it. He included it in *QHR* (11 ff.) and also made some observations on the hymn as a whole in *BRV* (*BRVP*. I, 135 f etc.). Among recent scholars Gonda tried to clarify some of the ideas of the hymn (specially *VVP*, 101 ff), Schmidt (1968) ignores the hymn.

3. The translation, on the whole, follows *RVG* and Sāyana. Some important points of difference are noted below:

1b. *aratīm* = *VNK* 100 ff.; 'divine illuminator'; Sāy: *śighraṃ gantāram*; *RVG*: 'Wagenlenker'; *OLD*: 'steward'.

9a. *yajñābandhuḥ* = For *bandhu* cf. *MVR*, p. 209; Sāy: *yajñe 'gniho-trādaḥ bandhanam viniyojanam yasya saḥ*; *RVG*: 'Opfergenosse'; *OLD*: 'kinsman of sacrifice'.

mānuṣo = *RVG*: 'des Manu'.

11a. *pastysāu* = Sāy: *yajamānānāṃ grheṣu*; *OLD*: 'in the dwellings'.

11d. *āyōyuvāno* = Sāy: *dhūmākāreṇā 'tmānam āyojayan vartate. yad vā ...tāni tejāṃsi svātmani miśrikurvan*. See p. 51 infra.

12d. *saptā priyāso* = For *priya* see *VNK*, 22 ff; Sāy: *priyāḥ sapta hotrakāḥ*; *RVG*: 'sieben Freunde'; *SBI*, p. 43: 'die sieben lieben (Himmelflüsse)', this seems unlikely. On verses 10. 14 and 18 see *VVP*, 101 ff and on verse 16 *NNG*, p. 91. The great rope in verse 10 means the one used for the generation of ritual fire.

4. *GRV*. II, p. 107.

5. *OLD*, p. 310.

6. *RVG*. I, p. 412, I have not tried to be too literal in citing this and other modern works in translation.

7. See II. 5b infra.

8. See pp. 32, 43 infra and Ch. III. below. Also see *BRV*. I, passim.

9. Citations from the *RV* in this chapter are hereafter often given without the preceding abbreviation *RV*.

10. See 47 ff infra.
11. *pṛ̥ti priyāṃ rupó ágraṃ padāṃ véḥ* ; cf. III. 5.5, *pṛ̥ti priyāṃ ripó ágraṃ padāṃ véḥ*. *rup-* and *rip-* are obscure. See *OLD*, p. 242, *RVG. I*, p. 341, *Varuṇa* (Lüders), 303 ff.
12. *páyasā pr̥ṣṭhyēna* : *RVG* : 'mit der rahmigen Milch' ; Sāy : *dhāra-kenā payasā*.
13. So in the *RV* at least ; see *VMM*, p. 70. For a possible 'original' difference see *ORV*, 117 ff ; *GPV*, 56 ff ; Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens I*, p. 69.
14. *sasāsya viyutā* ; Sāy. *svapnasya viyutā viyute viyoge* ; *RVG* : 'beim Entleeren der Nahrung'. Geldner (ibid) also speaks of the imagery of a she-goat suckling her kids.
15. See n. 8 above.
16. *RVG. I*, p. 202.
17. See *Introd. 2f* above for the difference between the two types of descriptions.
18. *OLD*, p. 63 ; differently Lüders, *Varuṇa*, 9-13, 57-155.
19. Cf. *EVP. VII*, p. 16 ; against this common view Lüders (o.c, 13 ff, 461 and passim) : 'Wahrheit'—'truth' with special reference to the spoken word. This view is untenable.
20. Gonda (*VVP*, p. 173) fails to note the cosmogonic connection and continuity. "the idea underlying the expression seems rather to be that of the breaking through of a stream of the great and fundamental power called *ṛta*, of a sudden influx of sacredness, ..."
21. *ORV*, p. 275.
22. *OLD*.
23. *RV. I. 106.3, VI. 75.10, X. 15* etc.
24. *OLD*, p. 85.
25. *Loc. cit.* For the similar viewpoint of Bergaigne see *BRVP. II*, 119 ff.
26. *RVG. II*, p. 258.
27. *RVG. I*, p. 415.
28. *Ibid*, p. 95.
29. *RVG. I*, p. 228.
30. *NNG*, pp. 91-92.
31. See *ERV*, pp. 32-35 ; *NNG*, p. 1.
32. 'Vedic Exemplarism.' *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. I, p. 59.
33. *ERV*, p. 32 and *NNG*, 92 for the matter in the paragraph.
34. *Paspaśāhnika*.
35. See *VMA. II*, 326ff ; *ERV*, 85 ff.
36. This is the basis of imagery-building. See Gonda (*GPV*, 33 ff) for the operation of the principle in nouns ending in -as which acquire

adjectival sense with change of accent, e.g., *ápas* 'work' → *apás* 'active' ; also *Brahman*, 50 ff on *bráhmaṇ* 'power' (passive) → *brahmán* 'the possessor of power' (active). The principle applies to any similar archaic concept.

The basic element of the concept is passive and is symbolised by natural objects while the active imagery is built upon it to describe a function of the said principle in myth. Hence, Agni = enlightenment → first enlightened being as calf of speech ; Moon = watching, guardianship of *Ṛta* → guardian of *Ṛta*, King Varuṇa ; Sūrya = light as the eye of gods → the watching god himself.

So also Confucius in *Yi Ching*, ch. V, § 11ff, (SBE XVI). According to this Heaven is the symbol of strength and also gives the idea of horse.

Gonda's observations sometimes betray confusion. He distinguishes the observation that he who knows the power is designated by the name of the power (*Brahman*, 52 ff) from the views on the personification of the same power (ibid, 62 ff). Gonda does not like to distinguish between the impersonal and personified forms. He admits the "chronological priority of the impersonal brahman" (p. 62) but at the same time maintains that "it is already clear that the ancient Indian thinkers did not draw a hard and fast line of distinction between the personal and the impersonal, the animate and the inanimate" (p. 62). The scholar approves the similar views of Von Glanzenapp.

But this last view is at best perfunctory. Personification, as observed by us, is a distinct literary phenomenon aimed at explicating aspects of the same basic concept. Gonda's views undermine this cause behind personification.

37. Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya, sūtra 14 ; Paraśurāmakalpasūtra V. 22, Gītā VI. 19, 37 speak of *jñānāgni*.

38. *VVP*, p. 267.

39. Śaṅkara on *BU*. I. 3.28 — *prakāśātmakatvād jñānaṃ jyotiḥ*. For the *CU* passage see infra. On Plotinus see Second Ennead, IX. 3 and passim.

40. J. H. Newman, *The Pillar of the Cloud*.

41. Śaṅkara on *BS*. I.1.24,

42. *VMA*. II, pp. 320-21,

43. *VVP*, pp. 272-73. The citation is from *VVP*, p. 272.

44. *VMM*, pp. 98-99.

45. See II. 7d infra.

46. Sāyaṇa understands *ṛta* as *udaka* (IV. 1.12), as *yajña* (IV. 1.13) and also paraphrases *ṛtasya* (III. 55.14) as *satyabhūtasyādityasya*. *ṛta* is 'water' according to N. II. 25, 'truth' or 'sacrifice' according to N. IV. 19.

47. *VSGP*. I, 212.

48. *VMM*, p. 92.

49. *RI*, p. 107.

50. *Die Religionen Indiens* I, 68-69.

51. E.g. *Nānārthaśabdakoṣa* by Medinīkara.

52, *Varuṇa*, 24 ff, *ORV*, p. 197. Gonda's (*GPV*, 27, 74ff) interpretation of *ṛtāsya gārbha* as the child of Ṛta, a view repeated in *Die Religionen Indiens*. I, 79, is not acceptable. He understands (*GPV*, p. 75) this as the "first embodiment of *ṛta*, i.e. among phenomenal beings the prototype of those embodying *ṛta*...". But in the imagery of Agni and the mother cow (II. 2, 3 above) the first embodiment of Ṛta is milk just as that of speech is cow. In both the imagery and the symbol are merged. Agni is always differentiated from both. The distinction between Agni and Ṛta is maintained also in the present myth sought to be reconstructed here, for which see the sequel of the discussion,

Gonda (like Lüders, *Varuṇa*, pp. 9-13, 57-155) does not try to proceed through the analysis of the imagery. The motherly waters as well as the presenting of Agni as a child are noted (*GPV*, p. 56), but imagery building is not recognised as a necessary part of myth-building. Naturally, the existence of any particular imagery for Ṛta goes unnoticed.

53. Also cs. n. 18 above.

54. *VSGP*. II, 46. The citation is translated from *ibid.* III, 44.

55. Cf. Geldner, *VSGP*. I, 163 on ṚV. III. 1.5. Also cf. ṚV. I.67.10 where Agni is understood as the 'Geist der Wasser' (*RVG*).

56. *OLD*.

57. *OLD*, p. 162,

58. Cf. D. K. Bedekar, *ABORI* 1950, p. 79.

59. Burrow, *Sanskrit language*, p. 40.

60. See the *Śabdakalpadruma* and the authorities cited by it under *jarāyu* and *AVŚ*. I. 11.4-6, IV. 2.8.

61. *VSGP*. III, 43 ff.

62. *Garbhopaniṣad*, 2 ; *Śāktānandatarāṅgiṇī*, Ch. I,

63. *SAGS*, 204ff.

64. Also see n. 52 above.

65. N. 51 above.

66. *VSGP*. II, 266 ff.

67. The scope of *lakṣaṇā* is broader than that of *synecdoche*. The former one means any relation between the primary and the secondary sense, while *synecdoche* includes only part-whole relation. On *lakṣaṇā* see the *Bhāṣāpariccheda* 82, with the commentary *Siddhāntamuktāvalī*.

68. See n. 41 above.

69. *The forgotten language*, 11 ff. The citation is from pp. 15-16.

70. 'Aṅgiras in the Vedic literature' by N. J. Shende. *ABORI*, 1950, pp. 108-131.

71. *OBG*, *JBBRAS*, vol. 26, 1950, Part I, p. 55.

72. *Ibid*, p. 60.

73. *MRK*, p. 64.

74. *OBG*, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

75. *OLD*, p. 314. See n. 3 above.
76. *QHR*, p. 14
77. *VSGP*. II, 121f.
78. *MRK*, p. 65.
79. *OBG*, pp. 75-76.
80. *Ibid*, p. 55.
81. *VMM*, p. 142.
82. Cf. *RV*. IV. 1.11, 12, X. 61.6 ; see II. 5 c, d *infra* for further discussions of the matters referred to in this paragraph.
83. *Sāy. paricārakān* ; *RVG*, 'ersten Meister' ; *OLD*, 'first worshippers'. But wisdom and priestliness are not separable in the *RV*. Also see *VVP*, pp. 49-50 and *passim*.
84. Cf. *Kumārasambhava*, V. 41.
85. *BRV*. I, *passim*.
86. *Ibid*, pp. viii-ix, 109 ff ; also Chapter II, Section IV, in general.
87. *Ibid*, 135 f.
88. Many of these are cited or referred to in II. 1, 2, 3 above. The most important ones are *RV*. I. 71.2, I. 83.4, IV. 2.15-17, IV. 3.11, X. 62.5-6 etc. in which the *Aṅgirasas* are mentioned by name and IV. 1, I. 72, X. 45. 11, X. 46.2, III. 31.3 etc. where the name of the *Aṅgirasas* is not mentioned. Also see II. 5d *infra*.
89. *OLD*, p.310. The reference made by Oldenberg is to *GRV*. II, p.107.
90. *RVG*. I, p. 412. See p. 28 above for the exact words of Geldner.
91. The growth of the idea of the celestial origin of *Agni* as the most important birth of *Agni* seems to have been related also to the apparent degradation of the womb of the motherly waters belonging to the middle region, for which see II. 7c, d *infra* and III. 7e below.
92. *ORV*, 105 ff. Unless otherwise noted the views of Oldenberg given in the subsequent paragraphs are from this portion of *ORV*.
93. *ORV*, p. 42.
94. *Ibid*, p. 121.
95. *Ibid*, p. 52, also p. 121.
96. *Ibid*, p. 122.
97. *Ibid*. p. 123.
98. *Ibid*, p. 111.
99. *Ibid*, p. 126.
100. *Loc cit*.
101. *Ibid*, 141 ff.
102. *BRVP*. I, 103 ff and III. 7e below.
103. See II. 5d *infra*.
104. See n. 88 above.
105. See *Introd*. 2g. above.
106. Traditionally the *Āprī* hymns belong to *Agni*. See *OLD*, 9 f.

107. See *infra*.
 108. See II. 8, 9 *infra* for the matter discussed in the paragraph.
 109. See II. 6, 8 *infra*.
 110. See *ORV*, 141 ff; *VMH*. III, 260 f; *VMM*, 63 f; *SBI*, *passim*.
 111. *VMM*, p. 63.
 112. *VID, ABORI*, 1950, p. 17.
 113. *An introduction to the study of Indian history*, p. 70.
 114. "Indra, and Indra's rather childish character become indeed most intelligible when he is thus regarded as a personification of the ego-principle, aham, abhimāna". *NAV*, p. 74.

It is not suggested, however, that the myth of Indra's release of cows is not cosmogonic. See Lüders in *Varuṇa*, 20f for a cosmogonic interpretation of the myth, also Schmidt (1968) for a different point of view.

What is emphasised in the present study is that the fundamental difference between the characters of Indra and Agni has often been missed. One may compare *VMM*, pp. 127-128, where Macdonell only notes their similarity without once mentioning the said difference. Schmidt goes farther in building up his theories upon evidences of the priestly character of Indra.

115. *VMM*. p. 61.
 116. *ORV*, p. 148.
 117. *VMM*, p. 99.
 118. See II. 5c above.
 119. See nn. 112, 113 above and *OBG*, 49-50.
 120. Cs. n. 114 above.
 121. See *Original Sanskrit Texts*, iv, pp. 31, 37 for this legend.
 122. *VMM*, pp. 102-103 and *RPVU*, 162 ff; also see *ORV*, pp. 65, 144; but differently *SBI*: *br̥haspati* originally an epithet of Indra.

123. *imāṇi dhiyaṇi saptāśīrṣṇīṇi pitṛā na ṛtāprajātāṇi br̥hatīm avindat*.
 124. See the table and analysis on pp. 68 ff above.
 125. E.g. X. 67.2-3.
 126. *VMM*, p. 102.
 127. *VMM*, pp. 37-38.
 128. *RPVU*, p. 109; also see *VMM*, 38ff. Gonda (*AEV*, 25ff and p. 60) also believes in the solar theory; so also Sukumari Bhattacharji, *IT*, p. 284. Also see n. 147 below.

129. *VMM*, p. 38.
 130. *RI*, p. 105. Also see *VMH*. II, 96 ff.
 131. *VMM*. p. 8.
 132. *RPVU*, 625 ff.
 133. This means that the presentation of the parental nature of Heaven and Earth with special reference to Agni is the first instance of bringing Agni to prominence in relation to other gods. The second instance is his

surpassing his parents. The term *pitúṣ pitṛā* used in VI. 16. 35 (p. 48 above) means that Agni has already been attributed greater glory than what his father (Dyaus) possesses.

134. *VMM*, p. 93.

135. Monism in the sense that this means a matter-cum-spirit unity apart from unity of becoming. Cf., Kunhan Raja in *PPR*, p. X, "Monism in the *Rgveda* is a Matter-cum-Spirit unity and not the pure Spirit of latter-day Monism, in which matter is thought only as an illusory transformation from the pure Spirit, and not as a reality. The *Rgvedic* philosophy is not at all anti-materialistic."

Kunhan Raja arrived at this conclusion from the analysis of a few hymns belonging mainly to the tenth Maṇḍala. While those hymns which are generally recognised as of relatively late origin (see *Introd.* above, n. 61) are not anti-materialistic and speak of matter-cum-spirit unity, the earlier ontology specially the one traced out in II. 4 above speaks of the spirit emerging from the womb of its material substratum—the waters—and thus anticipates Thales. See II. 8 *infra*.

136. This verse identifies the site of the sacrifice as the place where the ancient fathers sat aspiring after *Rta* while in the previous verse those very beings are spoken of as having come into being in the atmospheric receptacle. For the reflection of the idea of Agni's atmospheric—aqueous origin in the ritual also see III. 4 below.

137. See Geldner's comments specially on verses 3, 11, 14 etc. in *VSGP*. I, 157ff where the hymn has been analysed. Also see *RVG* on RV. III. 1.

138. *BRVP*. II, pp. 425-26,

139. This is understood as pervasiveness by Gonda (*AEV*, p. 172 and also Prefatory Note to the 1969 edition). But Gonda, like Macdonell, does not recognise the development of this concept from Agni's universality and also understands the solar connection of Viṣṇu like Macdonell and not as in the present study. See n. 147 below.

140. It is for this reason that the idea of gods generating Agni or instituting fire on earth was regarded as a late developed idea in II. 5b above. See n. 91 above.

141. *VMM*, p. 93.

142. Both citations are from *RI*, p. 105.

143. *RI*, p. 458.

144. *RI*, p. 112.

145. *RI*, p. 464.

146. *RI*, p. 460.

147. For both citations see *VMM*, p. 38. The full sentence and the one preceding it are given below. "The purely naturalistic interpretation favoured by most European scholars and by Yāska's predecessor Auaṇavābha (*Nir.* XII. 19) takes the three steps to mean the rising, culmi

nating and setting of the sun. The alternative view, which prevails throughout the younger Vedas, the Brāhmaṇas as well as post-Vedic literature, and was supported by Yāska's predecessor Śākapūṇi and is favoured by Bergaigne and the present writer, interprets the three steps as the course of the solar deity through the three divisions of the universe."

Gonda supports this point of view (*AEV*, p. 60) :

"The general idea underlying the three strides of the god is in all probability—as was suggested already by Śākapūṇi, cited by Yāska (*Nir.* XII. 19)—the diurnal course of the sun through the tripartite cosmos in his ascent from the horizon through the atmosphere to the zenith, which might, at least occasionally, have been considered a sort of heaven (cf. e.g. *RV.* 1.154.5, 8.29.7)."

It should be noted that the citation from Bergaigne (see n. 138 above) does not show that he held this point of view as believed by Macdonell. It has been attempted to show in the main body of the present study that Śākapūṇi too did not suggest this. Gonda seems later to have changed his opinion about Viṣṇu's solar connections for which see Prefatory Note to *AEV* (69 edition). But the matter has not been elaborated by the scholar.

148. Also see Yāska's explanation of this verse and *RV.* X. 88. 6. in *N.* VII. 27-28.

149. See n. 147 above.

150. Both citations are from *VMM*, p. 93.

151. *RPVU*, p. 156.

152. *ORV*, p. 109. For later Indian traditions of this sort, see Kātyāyana's *Sarvānukramaṇī*, *Paribhāṣā*, 2. 14-18.

153. *ŚB.* XIV. 1. 1, etc,

154. *VMM*, p. 39 ; also *IT*, p. 284.

155. See p. 42 above.

156. Sāyaṇa gives the following citation,

*vaiśvānarasya putro 'sau parastād divi yaḥ sthitaḥ |
paraḥ paraḥ sthitaḥ sūryaḥ pitāgniḥ pārthivo mataḥ ||*

157. Gonda (*NNG*, p. 87) explains differently without Agni.

158. See II. 6 above.

159. See n. 135 above,

160. After *RVG*.

161. Gomperz, *Greek Thinkers*, vol. I, p. 48.

162. The given translations of X.129 partly follows *NAV*, 54 ff. Vedic words in parentheses in the original translation have been omitted.

163. Cf. p. 83 above.

164. After the analogy of X.121.8. But Sāyaṇa says *agnyupalakṣitaṃ sarvaṃ viyadādibhūtajātam*. This is unusual for Agni.

165. See II.9. *infra*.

166. X.81,82. See *PPR*, p. 249,

167. The AVP readings are taken from AVP (Bh), II.

168. Gonda (NNG, p. 7) translates, "who knows the locations (*dhāmāni*) of divine power and all (worlds of) beings," N.IX.28 gives three meanings of *dhāman* : *dhāmāni trayāṇi bhavanti, sthānāni, nāmāni, janmānti*. *janman* means beginning or becoming—the sense adopted in the present translation. This seems to be supported by AVP. V.2.3 (AVŚ. IV.1.3) ; *pra yo jajñe vidvāṅ asya bandhuṃ viśvāni devo janimā vivakti*.

169. See II. 7d above and also the sequel.

170. The literal rendering 'all become of one abode' should not be taken to mean reverse becoming which is closely allied to *ātmayāga* and resorption as evident in the Daśahotṛ formula (see III.7b below). The present verse, perhaps, does not emphasise that though its *bhavaty ekarūpam* might be close to it, and seems to foresee it. The prenatal state of Agni, e.g. as described in ṚV. I.144.2 also is expressive of this concept.

171. VVP, p. 357.

172. Cf. *devānāṃ nāmadhā*, AVŚ. II. 1.3, ṚV. X.82.3.

173. See II.5a,d above.

174. VVP, 356, 357

175. See II.5d, 6 and 8 above.

176. MU, 6.

177. Laṅkāvatāsūtra, Suzuki's transl. p. 4.

178. VVP, p. 357.

179. VSGP. I,77 ff.

179a. Differently Whitney ; see Dipak Bhattacharya, 1ff, VIJ. 1977.

180. ṚV. VIII.8.23 also is an obscure formulation of the theory of three or four quarters : *trīṇi padāny aśvīnor āvīḥ sānti gūhā parāḥ* 'Three stations of the Aśvins are visible near and secret afar'.

181. See the Mīmāṃsāsūtras, II.1.35-37.

182. See the note on *pitṛs pitṛā* on p. 109 infra ; also see pp. 104-105 above.

183. See D. Bhattacharya, *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 6, 1978, passim.

184. In the *Abhisamayālaṅkārikā* ; see D. Bhattacharya, *Journal of Research*, Visva Bharati, II.1, 1976-77.

185. See n. 133 above.

186. See p. 97 above for the ṚV verses not cited here.

187. See II.7d above.

188. Cs. n. 182 and p. 108 above.

189. See VMM, p. 118.

190. See N.VII.1.5.

191. So also Edgerton (BIP).

192. ZII.1, 43 ff.

193. Pathak and Chitrao (1935).
194. See III.2,5 below.
195. Also see p. 137 below.
196. See III.5 below.
197. See II.7d above.
198. =AVP (Bh). The readings of AVP.V.2 are taken from the Orissa MSS and K.
199. For the identity of the fireplace and the three regions of the universe see III.5 below. In the Agnyādheya the placing of Agni in the Brahmaudanika fireplace, which is subsequently regarded as the Gārhapatya fireplace is likened to the union of Agni and the waters and also to the conception of Agni. See III.4 below and also the comments on Aps. V.10.2 and V.8.5(2) in III.3 below.
200. *RVG*, I, p. 278.
201. See III.2 below and also n.199 above.
202. So according to the AVŚ; accent marks are not given in the AVP.
203. D.M. Bhattacharya (1968), 46 ff; N.J. Shende (1952), 211 ff.
204. *BIP*, p. 81.
205. See AVP (Bh). II, p. xxx.
206. ṚV.X.55.5; SV.I.325; II.11.32; Maitrāyaṇīya Saṃhitā IV.9.12; Ait.Ār.V.3.1.2; Taitt. Ār. IV.20.1, etc.
207. For the idea of equipping Agni see III.6 below.
208. Two reciters of the AVŚ read *br̥haspátir* before S.P. Pandit; see Vishva Bandhu's edition
209. Encyclopaedia Britannica (1958), 2,860 f.

CHAPTER THREE

THE BIRTH OF AGNI IN THE AGNYĀDHEYA

1. Introduction

In this chapter it is proposed to examine how far ideas relating to the birth of Agni are reflected in a Vedic ritual, namely the Agnyādheya. By ritual reflection is meant the arrangement of the rite as the microcosmic dramatisation of a particular process of development. This is not alien to Indian mysticism.¹ But this has not generally been claimed for the Vedic sacrifice. Among Western scholars it was Bergaigne² who first introduced such a discussion. His main thesis was that according to the Ṛgvedic mythology the ritual on earth was of celestial origin and was given as a model to men by Gods to be imitated in the terrestrial sacrifices. Eggeling³ also partly subscribed to the theory. He showed the Agnicayana to have been a microcosmic representation on earth of the sacrifice of Puruṣa as mentioned in ṚV.X. 90. Eggeling, however, did not recognise the representation of myth in ritual as a general theory and thought that the idea originated only in the Puruṣa-hymn of the ṚV.

The existence of the notion that myth can be enacted on earth as a general Ṛgvedic idea, can be proved by such utterances as those in which the poets pray for being equal to the Aṅgirasas who released the confined cows, or those in which the place of the sacrifice is identified as the stage of the mythological drama and like passages many of which have been pointed out in Ch. II.⁴ These suggest the desirability of an examination of the authenticity of the ideas accompanying the myths relating to the birth of Agni through rituals which might reflect them.

It is possible that the ideas which took years to take shape were diffused in several fire-rituals. But only one ritual, namely the Agnyādheya (also called Agnyādhāna and Ādhāna), has

been taken up. This ritual readily suggests itself for the purpose since one of the principal ceremonials of the ritual consists of giving birth to Agni that is generating fire (*agni-janana*). Secondly, a very late and unique development of the RV (X. 90) was taken into account by Eggeling in his analysis of the Agnicayana, which too is a unique and a late, elaborate and intricate Vedic sacrifice.⁵ Hence, for the more ancient and commonly known myth of the birth of Agni one may look to the Agnyādheya—the relatively simple and primary fire-ritual which was a must for every sacrificer.⁶ However, the choice has not been made only upon a priori reasoning. One may also note that in AVP. II. 6.4 (AVŚ. II. 1.4) Agni, as the ritual counterpart of the emerging first principle, is called *dhāsyu* (< √*dhā*), a term which seems to mean 'eager to be placed in'.⁷ The Agnyādheya also consists of generating and placing (*ādhāna*) fire in the fireplaces.

There is no generally accepted method for the kind of analysis proposed here. Eggeling depended on the ŚB while commenting upon the Agnicayana. The Agnyādheya also has been described in the TB and ŚB.⁸ But depending solely on the Brāhmaṇas one cannot effect an itemwise analysis for which one has to consult also the Śrautasūtras which only give exhaustive accounts of all the items. For example, all the verses and formulae uttered or chanted during the performance of the rite are not necessarily mentioned in the Brāhmaṇas ; but those are found in the Śrautasūtras.⁹

A Brāhmaṇa-based interpretation may be even, to some extent, misleading. For, in these visibly concocted items have often been too much eulogised. These may confuse one as to where the emphasis is to be laid. There are numerous examples of this. Great importance is attached in the Brāhmaṇas to the Bṛhat and Rathantara sāmans. Sometimes these are regarded as the two rudders of the ship of sacrifice.¹⁰ But their specious eulogies are flatly contradicted by their sense and give the impression of their artificial incorporation with the rituals. For example, all the Brāhmaṇas claim that the aim of the Mahāvratā is to feed Prajāpati.¹¹ The Mahāvratā

is conceived as a bird and the Rathantara sāman is said to be its right wing.¹² The sāman is related to Prajāpati also in another way ; for it consists of seventeen-fold stomas and the number seventeen belongs to Prajāpati.¹³ But the subject-matter of the sāman which is based upon RV.VII.32.22, 23 has nothing to do with Prajāpati and concerns only Indra. like the Rathantara the Bṛhat also (=RV. VI.46.1,2) is addressed to Indra and has not anything in it concerning Prajāpati. But this sāman also is similarly eulogised.¹⁴

The tendency to eulogise matters of secondary importance is often linked to the fact that in the Brāhmaṇas the veneration of Prajāpati grows to a great extent throwing the original deities and ideas connected with the ritual (which can be inferred from the mantras uttered and from comparison) into shade. But Prajāpati was originally less important than Agni and Indra.¹⁵ His mythological basis lies in the hymns to Agni, Bṛhaspati, Vena and certain other comparatively late hymns.¹⁶ Before Prajāpati came into prominence Indra enjoyed supremacy as the god of war. Since Prajāpati's prominence grew in the Brāhmaṇas at the cost of those deities it is not unusual that the change should be reflected in the interpretation of the rituals in the Brāhmaṇas.

Those eulogies of sāmans and like matters are not generally found in the Śrautasūtras¹⁷ which, nevertheless, prescribe their use. Hence, here one has not to occupy oneself with the task of sorting out fabricated and handy interpretations from authentic traditions, which, of course, the Brāhmaṇas abound in, as one has to do when dealing with the Brāhmaṇas.¹⁸

It is not suggested here that there should be any exclusive preference for the Śrautasūtras. All these words are told just to show that it is not advisable to depend exclusively on the Brāhmaṇas while interpreting the ritual. But that is far from saying that it is possible to know everything about the Vedic sacrifice, even about the Agnyādheya, from the Śrautasūtras alone without taking help from the Brāhmaṇas. The Brāhmaṇas are indispensable guides since they still know ancient traditions which are not generally related in the Śrautasūtras. But, on the

one hand, one is required to compare the interpretations of the Brāhmaṇas with the ideas found in the mantras, on the other hand, it is also sometimes necessary to be careful about the Śrautasūtras. These are considerably later than the ṚV which gives us the stories of the birth of Agni and knows the ritual of generating fire and the enactment of the myth. One cannot reasonably expect a fullfledged representation of Ṛgvedic myths in so late treatises. Moreover, the Śrautasūtras are generally post-Upaniṣadic. It will not be surprising to discover here and there elements of Upaniṣadic idealism in the Śrautasūtras. The quantity of this particular type of encroachment is small, though, as it may be seen later on, the significance thereof is very great.

The Āpastambaśrautasūtra which describes the Agnyādheya in its fifth chapter has been mainly used below.¹⁹ The reason for this choice is that this Śrautasūtra is most widely followed by yājñikas of the Black Yajurveda school. The Kātyāyanaśrautasūtra, the only Śrautasūtra of the White Yajurveda is relatively meagre in description. The Vedic sacrifice is lost among its followers in North India.

In the discussion that follows it has been attempted to focus mainly upon the reflection of certain basic ideas of the myth in the ritual as well as on certain relevant topics like later developments in the Vedic ritual. To serve this purpose the matters have been arranged as follows. A short description of the Agnyādheya (according to the Aps) has been given in section 2. The third section concerns the identity of the birth of Agni and the ritual generation of fire as expressed through the dual sense of certain words used in the mantras. The reflection of the myth of Agni's aqueous origin, that of the universalisation of Agni, the mode of working of sacrifice and the stages in the development of the idea of sacrifice as reflected in the Hotṛ-formulae used in the Agnyādheya are treated in the last four sections.

2. Conspectus of the Ritual

Preliminary remarks : The description given below follows

the fifth chapter of the Aps. But the matter told in the first paragraph of the description is taken from other treatises indicated in parentheses. The ceremonials covered by this paragraph are not found in said chapter of the Aps, but it is the current practice to follow the texts indicated for the connected ceremonials.²⁰ All the major ceremonials have been included. These are generally accompanied by the utterance of mantras or by chants which have not always been indicated below. Only three fires are compulsorily set up, namely, the Gārhapatya, Āhavanīya and Dakṣiṇa. The Sabhya and the Āvasathya are not compulsory according to all the Śrautasūtras.²¹ The Gārhapatya fireplace is round-shaped ; so are the Sabhya and the Āvasathya ; the Āhavanīya is square-shaped and the Dakṣiṇa fireplace is semi-circular. No one is entitled to perform any Śrauta ritual unless he is an Āhitāgni—one who has performed the Agnyādheya, that is has set up the sacrificial fires.²²

Description : The sacrificer along with his wife pronounces his desire to set up the fires (BŚS. II. 1). He chooses the four priests, namely, Brahman, Adhvaryu, Hotṛ and Āgnidhra, and honours them by offering Madhuparka, (AGS. 1. 23. 1, 1. 24. 1).

Two kindling sticks (*araṇi*) are prepared from an aśvattha tree growing on a śamī-tree. All the other necessary implements also are procured. Apart from the implements, seven or five materials derived from earthly substances, seven or five materials derived from plants and also gold are procured to be deposited in the fireplaces before the establishment of fire. These materials are called *sambhāras*.

The site for the sacrifice should be inclined to the east. A shade is constructed with bamboos pointing towards the north. The Gārhapatya fireplace is dug about below the central beam and is sprinkled with water. To the east of it is the Āhavanīya fireplace in a separate chamber. The Dakṣiṇa fireplace should be near the Gārhapatya, southeast to it, so that one-third the distance between the Gārhapatya and the

Āhavanīya is covered thereby. The Sabhya is dug out on the eastern side of the Āhavanīya and the Āvasathya farther east to the Sabhya.

The sacrificer gets his hairs and beards shaved and his nails pared. His wife also does accordingly. They wear linen cloths later to be given to the Adhvaryu.

In the afternoon the Adhvaryu takes a part of the sacrificer's Aupāsana fire²³ and deposits it as the Brahmaudanika fire (= fire for cooking the meal of the priests) in the Gārhapatya fireplace. At night the Adhvaryu takes four panfuls of rice for the Brahmaudana (food for the priests) and cooks the rice on the Brahmaudanika fire. It is partly offered into the fire and the rest is distributed among the priests. The Adhvaryu stirs the food with pieces of wood which are then offered into the fire. Three heifers are promised to the Adhvaryu. After this the food is taken by the priests.

The ceremonials described up till now may be performed a year, 12 days, 3 days, 2 days or a day before the establishment of the fires.

After the rite relating to the Brahmaudanika fire has been performed the sacrificer is required to observe certain vows like the maintenance of the Brahmaudanika fire up to the day of the Agnyādheya, continence, truthfulness etc.

The night before the establishment of the fires the sacrificer says, 'From untruth to truth do I go, from manhood to divinity do I go, the divine word do I promise',²⁴ and keeps himself awake during the night. The fire is fuelled and refuelled with the verse, 'Fuelling the fire with pieces of wood may I attain to both the worlds. Prospering in both the worlds may I forever pass beyond mortality'.²⁵

Shortly before dawn the Adhvaryu warms the two araṇis on the Brahmaudanika fire and gives those to the sacrificer who holds the araṇis till the kindling of the fire takes place. The Adhvaryu digs a little into the fireplaces, sprinkles these again with water and deposits the materials derived from earth and plants into those. A piece of gold is placed to the north of the materials in the Gārhapatya. A horse is made to stand

by the place of the generation of fire. Ashes are removed from the Brahmaudanika fire and the araṇis are placed in it. A twirling takes place and results in the generation of fire. This is literally the 'churning out of fire' (*agnimanthana*). The Caturhotṛ formulae are uttered during the churning. As the fire is produced the sacrificer exhales into it and gives it to the Adhvaryu.

Many verses are uttered and chants sung as the Adhvaryu lays the fire into the Gārhapatya fireplace. This and the subsequent depositings of fire in the fireplaces are each time followed by a homa called śamanahoma.

Immediately afterwards the preparation for the depositing of the fire into the Āhavanīya fireplace starts. The Adhvaryu lights fire-wood in the Gārhapatya fire and takes it up, places it in a pan which is full of sand and asks the sacrificer to utter a few verses into the right ear of the horse standing nearby. At this time the Āgnīdhra takes some fire from some place and deposits that in the Dakṣiṇa fireplace as the Dakṣiṇa-fire. All the necessary verses are uttered, chants sung and the śamanahoma takes place. The Āgnīdhra instead of the Adhvaryu establishes the Dakṣiṇa fire; the śamanahoma, too, is done by the Āgnīdhra. The Adhvaryu continues to lead the horse, the sacrificer and his wife to the Āhavanīya fireplace. The wheel of a chariot is moved so that three complete revolutions take place. A third part of the distance between the Gārhapatya and the Āhavanīya is covered with the fire held at the height of the knee, for the next one-third part of the distance the fire is held at the height of the navel and for the last part the material is held at the height of the mouth. No one is allowed to come between the fire and the sun. The fire is taken with both hands stretched to the right. The Adhvaryu places a piece of gold in the middle of the distance and then crosses it. He makes the horse step upon the materials deposited in the Āhavanīya fireplace. The horse faces the Āhavanīya from the east, certain mantras are muttered (*japa*) by the sacrificer and when half the orb of the sun has become visible the Adhvaryu places the fire in the

Āhavanīya fireplace. The necessary ceremonials accompanying any depositing of fire in the fireplaces follows. The Sabhya and Āvasathya fires are placed after this according to the usual rules.

The Adhvaryu offers fire-sticks from many kinds of trees like *aśvattha*, *śamī* etc. on each of the three principal fires. The completion offering is made after this (*pūrṇāhuti*) which is followed by certain minor rites.

3. Dual sense of certain words

(a) *In the Ṛgveda* : The ritual generation of fire taking place before the establishment of the Gārhapatya fire is the enactment of the birth of Agni of the myth. Now, the Śrautasūtras, Brāhmaṇas and Saṃhitās use the root √*jan* (to be born) to mean the production of earthly fire. In Sanskrit the verb may be used to mean merely the physical production of any substance. For example, the gathering of smoke when the churning goes on is expressed through the verb √*jan* in Aps. V.11.11—*dhūme jāte gādhinaḥ kauśikasya*. But when, in the ṚV, it is said that Agni engenders the embryo in the waters as bull and becomes their child, or that he was born in the depth of the great atmosphere, in the origin of Rajas, in the origin of Ṛta etc, there is an extra sense, that of the event of the myth. The zoomorphic and anthropomorphic imageries²⁶ imply even the primary sense of birth being attached to the myth. But Oldenberg who did not recognise the myth also did not see the extra sense of the root √*jan* when used in connection with the myth of the birth of Agni.²⁷ According to this notion the natural fire itself is the god and there is no independent divinity which Oldenberg, like many other scholars, saw in Indra, Varuṇa etc. who were all supposed to have originated in natural phenomena. Since the natural fire itself is the deity, the birth of Agni cannot mean anything more than the generation of fire. This seems to have been the view of Hillebrandt also who found *jan*, *manth*, *nir-manth*, *indh*, *sam-indh* etc. to be just synonyms.²⁸ It may be noted that Hillebrandt understood the three fireplaces as represent-

ing the three stations of Agni in the three divisions of the universe,²⁹ but he saw no myth of the birth and subsequent universalisation of Agni as reflected in the ritual.

There are certain Ṛgvedic evidences, apart from those available in the mantras used in the Agnyādheya which indicate that the root \sqrt{jan} is used to mean both the ritual generation of fire and at the same time the mythological birth of Agni. ṚV. III.29 “consists of a number of verses and small groups of verses referring to the production of fire by the attrition of the two fire-sticks.”³⁰ Some of the verses used in the Agnyādheya belong to this hymn. In the first verse of the hymn the word *prajānana* is used in the sense of the fire-drill or in that of the pramantha—the upper araṇi. The third verse says that “she has immediately given birth (*jajāna*) to the manly (Agni)” and that “the son has been born (*ajaniṣṭa*) in the place of food.” “Agni when born (*jāto agniḥ*) shines resplendent” according to verse 7. Apparently these derivations of \sqrt{jan} indicate the ritual production of fire. But the 14th verse states, “He the god of the seven Hotṛs shone forth ever from the ancient (days), when he flamed up in his mother’s lap, at her udder”. As this is told in a hymn which is otherwise occupied with the ritual production of fire, the mother’s lap should be the Gārhapatya fireplace where the fire is first produced.³¹ But it is difficult to distinguish this from “the bottom of the great (Rajas), the origin of Rajas” of IV.1.11. The identity is suggested by Agni’s epithet *saptáhotṛ*—‘the god of the seven Hotṛs’ in III.29.14.³²

That was an illustration of allusion to the myth being made in a hymn primarily concerned with the ritual. The opposite of this also takes place—the ritual being mentioned in an account of the mythological birth of Agni.³³

The relevance of these allusions is justified only when the ritual generation of fire and the mythological birth of Agni can equally be expressed through the same verb \sqrt{jan} . Some of the mantras used in the Agnyādheya also confirm the dual sense of \sqrt{jan} and certain other words.

(b) *In ritual mantras* : (i) Aps. V.8.5. (1) : *jātavedo*

*bhuvanasya reta iha siñca tapaso yaj janiṣyate | agnim aśvatthād
adhi havyavāhaṃ śamīgarbhaṃ janayan yo mayobhūḥ ||*

“O Jātavedas, pour here the seed of the universe which will be produced by heat, which is refreshing (on account of its) producing the oblation carrying Agni from the aśvattha in the womb of śamī.”

When on the day of the establishment of fire, the two araṇis are heated on the Brahmaudanika fire before the fire which is to be established is kindled, Jātavedas—the Brahmaudanika fire—is asked to pour the seed of the universe which will result in the production of fire from the araṇis.

According to the first half of the verse the process of heating engenders the seed of the universe in the araṇis, while the second half states that Agni is produced. What one gets in result is that the same seed which Agni pours as the cause of general becoming also gives birth to himself. It is difficult to perceive this understanding of the kindling of fire without referring to the myth where the birth of Agni is followed by the emergence of the universally moving order of things.³⁴ Moreover the old image of Agni as father-cum-son³⁵ is suggested here by that Agni is himself asked to pour the seed which is expected to result in his own birth.

(ii) Aps. V.8.5(2). *ayaṃ te yonir ṛtviyo yato jāto arocathāḥ |
taṃ jānann agna ā rohāthā no vardhayā rayim ||*

“This is your periodic birthplace wherefrom born you shone ; knowing that, O Agni, arise and increase our wealth.”

This is the second verse uttered when the araṇis are heated and occurs immediately after the previous verse. It occurs at many places in the Vedas.³⁶ TB.1.2.1 enjoins the verse for the same purpose as above. Sāyaṇa gives different explanations for the ‘birthplace’ (*yoni*) of Agni at different places. While commenting on TB. 1.2.1 he takes the birthplace to be the two araṇis. On ṚV. III.29.10 also Sāyaṇa says that the araṇi is meant. At another place (AVŚ.III.20.1) the commentator thinks that either the sacrificer or the araṇi is meant. Sāyaṇa has yet another explanation for the verse in TS. 1.5.5.2

as he thinks that the region of the Āhavaniya fireplace could have been meant.

The different explanations given by Sāyaṇa indicate the absence of any definite understanding. But Bhaṭṭabhāskara is quite definite about the sense. While commenting on the verse in TB.1.2.1 he refers to the explanation offered by him for the verse in TS.1.5.5.2. Here Bhaṭṭabhāskara emphatically states that the Gārhapatya fireplace is meant and not the araṇis. Uvaṭa and Mahidhara (VS. III.14) give the same explanation. This seems to be the only correct interpretation. The adjective periodic or timely (*ṛtviya*) seems to give the clue. For, according to TB.1.1.9 the Brahmaudanika fire as the seed of Agni becomes full-grown in time to give birth to Agni. The fire to be deposited in the fireplaces also is produced in the Brahmaudanika fireplace. Hence the 'yonir ṛtviyo' should mean the Brahmaudanika fireplace (and naturally also the Gārhapatya fireplace as emphatically stated by Bhaṭṭabhāskara)⁸⁷—the receptacle of Agni for which the proper time to give birth to the child has come.

However, only the sacrificial birthplace of Agni does not seem to have been meant. The reference to the birth is made in the past tense (*yato jāto arocathāḥ*) and not in the future. Since the birth in the ritual is yet to take place the past tense should indicate the mythological birth. Secondly, since the preceding verse [Aps. V.8.5(1) above] refers to Agni's pouring the seed of the universe, it is difficult to perceive how the authors of the rite could be oblivious here of the primeval birth of Agni from his cosmic receptacle.

(iii) The same sacrificial birthplace of Agni as the representative of the cosmic receptacle of Agni seems to have been referred to also in the verse below.

Aps. V.10.2 : *itaḥ prathamam jajñe agniḥ svād yoner adhi jātavedāḥ | sa gāyatriyā triṣṭubhā jagatyā devebhyo havyaṃ vahatu prajānan ||*

“Herefrom was Agni first born, Jātavedas from his own origin.....”

This verse is uttered when the Adhvaryu distributes the materials derived from plants on the fireplaces where the three fires would later be laid into. Here also Sāyaṇa (TB. 1.4.4) understands *yoni* as referring to the araṇis. But the context shows that the araṇis cannot be meant. It is more plausible that the fireplaces in general, as representatives of the three divisions of the universe, have been meant by *itaḥ*, and that the Brahmaudanika fireplace has been specified by *svād yoneḥ*.³⁸

So far as the mythological sense of the word *yoni* and the verb *√jan* is concerned, in ṚV. IV. 5. 8 the station of the bird-Agni is called his 'own' (*priya*); but here a more familiar word—*sva*—has been used in the Aps. The allusion to Agni's first birth³⁹ also is strongly indicative of his primeval birth being remembered.

The two verses discussed above (Aps. V. 8.5[2] and Aps. V. 10.2) as well as the verse given below (Aps. V. 17.5) point to the special importance attached to the place of Agni's origin in the ritual by the authors of the latter. This place of origin is the Brahmaudanika fireplace. Now, according to the Aps and most of the other Śrautasūtras the site of the Brahmaudanika fireplace should be to the west of the Gārhapatya fireplace.⁴⁰ The BŚS⁴¹ on the other hand, maintains that the Gārhapatya fireplace itself is to be first treated as the Brahmaudanika fireplace. That seems to have been the view of Bhaṭṭabhāskara too.⁴² The Brahmaudanika fireplace gets never mentioned in the ṚV while the term *gārhapatya* occurs four times and the epithet *gṛhāpati* is also frequently used for Agni.⁴³ These occurrences as well as the importance attached in the said mantras of the ritual to the origin (*yoni*) of Agni that is to say the place where the fire is first produced and lastly the clear regulation of the BŚS as stated above, might show that the other regulation, according to which the fire was to be first produced outside the Gārhapatya to the west of it at a place which would not serve any purpose later, came in later. The Gārhapatya fireplace seems to have been originally the first birthplace of Agni in the ritual. Was there any stage of development, one may also ask, when the Gārhapatya fire-

place could represent the cosmic receptacle of Agni in the atmospheric region ?⁴⁴

(iv) There is yet another place where the *yoni* as the birth-place of Agni gets mentioned in the Agnyādheya. This occurs as one of the verses uttered when, after the establishment of the fires, fuel-sticks are offered to the fire.

Aps. V. 17. 5 :

*vidhema te parame janmann agne vidhema stomair avare
sadhasthe | yasmād yoner udārithā yaje taṃ pra tve havīṃṣi
juhure samiddhe ||*

“May we worship you at your supreme birth, O Agni, may we worship with praise at the lower abode. I worship that origin from which you arose ; when you were kindled they offered offerings into you.”

The verse has been explained in ŚB.IX. 2.3.39 as follows, “ ‘To thee give we honour, O Agni, in the highest home ;’—his highest home, doubtless, is the sky ;—‘to thee give we honour, in hymns of praise, in the lower abode ;’—the lower abode doubtless is the air ;—‘the birthplace whence thou hast arisen do I worship,’—that is, ‘this is his (Agni’s) own birthplace : that I worship ;’—‘on thee when kindled, offerings are poured forth ;’—for when he (the fire) is kindled, they make offerings on him.”⁴⁵ The ‘origin from which Agni arose’ is not explained clearly, though it is almost certain that some place in the sacrificial region is denoted. Mahīdhara (VS. XVII. 75) clarifies the matter by stating that the *yoni* is the *iṣṭakāciti*—brick-altar.

Two explanations are given by Sāyaṇa at two different places each of which partially agrees to the one noted above. In ṚV. II. 9.3 the supreme birth is understood as that in heaven and the lower abode as the atmosphere ; but the ‘origin’ is interpreted as the earth. In the commentary to TS.IV.6.5 also the supreme birth is said to be the one in heaven and the origin to be the raised altar, but the ‘lower abode’ is understood here as the earth.

Geldner (RVG) follows the second explanation of Sāyaṇa,

but partially, as he is silent on the sense of the origin from which Agni arose.

The apparently simple verse is thus proved to be quite obscure by the different explanations offered.

So far as the explanation of the 'origin' as given by Mahīdhara is concerned one may note that the *iṣṭakāciti* is not required in the Agnyādheya. In VS. XVII. 75, TS. IV. 6.5 and ŚB. IX. 2.3.39 the verse is prescribed for use in the Agnicayana which requires the said altar. Hence Mahīdhara (with VS. XVII. 75) and Sāyaṇa (with TS. IV. 6.5) are certainly true to the tradition in giving correct adhiyajña explanations. But these cannot hold good for the verse in the Agnyādheya.

The verse is old as it first appears as ṚV. II. 9.3, while the intricate Agnicayana is said to be of late origin.⁴⁶ But the establishment of the fire—both the archetype and the terrestrial ritual—was known to the ṚV⁴⁷. Moreover that some site in the place of the sacrifice is meant by the 'origin from which Agni arose' is suggested by the fourth pāda where the ritual offering into the fire is described. Now, in the Agnyādheya the fire is generated in the Gārhapatya fireplace ; hence this can be the sense of the 'origin' from which Agni arose.

For the first two quarters of the verse the following points are put for consideration.

The Śatapatha explanation is old, but certainly later than the Ṛgvedic verse. This belongs to the earlier strata of the ṚV. Now, the idea of the supreme birth of Agni changed within the ṚV itself.⁴⁸ Since the verse is not only old but quite ancient and since the atmospheric abode of the Son of Waters is called the supreme station (*paramē padē*) in ṚV. II. 35.14, it should not be outright rejected as absurd if the supreme birth of Agni mentioned in the first quarter is proposed as his birth in the atmospheric waters. That should be then also Agni's lower (so in relation to heaven) abode mentioned in the second quarter, which the ŚB, Mahīdhara, Uvaṭa⁴⁹ and also Sāyaṇa on ṚV. II. 9.3 understand as the atmospheric region. This means that the two pādas do not describe two different abodes and births.

If this understanding is correct the verse should belong to the earliest tradition about the birth of Agni as shown earlier,⁵⁰ and the Gārhapatya fireplace, then, should represent the atmospheric birthplace of Agni according to the third pāda of the verse.

It is notable how a dual sense is attached even to the word *yoni*, at least in Aps.V.8.5(2) and V. 10.2. The ritual production of the fire in the Gārhapatya as a representation of Agni's aqueous and hence atmospheric origin finds clear support from certain other verses and Brāhmaṇa passages also.⁵¹ But since the present section deals with only the dual sense of certain words, a Ṛgvedic reference to the aqueous birth of Agni as the ritual kindling of fire is being cited here : ṚV. III. 25. 5, *ágne apāṃ sám idhyase duroṇé nityaḥ sūno sahaso jātavedaḥ | sadhásthāni mahāyamāna ūtī ||* "O Agni, you are kindled in the house of waters, (our) own (god), O son of strength, Jātavedas, exalting (your) abodes (here) with assistance." Here even the house of waters has got a dual sense ; for, he who is kindled in the house of waters is our 'own' (*nityaḥ*)⁵² and exalts his abodes—obviously here on earth as Agni Gṛhapati.

(v) There is another mantra (Aps. V. 10. 9 cited below) which seems to confirm the observations made above about the two senses—one of the archetype and the other of the current event—being attached to the same word. As the fire-drill goes on working and the generation of fire is imminent Agni is asked to be born along with Agni : *sahāgne 'gnina jāyasva saha rayyā saha puṣṭyā saha prajayā saha paśubhiḥ saha brahmarcasena.* "O Agni, be born along with the fire, with wealth, with nourishment, with offspring, with animals, with the splendour of brahman."

There are two Agnis in the verse. One of those is naturally the fire that is produced. But why should another Agni, the addressed deity of the hymn, be born ? It is only logical to think that one of these Agnis is the natural element while the other is the ideal Agni, the basis which is symbolised by the element that is to say Agni of the myth whose birth brought

about the flow of Ṛta and the well-being of the entire universe. The possibility of a reference to that primeval birth is also suggested by that immediately after the fire is produced the Adhvaryu recalls the ancient birth,

(vi) *ajann agniḥ pūrvaḥ pūrvebhyaḥ pavamānaḥ śuciḥ pāvaka īḍyaḥ* (Aps. V. 11. 3).

“The ancient Agni was born from (the activities of) the ancient ones, the pure, white, purifying and adorable one.”

Hillebrandt or Bergaigne does not find any full-fledged cosmogonic myth in such references to the activities of the ancestors kindling fire.⁵³ According to Hillebrandt these allusions are made to add the glory of tradition to the present act which is thus claimed to have been done according to time-honoured custom. But Hillebrandt notices that the ancient act is often referred to as the first one: “Manu zündet zuerst die Feuer an, schichtet zuerst die Altäre.”⁵⁴ This is no reference to the custom in vogue, but to the origin of the custom, a true story of beginning, and hence, according to the definition proposed earlier⁵⁵ a myth. The present verse (Aps. V. 11. 3) need not be understood differently.

* * *

It is to be admitted that it is not possible to build a complete picture of the whole myth from the mantras so far noted. One has to compare the ritual details to the Ṛgvedic ones at every step to see the latter in the former. There was a long gap between the period of the origin of the myth and the composition of the ritual treatises. However, some basic features of the myth of the aqueous origin of Agni—Agni producing himself in the waters who are his consorts—are clearly discernible in some of the ritual details noted in the following section.

4. The aqueous origin of Agni

In the Saṃhitās the myth of Agni reproducing himself in the universal waters seems to be the earliest idea about the origin of Agni.⁵⁶ This myth finds certain reflection in the ritual.

The ŚB knows the story at least partially. It states the theory of Agni being the consort of the universal waters in the section on the Agnyādheya (II. 1. 1. 3-5) and also while stating the general rules of the sacrifice in the first Kāṇḍa (I. 1. 1. 14-20).

According to ŚB. II. 1. 1. 3-5 the Adhvaryu draws three lines in the Gārhapatya fireplace and sprinkles these with water. All the Śrautasūtras enjoin the rite, sometimes with a few variations. According to the Aps it is performed once during the preparation of the fireplaces and for the second time on the day of the sacrifice when the materials are laid into the fireplaces.⁵⁷ The ŚB justifies it as follows,

“II. 1. 1. 3. He then sprinkles (the lines) with water. When he thus sprinkles (the fireplace) with water, that is the equipment (of the fire) with water. The reason why he brings water is that water is food ;.....4. Water (*ap*, fem.), moreover, is female, and fire (*agni*, masc.) is male ; so that he thereby supplies the latter with a productive mate. And since all this (universe) is pervaded (or obtained, *āpta*) by water, he sets up the fire, after he has obtained it by means of water. This is why he brings water. 5. He then brings (a piece of) gold. Now, Agni at one time cast his eyes on the waters : ‘May I pair with them’, he thought. He came together with them ; and his seed became gold. For this reason the latter shines like fire, it being Agni’s seed. Hence it (gold) is found in water, for he (Agni) poured it into water. Hence also one does not cleanse oneself with it, nor does one do anything else with it. Now there is splendour (for the fire) : for he thereby makes it to be possessed of divine seed, bestows splendour on it ; and sets up a fire completely endowed with seed. That is why he brings gold.”⁵⁸

That is told in the second Kāṇḍa in the section on the Agnyādheya. There is further elaboration in the first Kāṇḍa which deals mainly with the Darśapūrṇamāsas :

“I. 1. 1. 14. The reason why he brings forward water is, that all this (universe) is pervaded by water ;.....18. After pouring out some of it (into the jug) he puts it down north of

the Gārhapatya fire. For water (*ap*) is female and fire (*agni*) is male ; and the Gārhapatya is a house : hence a copulation productive of offspring is thereby effected in this house.....
 19. The reason then why he places it near the Gārhapatya fire is, that the Gārhapatya is a house, and a house for a safe resting-place ;20. He then carries it north of the Āhavanīya fire. For water is female and fire is male : hence a copulation productive of offspring is thereby effected. And in this way alone a regular copulation can take place, since the woman lies on the left (or north) side of the man. 21. Let no body pass between the water (and the fire), lest by passing between them he should disturb the copulation which is taking place.”⁶⁹

In these passages Agni is the consort of the all-pervading waters. But unlike in the ṚV, he is not mentioned also as the child of the waters. Though the whole Ṛgvedic story of Agni as the consort-cum-child of the waters is not stated in the ŚB, the total picture can be drawn by supplementing the ŚB-accounts by matters available in some of the mantras noted in the previous section. In those mantras the Gārhapatya fire-place is the place of Agni's first birth, while according to the ŚB that is the place of Agni's engagement with the waters. The resultant effect is not different from that of ṚV. II. 35. 13 : “He, the bull, engenders this embryo in them ; he, the child, sucks ; him (the mothers) lick.”

The presentation of the affairs of gold in the ritual also is such as to indicate that the Ṛgvedic idea of the aqueous origin of Agni and that of his being his own procreator in the waters are at work behind that. According to Aps. V. 10. 3 a piece of gold is to be placed to the north of the other materials in the Gārhapatya fireplace. A myth connecting Agni, gold and water is given in the Brāhmaṇas as an explanation of the said ceremonial. As shown just above, according to ŚB. II. 1. 1. 5, gold which is found in water is the semen of Agni and the ceremonial means equipping Agni with seed for his union with the waters in the Gārhapatya fireplace for procreation. Cf, also TB. 1. 1. 3 : “It has been said that Agni should be established as possessed of semen. The waters were the wives of Varuṇa.

Agni desired them. They united. His seed fell afar. That became gold. When one deposits gold he establishes Agni as possessed of semen.”

It is obvious that without gold the imagery of Agni and the waters as husband and wives remains incomplete. The Gārhapatya fireplace is the abode, Agni the male, the waters the females and gold Agni's seed. The Brāhmaṇas, however, do not tell who is going to be produced by the union. Most probably that is understood. For, it is only Agni whose birth has been praised in so many mantras and who is to be produced in the ritual.

But there are other ways of ascertaining that gold is not only the seed of Agni by which Agni procreates in the waters, it is also the seed from which Agni is born in the waters. For example, the ṚV knows gold as the origin of the Son of Waters. Cf. ṚV. II. 35. 9-10 :

“9. Since the Son of Waters has stayed in the lap (of the waters), the erect among the oblique ones, clothing (himself) in lightning ; the gold-coloured, quick (waters) flow around while bearing (him in) his highest glory. 10. Of golden form, looking like gold, the Son of Waters, he indeed is gold-coloured. When he sits (coming out) from the golden origin (*hiranyāyāt pāriyóneh*) the gold-givers give him food.”

Since the Son of Waters is a form of Agni the golden origin of the Son of Waters should not be regarded as different from the aqueous origin of Agni. But this has got a dual sense, for there is clear reference here also to the ritual—‘when he comes out from the golden origin the gold-givers give him food.’ And this food is ghee (*ghṛtām ánnam asya*, verse 11). In this context the golden origin can be only the Gārhapatya fireplace where Agni as the consort of the waters is equipped with seed. In the Brāhmaṇas gold is the seed of Agni, in the Ṛgvedic hymn above gold is the origin of Agni. The full picture, again, is one of Agni reproducing himself through the waters.

How far the idea is reflected in the Agnyādheya comes out also from the verses uttered in this connection. The Aps-

prescribes three mantras for the ceremonials connected with gold. One is uttered during the collection of gold (Aps. V. 2.1), one when it is being placed in the Gārhapatya fireplace (Aps. V. 10. 3) and lastly a laudatory verse is uttered just after the placing of the material in the fireplace (Aps. V. 10. 4). The collection verse and the laudatory verse both know Agni's aqueous origin and golden form. The collection verse which also mentions gold as the seed of Agni states : "The shining gold, the seed of Agni, produced from waters, the nectar among beings—collecting that and depositing in north, may I overcome evil luck by giving away (that)." The laudatory verse says : "The gods have established here in great beauty the bright Agni whose chariot is bright, whose skin is of golden colour, Vaiśvānara dwelling in waters, who finds the sun, the deep-diver reaching the end, covered with strength and (also) impatient."⁶⁰ While these verses speak of the golden form, golden seed and watery origin of Agni, the verse accompanying the depositing of gold in the fireplace also knows Agni as originating in gold, *yās te śivās tanuvo jātavedo yā antarikṣe divi yaḥ pṛthivyām | tābhiḥ sambhūya saṅgaḥ sajoṣā hiraṇyayonir vaha havyam agne* //⁶¹ Agni is called *hiraṇyayoni*—of golden origin.

These verses taken together make Agni dwelling in waters and produced from waters ; his seed is gold and his origin also is gold. The Ṛgvedic imagery of the consort-cum-child Agni and the waters is thus almost fully reflected in the verses of the Śrautasūtra alone, though the complete picture cannot be gathered from the TB or ŚB.⁶²

5. The universalisation of Agni in the three fireplaces

(a) *Verses uttered during the placing of fire* : The universal nature of Agni also is thoroughly reflected in the Agnyādheya. In the Saṃhitās that finds expression through the notion of the three stations of Agni. This universal nature is also an attainment, that is to say it is realised after the birth of Agni. Agni is addressed to, 'As soon as born you filled up the worlds, the sky and the earth.'⁶³ Like his birth Agni's universalisation

also comes through a process which ought to be reflected in the ritual.

It is the establishment of the fire in the three fireplaces which evidently suggests itself to be the ritual representation of the process of universalisation as found in the *Saṃhitās*. This is fully corroborated by the mantras uttered during or immediately after the establishment of the sacred fires in the fireplaces. Some of these, occurring or referred to in *Aps. V. 12. 1, 2* are given below :

“(i) The earth by (your) abundance, the sky by (your) spaciousness, the atmosphere by (your) greatness, O goddess Aditi, I place Agni, the food-eater in your lap for food. (ii) Hither has this spotted bull stridden, reached again the mother, and the father while going to the sun. (iii) O *Jātavedas*, those of your forms which are propitious, which are in the atmosphere and which are earthly, having come into being with those, O Agni, the one of golden origin, with the multitude, united, carry the oblation ! (iv) I establish you the all-animal with the seed of heaven, the greatness of earth, the nourishment of the atmosphere, the splendour of animals. O Agni, the lord of the house, the serpent of depth, worthy (member) of the assembly, get the world for the sacrificer from heaven, earth and the atmosphere.”⁶⁴

These verses mention the regions and the forms of Agni—not only the three illustrious ones but also those that are found in animals, Agni’s traversing heaven and earth, etc. In ‘O *Jātavedas*, those of your forms’ etc. it has been prayed that Agni should come into being in his earthly and atmospheric forms, but in ‘I establish you’ etc. all the possible domains of Agni are spoken of as contributing to his glory. And in ‘Hither has this spotted bull’ etc. Agni is the traverser of heaven and earth—a common *Ṛgvedic* idea (see II. 7 above) foreshadowing *Viṣṇu* in Agni. On the whole there is the comprehension of Agni as distributed throughout the world and as spreading himself over the universe in the verses mentioned.

There are many mantras of this nature almost all of which

are uttered during or just after the placing of the fire in the fireplaces. In the Gharmaśiras formulae (Aps. V. 12. 1) it is said that heat (terrestrial ?) is the head of Agni, wind the life-breath and the sun the eye. The establishment of fire in each of the fireplaces is followed by an oblation of appeasement (*śamanahoma*) consisting of corns and ghee (Aps. V. 16. 3, 4). The mantras uttered in this connection remember all the forms of Agni, "O Agni, the pure characteristic form of you which is among animals, which is on the earth, which is in (the terrestrial) Agni, which is in the Rathantara (*sāman*), which is in the Gāyatrī metre, that do I appease by this (offering)." This offering is made to the terrestrial Agni who is called pure (*pavamāna*). Two other mantras are uttered for the aquatic-atmospheric-purifying (*pāvaka*) Agni and for the solar-heavenly-brilliant (*śuci*) Agni: "O Agni, that purifying characteristic form of you which is among waters, which is in the atmosphere, which is in Vāyu, which is in the Vāmadevya (*sāman*), which is in the Triṣṭubh metre etc." "O Agni, that brilliant characteristic form of you, which is in the sun, which is in heaven, which is in Āditya, which is in the Bṛhat (*sāman*), which is in the Jagatī metre etc."

The emphasis on symmetry and schematism in that a particular metre, a particular *sāman*, a particular god etc. have been carefully chosen as appropriate for each of the three forms of Agni, stands in contrast to the simplicity and fluidity of the Ṛgvedic comprehension. The idea had become stereotyped by the time of the Kāṭhakaśaṃhitā⁶⁶ where the mantras are first found with minor variants.

Similar attempts at schematism are evident in the Agnitānu formulae (Aps. V. 13. 7) which the sacrificer is made to utter in the ears of a horse standing near the Āhavaniya fireplace before the establishment of the Dakṣiṇa fire: "O horse, bring that characteristic form of Agni which is in animals and pure ! O horse,.....in waters and purifying ! O horse,.....in the sun and brilliant !"

Some mantras are uttered a little before this when the fire is taken up from the Gārhapatya fireplace for being placed in

the other two (*agnyudyacchanam*, Aps. V. 13. 4). In two mantras among those the general idea of Agni's universality is present, "O Agni, that glory of you—the heaven—which is among the gods, that soul of you which entered into animals, that nourishment of you which spread among men, come enriching us with that !" "From heaven, earth and atmosphere, from wind, animals and herbs, wheresoever you came into being, from that come, O Agni, enriching us !"

(b) *The three fireplaces as the three divisions of the universe :* All the mantras noted above are uttered during the establishment of the fire in the three fireplaces. Since the three stations of Agni became a common concept by the end of the R̥gvedic period⁶⁶, it is obvious that the three fireplaces should be thought to represent the three divisions of the universe. Hillebrandt⁶⁷ notes this although he does not see Agni's birth and subsequent universalisation in the Agnyādheya as proposed here. According to Hillebrandt the Āhavaniya fireplace represents the heaven with the sun, the Dakṣiṇa the atmosphere with wind and the Gārhapatya the earth with fire. Many evidences are given by the scholar. The principal ones among them are TS. 1.6.7 where the Āhavaniya belongs to the gods, the Dakṣiṇa to the fathers and the Gārhapatya to men, and AB. VII. 5 where these three beings belong to the heaven, atmosphere and earth respectively.

There is at least one confirmation of the representation of the three divisions of the universe in the three fireplaces in the mantras uttered in the Agnyādheya. The preparation of the fireplaces consists of equipping these with certain materials. Aps. V. 1. 7 mentions earth from an anthill (*valmikavapā*) as one of the materials. As that is laid into the three fireplaces three similar verses are uttered. When the material is placed in the Gārhapatya fireplace the Adhvaryu says, "That immortality of the earth which came into being together in you, may Agni give that to Agni, let this be laid into it" (Aps. V. 9. 8). The same verse is uttered when the material is placed in the Dakṣiṇa fireplace, but immortality now belongs to the atmosphere (Aps. V. 9. 9). When the material is placed in the

Āhavanīya fireplace immortality is said to belong to heaven (Aps. V. 9. 9). This is an oblique reference to the representation of the three divisions of the universe in the three fireplaces.

(c) *The anomalous southern fire* : The relative late origin of the idea of the three stations of Agni in the three divisions of the universe was mentioned earlier (II. 7 above). It is natural to suppose that their representation in the three fireplaces could not be a very old Vedic idea. From Ṛgvedic evidences it is difficult to come to a conclusion about the time of the supposed incorporation of the concept in the Śrauta ritual, but a few relevant facts from the ṚV and Śrautasūtras should be mentioned here.

As Hillebrandt⁶⁸ has shown the three ritual fires hail from Ṛgvedic antiquity. The scholar also thinks that they were representative of Agni in the three divisions of the universe even in the ṚV just as they were in the Śrautasūtras. He takes the Ṛgvedic Nārāśaṃsa to have been the atmospheric fire represented in the Dakṣiṇa fireplace and the Ṛgvedic Vaiśvānara to have been the heavenly fire, namely the sun, represented in the Āhavanīya. Agni Gṛhapati was naturally the terrestrial fire represented in the Gārhapatya.

However, Hillebrandt also admits that direct confirmation of every detail of his theory is difficult.⁶⁹ The term *gārhapatya* is actually found in ṚV.I.15.12, VI.15.19, X.85.27 etc. Agni Gṛhapati that is the fire in the dwellings of men also is not infrequently mentioned.⁷⁰ The Āhavanīya and the Gārhapatya seem to have been described in ṚV.I.31.4.⁷¹ Agni is also called *triśadhasthā* which might equally mean Agni in the three divisions of the universe or Agni in the three fireplaces. The discussion of Hillebrandt shows that much more direct Ṛgvedic evidence is not available.

Although the existence of the three ritual fires in the ṚV is more or less certain, there is no direct Ṛgvedic statement confirming the representation of the three divisions of the universe in them. Moreover both old and new ideas are

recorded in the ṚV. Hence the position in the ṚV is not quite clear.

Now, it was shown earlier (Ch. II.7) that it is difficult to find out the original significance of the threefoldness of Agni, that it was not originally related to the idea of Agni's universality and that Agni's all-pervading nature was at first expressed through his two stations in heaven and earth. One is to compare with this the fact that the act of the establishment of fire also is such as to indicate the lateness of the idea of the representation of the three divisions of the universe in the three fireplaces. The touch of pedanticism⁷² seems to point to the forced nature of interpretation. One has also to take into account the rather anomalous nature of the establishment of the Dakṣiṇa fire as noted below.

There are many rules about the placing of the Dakṣiṇa fire. According to Āśv.II.2.1, for instance, the Dakṣiṇa fire may be brought from the house of a Vaiśya, a rich man etc. According to the Śāṅkhāyana⁷³, on the other hand, both the Āhavanīya and the Dakṣiṇa fires are to be brought from the Gārhapatya which alone is to be generated. BŚS II.17 states that the fire is to be carried on a platter to be placed in the Dakṣiṇa fireplace but is silent as to wherefrom that is to be collected. According to an alternative rule of the BŚS the fire should be carried to the Dakṣiṇa fireplace from the Gārhapatya. But there are no two rules for the Gārhapatya fire which must be generated through a prescribed process (BŚS.II.16), or for the Āhavanīya fire which must be brought from the Gārhapatya (BŚS.II.17).

The Bhāradvāja Śrautasūtra (V.6-7) mentions the setting up of the Dakṣiṇa fire just in a casual manner. After the Gārhapatya fire has been established the preparation for the setting up of the Āhavanīya fire starts. The Agnitanu formulae are uttered into the right ear of the horse. But neither these acts nor the following ones (Bhāradvāja, V.7.10 ff) have anything to do with the Dakṣiṇa fire, "He should light a faggot on the Gārhapatya fire and lift up that fire, which is the Āhavanīya, with the formula, 'I lift thee up for vigour and

strength. the sprinkler for might, long life, and splendour. Thou art the smiter of enemies, the smiter of Vṛtra.' While the fire is being taken out (from the Gārhapatya fire), the Udgātṛ should chant the Vāmadevya Sāman, etc, etc."⁷⁴ These are all done with an eye to the imminent setting up of the Āhavanīya fire. In the meantime the Adhvaryu should bring a fire from somewhere or produce it by means of churning and deposit it in the Dakṣiṇa fireplace with the relevant mantras. After this the journey to the Āhavanīya which had been as it were interrupted starts again and the fire which had been taken up from the Gārhapatya is deposited as the Āhavanīya.

It is the same story with Aps. V.13. The Kāṇḍikā begins with the rule *ardhodite sūrya āhavanīyam ādadhāti*, 'He should establish the Āhavanīya when half the orb of the sun is visible'. The preparation for the placing of the Āhavanīya fire is described in V.13.1-7. Four subsequent sūtras (V.13.8, 14.1-3) deal with the Dakṣiṇa fire and then the Āhavanīya is taken up again. The Aps also has a special rule that the Āgnīdhra, instead of the Adhvaryu, should perform the ceremonies pertaining to the Dakṣiṇa fire.

ŚB.II.1.4 which deals with the placing of the fires does not describe the Dakṣiṇa fire but speaks of 'two fires' in II.1.4.7 and 15, meaning the Gārhapatya and the Āhavanīya thereby.

Oldenberg brushed away these anomalies as 'pranks of the ritual regulation unworthy of consideration', but Hillebrandt specially noted some of these and said that it would be interesting to investigate into the origin of the anomalies.⁷⁵

It is worth noting that while there are so many different types of rules about the Dakṣiṇa fire no such controversy or casualness is noticed in the descriptions of the other two fires. Should we take these as evidences for a late incorporation of the Dakṣiṇa fire with the Agnyādheya? One should at least compare the above mentioned peculiarities with the variety of notions about the threefoldness of Agni in the ṚV side by side with the fact that the twofold birth of Agni is not subjected to different explanations in the ṚV.⁷⁶ The

anomalous position of the Dakṣiṇa fire among the three ritual fires conforms to the late crystallisation of the consistent notion of the three stations of Agni in the three divisions of the universe in the ṚV.

There is yet another problem with the Dakṣiṇa fire as the representative of Agni in the atmospheric region. The atmospheric station of Agni was the deity's supreme station and also the womb of the waters according to a distinct tradition.⁷⁷ These features are not found in the Dakṣiṇa fireplace but are to some extent perceptible in the Gārhapatya fireplace.⁷⁸

All these suggest that the representation of the three divisions of the universe as found in the Śrautasūtras was not a very ancient ritual arrangement and is, perhaps, post-Ṛgvedic. As to the original position any remark may amount to just guesswork. What looks not impossible is as follows.

Since Agni Gṛhapati is a familiar Ṛgvedic notion the existence of the Gārhapatya fireplace in early Ṛgvedic ritual cannot seriously be doubted. Even in the Agnyādheya this fire plays the most important role, for it is first established and then partly carried to the Āhavaniya. If there had been any stage of the ritual with one fire, that could consist of only the Gārhapatya. Its character as the aqueous receptacle of Agni also could be as old as that suppositional stage.

The two fireplaces seem to have been referred to in ṚV. I. 31. 4.⁷⁹ This belongs to the younger portion of the ṚV. This might mean the late emergence of the ritual with two fires as an important Vedic cult. The Dakṣiṇa fire as that of the fathers⁸⁰ also seems to be a late Vedic tradition or, at least, to have been recognised as an important idea at a relatively late age. Evidences for the existence of this idea are found in ṚV. X. 15. 6, 17. 9, TS. 1. 6. 7 etc. none of which can be said to belong to the earlier layers of the Vedas. This fire could come to be related to the middle region through its association with the fathers. As to how the fathers came to be related to the middle region, no definite answer can be given. The Aṅgirasas are said to have been born with Agni. The

seven sisters rearing up Agni in his aqueous receptacle of course belonged to the middle region. So could be the Aṅgirasas. The Aṅgirasas as the associates of Indra, a god of the middle region, also could share some of the characteristic features of the god and thus belong to the middle region. Hillebrandt also noted a conflict between the Devayāna and the Pitṛyāna.⁸¹

Thus early cult-conflicts and mytho-genesis were always possible in Vedic India. It is possible that the above noted cult-traditions got fused into the Agnyādheya of the Śrautasūtras when the universal existence of Agni in the three divisions of the universe became a definite Vedic notion.

6. Mode of operation of the ritual

(a) *Prevailing opinions and RV. IV. 1 and IV. 2*: Barring idealistic interpreters of the Vedic ritual—ancient and modern—who distinguish between inner and outer sacrifices⁸², most of the scholars agree that the general aim of the Vedic ritual is well-being. The purpose of the Agnyādheya also, as revealed in numerous prayers and utterances made in the ritual, is the welfare of the sacrificer—children, long life, prosperity here and in the other world, etc.

As to how the sacrifice was believed to serve as a means in the RV the most prominent explanation given in modern studies is based on the well-known give-and-take theory—one is to propitiate the gods through the sacrifice and thus pursue them to fulfil one's desire in return of the worship. "The offering goes to the god as a gift presented to him. The sacrificer hopes that it will work upon the mind of the god, not through force, but by awakening his mighty benevolence."⁸³ Different from this mode of operation in which gods are superior to mortals is that of "magic which claims to determine the course of events directly without taking help from the good wishes of alien subjects."⁸⁴ This idea prevails in the Brāhmaṇas according to which the mechanical performance of the ritual according to certain prescribed rules works with or without help from gods.

The theory of reciprocal actions between gods and men is clearly enunciated in *Gitā* III. 11 and illustrated by Kālidāsa in *Raghu*. I. 26.⁸⁵ The idea is sometimes found also in the *ṚV*. But contrary to the prevalent opinion and the overwhelming preference among scholars for the above mentioned sequence in the stages of development of the Vedic sacrifice, certain *Ṛgvedic* evidences tend to show that apart from the give-and-take theory there could be other even more ancient ideas about the mode of operation of the sacrifice in the *ṚV* and that it is the give-and-take theory which came to prevail at a relatively late stage of development when the element of drama in the ritual was eventually lost sight of.

For example, in *ṚV*. IV. 1.18 the *Aṅgirases* are said to have won a heavenly treasure (*rátnaṃ dyúbhaktam*) by releasing the confined cows. In another verse (IV. 1.10) the same treasure has been called a divine treasure (*rátnaṃ devábhaktam*) and it has been prayed that *Agni* might lead mortals to that treasure. The idea seems to be this—as *Agni* was first born he inspired the *Aṅgirases* to find out a great treasure ; similarly when *Agni* is born in the present ritual he should lead men to similarly great treasures. That is to say, an exact representation of the archetypal event should result in similar attainments. Naturally, in the terrestrial representation the ritual fire should play the part of *Agni* who was born in the origin of *Rajas* (IV. 1.11) in the myth, and mortals should act as the ancient fathers born with *Agni*. A confirmation comes from IV. 2. 14-17 where the poet (or, the poets collectively) claims to be equal to the *Aṅgirases*, to do just what they did.⁸⁶

This does not make the whole picture clear. How could the mere representation of an ancient phenomenon bring about equal results ? Indications for this are not numerous in the *ṚV*. In IV. 1.9 it has been said that *Agni* won common proprietorship with man while performing his task in the dwellings of the latter. This is a significant idea—the god and men equally owning a treasure—which should be distinguished from reciprocal action and benefit. According to Geldner,⁸⁷ the idea of common proprietorship exists also in *ṚV*. X. 50.3^b and

TS. 1.2.14.6. Now, according to ṚV. X. 45.11 the Uśijes (= Aṅgirasas) opened the cow-stall desiring the treasure not by pleasing Agni but with him. As stated earlier (Ch. II. 5d) the Aṅgirasas were also connascent with Agni and even his mortal forms. The archetypal mortals had, also thus, much in common with Agni. The same share with the god should be desired to be won when the present sacrificer likes to be equal to the Aṅgirasas. The full implication of this comprehension, perhaps, can be understood from the *modus operandi* of the Agnyādheya as well as from the analysis of the Agnicayana as made by Eggeling.

Eggeling⁸⁸ showed that "the periodical sacrifice is nothing else than a microcosmic representation of the everproceeding destruction and renewal of all cosmic life and matter," and that the sacrificer himself represented Prajāpati who was dismembered at the archetypal sacrifice. Here what happened to Prajāpati also happens to the sacrificer, for they are identified in the sacrifice. This seems to be an elaborated late form of the idea contained in 'the god won common proprietorship with the mortal' (ṚV. IV. 1.9). At least the underlying idea of the common functioning of the sacrificer and the deity seems to be equal in both cases.

Unfortunately Eggeling's own remarks were against the view that his analysis of the Agnicayana could be of any avail in understanding the *modus operandi* of the sacrifice in general in the ṚV. He did not take any notice of Bergaigne's thesis⁸⁹ that the sacrifice in the ṚV was meant to be an imitation of acts of god. The evidences given above (Ch. II. 1, 3, 9) in support of the existence of the idea of representation in the ṚV and AV also were not noted. Like other Vedic scholars Eggeling⁹⁰ also believed that the earliest theory of the sacrifice was not one of representation and identity of the deity and the sacrificer, but was that of pleasing the gods and of gaining some special objects from them. However, the evidences given in the present work show that the representation theory is as old as ṚV. IV. 1. And as Eggeling demonstrated, the theory would have been meaningless in the Agnicayana without the

doctrine of the identity of the sacrificer and Prajāpati. These confirm at least that there could be much more than mere reciprocal action between gods and men in the Ṛgvedic comprehension of the *modus operandi* of the sacrifice. However influential that theory might have become in later ages, to think that the kind of Vedic sacrifice envisaged in ṚV. IV. 1, IV. 2 or like passages cited in Ch. II. 1-3 above was based merely on the give-and-take theory will involve gross oversimplification.

The observations made here and also the fact that the *modus operandi* of the sacrifice in the Brāhmaṇas (excepting that of the Agnicayana, by Eggeling) and the Śrautasūtras has not been analysed in modern studies apropos of the great Ṛgvedic myths, suggest that it may be worthwhile to attempt to see how the enactment of the birth of Agni in the Agnyādheya was believed to result in the attainment of gains by the sacrificer.

(b) *Agni's vṛddhi and extension thereof to the sacrificer* : The Agnyādheya is at the first instance a great enrichment of Agni.⁹¹ It is better to use the term *vṛddhi* (or *ṛddhi*, *saṃṛddhi* etc.), which the Vedas use, instead of enrichment. The verb *iḍ* also is used in the same sense.⁹²

The ritual arrangement, it will subsequently be shown, implies that Agni does not return anything for this *vṛddhi* ; but the *vṛddhi* is made to be extended to the sacrificer through the extension of the enriched Agni's entity to him. This is performed in three stages ; first the god is enriched, then his entity is extended to the sacrificer, this results in the *vṛddhi* of the latter.

Like the birth of Agni this *vṛddhi* of Agni also has got two aspects—cosmic and microcosmic. The natural fire grows, spreads into the forest, the ritual fire also grows in the fireplaces ; but as the child of waters Agni or Apām Napāt also grows in the myth. Moreover, *vṛddhi* is not mere growth, it is also prosperity which too occurs in the two planes. Agni's birth and universalisation mean his *vṛddhi*. As shown in the previous sections these occur both to the cosmic Agni and the ritual fire.

In the *RV* also the growth of Agni is often mentioned. Not too infrequently the reference also concerns Agni's aqueous birth and cosmic origin : III. 5. 8, "As soon as born Agni grew up by herbs, as the sprouting (grass) blades enrich him with ghee. Like glistening downstream waters Agni is eager to increase in the lap of his parents." This might refer to the ritual fire, but according to Sāyana the lap of Agni's parents is the atmospheric region between the sky and the earth. This is very much possible ; for, the first half of the next verse states, "Extolled the young one shone by the fuel at the summit of the sky, on the navel of the earth" (III.5.9^{ab}). This as well as the following verse (10) are direct statements of the coincidence of increasing by fuel and cosmic *vṛddhi*, "The tall one has by (receiving) fuel upheld the firmament, Agni becoming the highest of lights, when Mātariśvan for the sake of the Bhṛgu kindled the carrier of oblations, (Agni) who dwelt in secret." The dual sense of growth seems to exist also in *RV*. I.65.4, "In (their) womb in the original receptacle of *Ṛta*, the waters nourish the fine-child with praise, him who is well-born." The same incident as alluded to in III.5.8 (above) is described also in I.95.5^{ab}, "The fair (child Agni) grows up visibly in them in his own glory, standing erect in the lap of the downstreaming (waters)." Similar is III.1.11, "The great one grew up in the wide unbounded (*Rajas*), for the many resplendent waters together (made) Agni grow. He lay in the exit-door of *Ṛta*—the domestic Agni in the work of the uterine sisters."⁹³ The mythological growth is alluded to in III.1.14, "Mighty rays milking the immortal (*Ṛta*) in the boundless ocean accompanied the brilliantly embellished Agni like bright lightnings, (Agni) who had grown up in his own abode as it were in secret." This becomes also ritual growth in I. I41. 5^{ab}, "Then he entered into the mothers in whom the bright (Agni) grew wide unimpaired." The mothers here might equally be the waters and the fireplaces where also Agni grows.

The continuous influence of this idea of growth is evidenced by the fact that the cosmic *Puruṣa* also grows, "And (he)

commands immortality in that he overgrows with food (RV.X. 90.2).”

In the Agni hymns the growth of Agni may mean the visible spread of fire which is aided and abetted ; at the same time this growth also belongs to the child Agni. If there really existed a myth with the imagery of human childbirth, the above verses do not consist of metaphorical descriptions of the ritual but pertain to the imagery of the myth and then to the ritual so far as it follows the myth.⁹⁴ The idea of growth in the myth is thus imagined after the rapid natal and post-natal growth.

But this is also accompanied by the general sense of *vṛddhi*—prosperity and well-being. *yajñēna vardhata jātāvedasam* (II. 2.1) may be translated as, ‘increase or extol Agni by the sacrifice.’ Oldenberg’s translation of ‘*eténāgne bráhmanā vāvṛdhasva*’ (I. 31. 18) is ‘Be magnified, O Agni, through this spell.’⁹⁵ For a mere physical growth and spread, ghee would have been more appropriate than spell. That is not meant, the sense being that of increasing in glory or prosperity. I. 36.11, *tám imā ṛcas tám agnīm vardhayāmasi*, ‘him do these hymns, that Agni do we extol’ also is similar.

The Agnyādheya also abounds in the idea of Agni’s *vṛddhi*. The birth and the universalisation of Agni are his *vṛddhi*. But *vṛddhi* is not merely a post-natal affair for Agni. Almost the entire ritual consists of acts which contribute towards Agni’s *vṛddhi*.

For instance, the collection and depositing of materials in the fireplaces aim at Agni’s *vṛddhi*. At the very beginning of the section on the Agnyādheya the collection of materials has been described in the ŚB (II. 1.1). There should be five materials according to the ŚB : water, gold, saltish earth, mould from a molehill and gravel. It has been said that by equipping the fireplaces with gold the Adhvaryu enriches Agni with seed (II. 1.1.5), by saltish earth he enriches Agni with cattle and heavenly and earthly juice (II. 1.1.6), by mould from a molehill he enriches the god with splendour (II. 1.1.7), by water with food and a mate (II. 1.1.3, 4) and by gravel he makes the earth firm before establishing Agni on it (II. 1.1.8).

The Aps (V. 1.1-7, 2.1) does not count water in the list of the materials. But water is actually used and its importance was noted earlier.⁹⁶ The Aps adds four new materials derived from earth, viz., sand, earth dug out by a hog, earth from an anthill and mire from a pond that never dries up. There are also seven materials derived from plants. Gold also is in the list, but is not counted among the materials derived from earth and is separately mentioned. There are also alternative rules.

The collection of sand is accompanied by the following verse : "May (this) form of Vaiśvānara scattered over the earth easily enter into us," (Aps. V. 1.7). This verse shows also that Agni's vṛddhi is meant to be extended to the sacrificer. The entrance of a particular form of Agni into mortals is the extension of the deity's being. But this is preceded by a note of vṛddhi in that Agni remains scattered over the earth in that particular form.

The sign of vṛddhi is evident more or less in all the materials deposited. The materials become symbols of vṛddhi through those signs. There may be different ways of inferring the existence of those signs. For sand it can be inferred from the collection verse mentioned above that the sign is in their abundance. The tenacity visible in the accumulation of deposits where no human hands are working (mould from molehill) also may be a sign. In the mire of a never-drying pond there exists the ability to maintain existence even in the hot dry summer of the North. Ponds that do not dry up in summer are to this day often regarded as holy spots in northern India.

Though the equipping of the fireplaces with the materials as well as certain other ceremonials aim at Agni's vṛddhi, those acts do not themselves contribute to the vṛddhi of the sacrificer. Agni's vṛddhi is first achieved by those. But the prayers aim also at the well-being for the sacrificer or for men in general. The collection of mould from a molehill is accompanied by desire for a long life, that of clay by the desire for the absence of hunger etc.⁹⁷ As to how this vṛddhi occurs to the sacrificer the following verse gives certain idea :

Aps. V. 8.8. "You two bear (Agni) to be born in due time, have the seed of Agni in (you), you bear the foetus, that you do I receive ; it is true that you carry the valiant (son). Those two (of you) will procreate in the morning for me. Those two (of you), when (Agni is) born, will make me procreate (and endow me) with offsprings, with animals and with the splendour of brahman in the region of heaven."

The sacrificer utters this mantra when taking the two araṇis from the Adhvaryu after those have been warmed in the Brahmaudanika fire. The two araṇis have been impregnated (= metaphor of the ritual, not a myth)⁹⁸ and the sacrificer avers that they will give birth to a valiant child. In the second half it has been prayed that after giving birth to the child (= Agni) the araṇis should bring valiant offsprings for the sacrificer himself. That is to say Agni's vṛddhi should mean the same for the sacrificer.

Now, as told earlier (p. 166) between Agni's vṛddhi and the same of the sacrificer there exists one more stage. The vṛddhi accrues to the sacrificer after he and Agni are identified. This is fully accomplished only after the churning out of the fire. But there is a kind of rehearsal, after the above mantras are uttered, of what will again be done by the sacrificer when the fire is kindled. The sacrificer and the Adhvaryu mutter the following mantras (Aps. V. 9.1) after the former has taken the two araṇis : "In me I take first Agni for increase of wealth, for good offspring with noble heroes ; in me offspring, in me radiance I place ; may we be unharmed in our body with good heroes. The immortal Agni who hath entered into us mortals within the heart, O fathers, may we enclose him in ourselves, may he not abandon us and go afar."⁹⁹ This is the establishment of Agni's entity in the sacrificer so that the vṛddhi of Agni is extended to him. The procedure envisaged in the verses strictly accords with what has been said above about the way of gaining the fruits of the sacrifice.

Some acts done after the kindling of fire also confirm this. All the acts preceding the generation of fire aim at one thing—bringing about the birth of Agni. This itself is the mortal's

accomplishment of Agni's *vṛddhi*. Then comes the second stage of the establishment of identity between the sacrificer and Agni. As the churning out of Agni begins (Aps. V. 10.9) the Adhvaryu begins to mutter, "O Agni, be born along with the fire, with nourishment, with offspring, with animals, with the splendour of brahman." This is a direct prayer for Agni's *vṛddhi*. Some of the *sāmans* that are sung¹⁰⁰ also aim at that. After the fire has been produced the sacrificer identifies himself with Agni through certain procedures. The matter is rather clumsily put in the Aps, but we get a full idea of the process from KŚS. IV. 8. 26-27. The sacrificer first exhales into the fire (*abhiśvāsaḥ*) with the formula—"I place the vital breath into the immortal." Then he inhales (*ucchvāsaḥ*) Agni with—"I place the immortal into (my) vital breath." The intention is clear. Agni is first enlivened with the breath of the sacrificer and then Agni the immortal is taken into himself by the sacrificer.

This looks like a demonstration of the theory underlying the two verses beginning with 'In me I take first Agni' etc. (Aps. V. 9.1) uttered by the sacrificer and the Adhvaryu as told above. How the theory of cause and effect relation between cosmic and microcosmic becoming is made to operate through the ritual is, perhaps, best expressed in the above-mentioned ceremonial. This may be summarised as follows: Agni's cosmic becoming is well; hence bring him into being that way; then extend his being to the individual so that the well-being accrues to the latter.

ŚB. II. 2.2.8-18 give an explanation of the ceremonial which is not essentially different from the one given above. A strife grew up between the gods and demons when the former visualised the immortal Agnyādheya and resolved to place Agni in their inner self. The demons asked Agni to burn grass, wood and to cook food and meal. Hence their fire is used for cooking only. "The gods then established that (fire) in their innermost soul; and having established that immortal element in their innermost soul, and become immortal and unconquerable, they overcame their mortal, conquerable enemies."¹⁰¹

BŚS. II. 16 also enjoins the same ceremonial. The BŚS does not distinguish between exhaling and inhaling, but terms the procedure *abhiprāṇana*—breathing. But the two verses prescribed clearly show that exhaling and inhaling are meant. The first verse states, “I breathe out upon you with the vital-breath of Prajāpati, with the nourishment of Pūṣan, for a long life, for hundred autumns for me, for a span of life through hundred autumns, for splendour, for living, for virtue.” This looks like enlivening Agni. Then Agni is taken in with the following verse, “In (my) breath you, the immortal do I place, the eater of food for food, the protector for protection.” The two verses are prescribed also in TB. 1.2.1.

Aps. V. 11.6 mentions a verse for exhaling which is the same as the one prescribed in the BŚS, but no verse for inhaling is mentioned. But the two verses ‘In me I take first Agni’ etc.¹⁰² prove the existence of the idea. This is indicated also by certain other mantras. At the end of the ceremonials connected with horse the sacrificer prays (Aps. V. 15.3) that the auspicious forms of Agni may enter into him: “O Agni, those two auspicious forms of you (which are) sovereign and overpowering, let them enter into me, let them impel me. O Agni, those two auspicious forms of you (which are) all-pervasive and all-encompassing, let them enter into me,…” Two more verses of the same nature are uttered at the same time. Again, when the Āhavanīya fire is being established the sacrificer recognises himself and Agni as inseparable and each as the origin of the other with a verse beginning with, ‘I am from you, you are from me, you are my origin, I am your origin etc.’ (Aps. V. 16.1). There are also prayers for the entrance of Agni into all beings; cf. the verse uttered during the collection of sand.¹⁰³ Also cf. ‘Arise Agni from mother earth, enter from the great abode into the people’ (Aps. V. 9.8). The verse is uttered when the mould from a molehill is deposited into the fireplaces.

7. The Hotṛ-formulae and the model phenomenon

(a) *Preliminary remarks*: There are five similar formulae

uttered by the Adhvaryu when the churning out of the fire goes on (Aps. V. 11.2). These five formulae along with certain other mantras are called Caturhotṛ-anuvākas (*caturhotṛkāḥ*, *caturhotārah*). It is, however, more convenient to use the term Hotṛ-formulae. Each of these anuvākas has got also its independent title. The first one is Daśahotṛ, the second one is Caturhotṛ, the third Pañcahotṛ, the fourth Śaḍḍhotṛ and the fifth Saptahotṛ. They derive their names from the number of priests or sacrificial items mentioned in them. These are all found in certain texts of the Black Yajurveda. They appear in all the Saṃhitās¹⁰⁴ excepting the TS—perhaps a sign of lateness—and in the Taittiriya Āraṇyaka and are referred to in the Tait. Brāhmaṇa¹⁰⁵ and the Śrautasūtras. These are used mostly in the Kāmya Oblations, but are recited also in the Agnyādheya, Darśapūrṇamāsas, Piṭṛmedha and a few other common rituals.¹⁰⁶

In TA. 1-5 the five formulae used in the Agnyādheya appear as follows :

1. (Daśahotṛ) : *cittiḥ sruk, cīttam ājyam, vāg vediḥ, ādhītaṃ barhiḥ, keto agniḥ, vijñātam agniḥ, vākpatir hotā, mana upavaktā, prāṇo haviḥ, sāmā 'dhvaryuḥ.*

2. (Caturhotṛ) : *pṛthivī hotā, dyaur adhvaryuḥ, rudro 'gnī, bṛhaspatir upavaktā.*

3. (Pañcahotṛ) : *agnir hotā, aśvinā adhvaryū, tvaṣṭā 'gnī, mitra upavaktā.*

4. (Śaḍḍhotṛ) : *sūryaṃ te cakṣuḥ, vātaṃ prāṇaḥ, dyāṃ pṛṣṭham, antarikṣam ātmā, aṅgair yajñam, pṛthivīm śarīraiḥ.*

5. (Saptahotṛ) ; *mahāhvir hotā, satyahavir adhvaryuḥ, acyutapājā agnī, acyutamanā upavaktā, anādhṛṣyaś cā 'prati-dhṛṣyaś ca yajñasyā 'bhigarau, ayāsyā udgātā.*

Keith's remark that the Hotṛ-formulae "must be treated as representing the desire to substitute mental processes for the tediousness of the sacrifice"¹⁰⁷ is wrong and too simple. There is no mental process in the last four formulae.

The Hotṛ-formulae appear to have come into being as concise expressions of different types of understanding of the model phenomenon behind the ritual. The Daśahotṛ formulates

the offering of the individual's own entity into the fire of higher will and superior being. This model phenomenon is no archetypal event, but the ideal to be realised within oneself. Its purpose is soterial. But the other formulae are precise descriptions of the archetypal event, once understood as an act by the ancient fathers (Saptahotṛ) and in the remaining formulae as acts by gods.

(b) *Daśahotṛ—ideal model*: The following translation is partly based on Sāyaṇa's commentary on TA.III.1.

“Thought is the spoon, the object of thought is clarified butter, language is the fire-altar, pronunciation is the strewn grass, higher will is the (Āhavanīya) fire, the object of higher knowledge is the (Gārhapatya) fire, the breath of speech is the priest Hotṛ, the mind is the priest Upavakṛ, life is the oblation, the power of speech is the Adhvaryu”¹⁰⁸

The identity of the two fires, not distinguished in the formula, has been suggested after Sāyaṇa. Vākpati means ‘the lord of speech’, understood by Sāyaṇa as the vital breath necessary for uttering words. These interpretations may be or may not be agreeable to all, but it cannot be doubted that the process of sacrifice has been conceived here as ending in the offering of life into a superior existence. We are thus drawn close to the idea that “the elements of the outer sacrifice in the Veda are used as symbols of the inner sacrifice and self-offering.”¹⁰⁹

But what is thus conceived in the Daśahotṛ formula is not the general comprehension of the Agnyādheya. The outlook so far disclosed relates itself to phenomenal becoming and not to what transcends phenomenality. What is emphasised by this observation is that the latter-day interpretation of the sacrifice as the submerging of the individual soul into the universal soul is not generally evident in the Agnyādheya. Of course, there is a reference to internal *ādhāna* in ŚB II.2.2.14 ; but that is not the inner sacrifice noted above as distinguished from the outer sacrifice. The internal *ādhāna* of ŚB II.2.2.14, whose aim is the achievement of long life and vigour,¹¹⁰ per-

tains to the material world like the external ritual. Hence, when ideas relating to the inner sacrifice appear in the Daśahotṛ-formula we suddenly embark upon a theme almost alien to what precedes and what follows it and are made to perceive that the drama in the sacrifice is not really one of phenomenal becoming but is one of ascent to higher existence. It appears as if somebody inserted the new plan at a much later date when the original model had been forgotten or undermined. The reason for such observation might become evident from the examination of the other formulae as done below.

(c) *Saptahotṛ—ancestral archetype* : The *Saptahotṛ* is quite different. An exact translation is difficult and the following one is only approximate :

“The one of Great oblation is the *Hotṛ*, the one of True Oblation is the *Adhvaryu*, the one with Unfailing Light is the *Agnī*, the one of Unfailing Mind is the *Upavaktṛ*, the Invincible and the Irresistible are two *Abhigaras* of the sacrifice, the Untiring is the *Udgātṛ*.”

According to *Sāyaṇa* (TA. III.5), *Mahāhaviṣ* etc. are the names of the mythical seven great sages. Then this is a precise statement of the model sacrifice performed by the seven ancient fathers and implies that the Vedic ritual is fashioned after an event or sacrifice in which the main part was played by mortals. To distinguish this archetypal model from the ideal model of the *Daśahotṛ* and the divine archetypal model of the remaining three formulae, the sacrifice indicated by the *Saptahotṛ* formula may be called the ancestral model.¹¹¹

There is another ceremonial in the *Agnyādheya* where reminiscences of the ancestral model are to be found. Just after the establishment of the fires the sacrificer utters one of the following formulae according to his family : ‘By the rite of the *Bhṛgu*s, thee, O lord of the rite, do I establish. By the rite of the *Aṅgiras*es etc. By the rite of the *Āditya*s etc.’

(d) *Caturhotṛ, Pañcahotṛ and Śaḍḍhotṛ—sacrifice by gods* : The *Caturhotṛ* and the *Pañcahotṛ* formulae mention the names

of the performers of the divine sacrifice : 'Pṛthivi is the Hotṛ, Dyaus the Adhvaryu, Rudra the Agnit and Bṛhaspati the Upavakṛ.' 'Agni is the Hotṛ, the Aśvins the two Adhvaryus, Tvaṣṭṛ the Agnit, Mitra the Upavakṛ'.

There is no trace of the fathers, nor of the understanding that the sacrifice is one of one's own individuality. The performers of the model act here are gods. But there are two different comprehensions of the divine model to be enacted on earth.

The shadow of the divine sacrifice falls also on the act of choosing the priests of the rite.¹¹² The sacrificer says to the priest Brahman, 'In this Ādhāna Moon is my Brahman, he is my Brahman, I choose you as my Brahman.' And the Brahman answers, 'Moon is your Brahman, he is your Brahman, I am your human Brahman'. Similarly a human Hotṛ is chosen for the divine Hotṛ—Agni, and a human Adhvaryu for the divine Adhvaryu—Āditya. The characters of this divine model are different from those of the Caturhotṛ and the Pañcahotṛ.

An interesting episode about the Agnyādheya performed by gods is met with in ŚB II.1.4 15-16. The gods were about to establish fire but were prevented by demons who said, 'The fire shall not be produced ; you shall not set up your fires'. Another account is found in ŚB. II.2.2.8-14 which says that the Agnyādheya made the gods immortal.

The first Agnyādheya by Prajāpati, or more generally the first sacrifice by Prajāpati, also is a familiar concept in the Brāhmaṇas. According to ŚB II.1.2.6 it was performed with desire for offsprings. TB. II.2, MS. 1.9 etc. also refer to the sacrifice of Prajāpati for offsprings in routine manner while commenting upon the Hotṛ-formulae. Sāyaṇa introduces his commentary on the Daśahotṛ formula in TA. III.1 with an account of Prajāpati's first sacrifice for creation. However, his introduction better suits the Caturhotṛ and the Pañcahotṛ where gods are mentioned as priests.

There are also a few other verses used in the Agnyādheya which allude to the divine Agnyādheya. With the ceremony of

laying gold into the fireplaces it is recalled, 'The gods have established here in great beauty the bright Agni...'¹¹⁸

The *Ṣaḍḍhotṛ* formula is different,

"(May) your eye (go) to the sun, breath to wind, back to the sky, soul to the atmosphere ; (may you get) the sacrifice by (your) organs, the earth by (your) limbs."

According to one of the two interpretations presented by Sāyaṇa (TA. III. 4) the animal to be sacrificed in the *Paśu-bandha* sacrifice is thus addressed. But the commentator, on his own part, prefers to hold that the sacrificer himself is addressed. In the latter case the amalgamation of the sacrificer, part by part, into cosmic objects looks like a reverse-drama of the sacrifice of *Puruṣa* (RV. X. 90). After the cosmogonic sacrifice of *Puruṣa* by the gods, the limbs of *Puruṣa* became cosmic objects (RV. X. 90.12-14). The man on earth is a microcosmic *Puruṣa* and the present sacrifice, according to the above interpretation of the *Ṣaḍḍhotṛ*, means the return of the limbs of the sacrificer to their cosmic counterparts. This physical return-journey foreshadows its later idealisation in the theme of the submerging of the individual soul into the universal.

But, perhaps, we need not look into the *Puruṣa*-hymn. The *Gharmaśiras*-formulae, uttered when the fire is established (Aps. V. 12.1), mention heat as Agni's head, wind as his life and the sun as his eye. According to TB. I. 1.8.1, the three regions of the universe are all fires ; in order that they are all established without exception, one should utter the formula 'Heat is thy head' etc. when the *Gārhapatya* fire is established, 'Wind is thy life' etc. when the *Southern* fire is established, and 'The sun is thy eye' etc. when the *Āhavanīya* fire is established. Hence these formulae also might imply the sacrificer's return, part by part, to the corresponding limbs of the cosmic Agni.

On the other hand, if, as understood in the first interpretation mentioned by Sāyaṇa, the sacrificial animal is meant, its sacrifice seems to take the form of cosmogony ; for, the ritual then, is to be understood as one like the sacrifice of

Puruṣa, parts of Puruṣa when cut up having contributed to the formation of the universe—"From the eye came into being the sun...from the breath the wind" (RV. X. 90.13).

Both the explanations offered by Sāyaṇa appear to be historical ; the first one (the addressee is the animal) having been replaced by the other (the addressee is the sacrificer) in a more developed stage of the understanding of the sacrifice. In any case, one perceives a possible reference here to the divine cosmogonic sacrifice (RV. X. 90) of Puruṣa which is sought to be utilised, either by direct re-enactment in the sacrifice of the animal whose cut up limbs contribute to the formation of the universe, or, by the application of the underlying pantheistic theory of the universe being the body of Puruṣa and man his microcosm, in that the limbs and organs of the sacrificer are meant to return to their corresponding parts in the universal being.

This brings us to how closely the theory of the re-enactment of the divine cosmogonic sacrifice and the idea of inner-sacrifice or reverse-becoming through the ritual are related as succeeding ideas in the order of development. One has only to comprehend the ritual as the starting point of the reverse-becoming instead of as the representation of the first cosmic becoming and then replace the physical amalgamation by the spiritual one.

The Hotṛ-formulae, thus, give us specimens of different notions relating to the model of the terrestrial sacrifice. According to one of these the sacrifice is the re-enactment on earth of a model act performed by the fathers (Saptahotṛ) ; according to another it is the same of the one performed by the gods, (Caturhotṛ, Pañcahotṛ, Ṣaḍhotṛ). According to the third view, the model is not any archetype but is the Ideal and the present sacrifice is either symbolic of the body going back to its corresponding parts in the macrocosmic Puruṣa (Ṣaḍhotṛ) or of the material life being offered into the fire of higher will and Brahman (Daśahotṛ).

(e) *Views of modern scholars on the model phenomenon* : As mentioned earlier (III. 6a above) Eggeling did not recognise

the theory of representation in early Ṛgvedic speculation, "The complicated ritual of the Firealtar...does not seem to have formed part of the original sacrificial system, but was probably developed independently of it, and incorporated with it at a comparatively recent period."¹¹⁴ This observation was based on independent evidences. But Eggeling also said that the whole underlying principle of the unity of theory and practice and the representation of cosmogony in the ritual was a later development. "There seems, indeed, some reason to believe that it was elaborated with a definite object in view, viz. that of making the external rites and ceremonies of the sacrificial cult the practical devotional expression of certain dominant speculative theories of the time."¹¹⁵ The same was the opinion of Keith, "...it is essentially in conception the embodiment of philosophic theory, a fact which explains its loose connection with any real sacrifices."¹¹⁶

Apart from the absence of the theory of representation, those observations also imply the absence of philosophical thought in early Vedic speculation. That was the real source of the error.¹¹⁷ But even in ṚV. IV. 1 there is a cosmogonic theory reflecting upon even moral, social and intellectual becoming, and also a sense of unity between the archetype and the present ritual.¹¹⁸ How can one ignore those evidences? The absence therein of the mode expression of thought as found in post-Vedic philosophy is not an evidence for the absence of philosophy itself in early Vedic thought which was not yet accustomed to distinguish poetry (=symbol and imagery) from philosophy (=basis) in myth, myth from ritual, moral, social and intellectual becoming from physical, cosmic becoming. The comprehension was integral and complex, and the expression thereof archaic. But, as Bergaigne rightly advised,¹¹⁹ the Vedic scholar should not fight shy of an idea even if it appears to be bizarre and allow the words to guide him.

Among Indian scholars it was Coomaraswamy who first spoke of the archetypal model and Jātavidyā as parts of the general theory of Vedic philosophy. "It needs no argument to

prove that the ritual on earth is performed in imitation of the First Sacrifice; 'the observance of the rule thereof is the same as at the creation' (ŚB., XIV. 1.2.26, and *passim*), and 'in like manner does he, the sacrificer, even now' (ŚB., VII. 2.2.7)."¹²⁰ As to the purpose and occasion of the first sacrifice, the scholar observed, "It is that there may be Light that the First Sacrifice is undertaken by the desirous Angels and Five Kindreds : The occasion of the First Sacrifice—*janā yad agnim ayajanta pañca*, V. S., XII, 23—is *agre, in principio*, at the beginning of an aeon, the birthday of the Supernal-Sun, the springtide of the Cosmic Year, ..."¹²¹

In spite of his avowedly rigid and schematic approach to the religion of the RV, foreshadowing the modern structural approach, Bergaigne did pioneering service to mythological research by first discovering in the West the element of imitation in the Vedic sacrifice. Oldenberg and Hillebrandt noted his views with some approval but just casually.¹²² Macdonell and Keith ignored the theory of Bergaigne though Keith approved Eggeling.¹²³ Gonda¹²⁴ also has not focussed on the representation theory. Thus, the significance of the divine model, not to speak of the ancestral model which was not recognised even by Bergaigne and Coomaraswamy, has generally been under-estimated or ignored in Western researches.

According to Bergaigne, the "Vedic sacrifice...appears to us in the first instance to be an imitation of certain celestial phenomena."¹²⁵ It was an act of gods. The term "gods" "occurs as applied to those who are regarded as merely carrying out in heaven the same kind of activity as the sacrifice which is celebrated from day to day by men on the earth."¹²⁶ About the *modus operandi* of the sacrifice Bergaigne remarked that "it was a means of causing rainfall by creating, so far as terrestrial representations of rain-water and of lightning went, conditions similar to those under which lightning in heaven would determine the discharge of rain-water."¹²⁷ This, of course, makes the sacrifice a kind of magic.¹²⁸ The *modus operandi* of the Agnyādheya, however, does not imply only magic. There is also an element of cosmogony here which is

less marked in ordinary magic serving specific purposes. Nor is there anything of violence or of narrow, selfish motivation in the Agnyādheya. At least the border-line between magic and philosophy breaks down in the Agnyādheya.

Bergaigne did not recognise the ancestral model noted above.¹²⁹ Now, it cannot be denied that the archetypal fire-sacrifice by the gods is a Ṛgvedic notion. The following observation by Bergaigne¹³⁰ is convincing, "Let us first of all establish it clearly that it is said of gods as well as of men that they produce, I. 59.2, III. 2.3 ; that they make, III. 11.4 ; that they kindle, VI. 16.48 ; cf. VI. 11.6, 1.95.9 ; Agni, whom they kindle for being used as a messenger, I. 36.4. This notion is confirmed in the compound *deveddha* "kindled by the gods," serving as an epithet of Agni, invoked in X. 64.3 in a list of gods, and of the Agnis, VII. 1.22, whom the terrestrial Agni is expected to propitiate in favour of men and who appear to be identified with the gods themselves." Hence Bergaigne believed, "The gods furnished man with a model which he has only to copy."¹³¹

But there are certain points which should be given additional consideration here. First, the Caturhotṛ and the Pañcahotṛ allude to the sacrifice by the gods that is the divine model. But we are to enquire how the Saptahotṛ formula could exist there putting the sacrifice by the seven fathers at least on par with the divine sacrifice. The ideal model also is given with the Daśahotṛ. It will be no wonder to perceive different ideas belonging to different ages about the model sacrifice as co-existing in fossilised form in those formulae. As it so often happens in Indian theology and mysticism, the oldest and latest beliefs exist side by side with such mutual tolerance as would be unthinkable in the medieval West. The Gītā presents two almost mutually exclusive ideas about the significance and utility of the sacrifice as two grades in the same system of devotional mysticism.¹³² The grandeur of Nāropā's realistic mysticism is not little blurred by his apparently deliberate adoption in practice of what may pass as vestiges of neolithic cults.¹³³ Here in the Caturhotṛ, Pañcahotṛ and Saptahotṛ formulae we

have two theories whose contradictions are far less perceptible.

Secondly, ṚV. IV. 1 does not present the gods as the principal actors in the drama of the birth of Agni. That was a myth in which the fathers played the most important part. There are many references to the event in the ṚV.¹⁸⁴

All those references were taken by Bergaigne¹⁸⁵ to have been statements of the influence exercised on the celestial phenomenon by those legendary beings. According to the scholar, since the sacrifice on earth was believed to influence the celestial phenomenon, the sacrifices of the past also were so believed and hence those sacrifices of past ages were thus referred to. But the fathers are not said to have imitated the gods but it is they who are said to have set the model for men (II. 5b). Bergaigne held "the frequent confusion between those sacrificers and the gods" responsible for this.¹⁸⁶ His insistence on the imitation of celestial that is natural phenomena in the earthly ritual added to which was the view that "there never has been such a change in the Vedic religion that the latest hymns could not serve as a commentary on the oldest"¹⁸⁷ shadowed that the historical significance of a cosmogonic act of the fathers could be different from that of the gods¹⁸⁸ and also the possibility of the co-existence of different stages of idea in the same rituo-philosophical system.

But the actual co-existence of different layers of thought in Indian thought as well as in the ṚV cannot be disputed. Hence one need not accept without examination Bergaigne's thesis that the Ṛgvedic idea of sacrifice concerns only the divine model. Bergaigne himself observed, "It is true that from the point of view of the formation of the ideas in question it is the celestial sacrifice which may pass as an imitation of the terrestrial sacrifice in the sense that such a mythical conception appears to be the product of speculation on the origin of the human ritual... ." ¹⁸⁹ The same was the point of view of Oldenberg, "The notion of Agni kindled by gods pertains, on the one hand, to the thought that because of their homogeneity with the earthly fire, like this the celestial forms of fire also

should have been kindled by somebody ; and, on the other hand, to the notion inherent in the personification of gods, that the highest and holiest activity of men—the sacrifice and therefore also the kindling of the sacrificial fire—must be accomplished also by gods.”¹⁴⁰ Both the authors envisage a stage when the ritual on earth was done without a divine model. It is that stage of thought when the ancestral model seems to have reigned in the ṚV.

Thirdly, the earliest Ṛgvedic idea about the cosmic birth of Agni pertained to his atmospheric receptacle. This abode lost its former glory with the rise of the idea of the empyrean and the empyreal sun.¹⁴¹ Again, originally the seven mothers were active around the birth of Agni in his atmospheric receptacle and were eventually replaced by the seven fathers.¹⁴² On the other hand, the close relation between the empyrean (*parama vyoman*), empyreal sun (*svar*) and heaven as the abode of gods and hence of divine activities is evident in the fact that in Classical Sanskrit both *svar* and *svarga* mean the abode of gods. So the rise of the idea of the divine model against the ancestral model seems to be closely related to the importance given to the supreme birth of Agni in the empyrean instead of to that in the atmospheric receptacle as noted earlier.

The animosity between the Devayāna and the Pitṛyāna noted by Hillebrandt¹⁴³ as well as the incongruity of the initial verses of ṚV IV.1¹⁴⁴ also speaks for the said course of development.

(f) *From earthly gain to divinity : from divinity to mokṣa :* The divine sacrifice, with its enactment on earth and the theory of reciprocal action, and the idea of inner sacrifice appear in the Gītā as two different ways of understanding the sacrifice.

Gītā III.10 states “Having created beings along with the sacrifice, Prajāpati said at the beginning, ‘Produce ye with this, let this yield your desired things !’ ” This means that Prajāpati’s sacrifice of creation is enacted on earth for the attainment of earthly gains. But the intricate process of the establishment of identity and the extension of divine *vṛddhi*

to the mortal is not told. Instead the familiar give-and-take formula is stated in the next verse : "Enrich the gods with this and let those gods enrich you ; enriching each other may you attain the highest bliss !"

The inner sacrifice is mentioned elsewhere. "And others offer all actions of the limbs and actions of breath into the fire of self-restraint kindled by knowledge" (Gītā IV. 27) ; "Just as the burning fire turns the firewood into ash, O, Arjuna ! so does the fire of knowledge turn all actions into ash." (IV.37). This inner sacrifice of the Gītā is different from that of the Daśahotṛ-formula. The Daśahotṛ means a re-interpretation of the external rite and gives it an esoteric meaning. But the Gītā is speaking of the yogic inner sacrifice—the true *antaryāga* requiring no external ceremony. In the present study the term inner sacrifice relates only to the Vedic inner sacrifice i.e. the re-interpreted external sacrifice, and not to the yogic one.

It has been noted earlier (III. 7a) that even when the external sacrifice is understood as offering one's own individuality, there exists a model—the actual ceasing of one's profane existence for a higher one. But while the archetypal model was fashioned by the ancestors or the gods at the Beginning of All, the model of the inner sacrifice is the Ideal which the individual likes to achieve at the end of his worldly existence. The drama of the inner sacrifice is performed in anticipation of the Ideal and contributes to the expeditious achievement thereof.

It is obvious that the emergence of the idea of the drama in anticipation of the upstream journey could not be possible without the divine model of the past having been undermined and replaced by the ideal model in theological speculation. Tracing out the full development will be a difficult task but certain intervening ideas can be pointed to.

The achievement of heaven as the aim of the sacrifice probably lies somewhere in the progress from gross materiality to the spiritual goal of self-sacrifice. Though there is a prevalent opinion that the sole aim of the sacrifice is the attainment of

heaven,¹⁴⁵ the analysis of the Agnyādheya tends to show that that was not always the sole aim. In post-Vedic thought also both heavenly prosperity and worldly prosperity are the fruits of the sacrifice. When Prajāpati says, 'Produce ye with this' (Gītā III. 10, see above), only material vṛddhi is meant. But Gītā IX.20-21 speak of enjoyment in heaven as the fruit of the sacrifice.

The attainment of heaven is, from one point of view, an extension of the material gain. An interesting illustration of this is supplied by a Śatapatha variant. The Mādhyandina recension reads in II.2.2.7, *tad yathā yonau reto dadhyāt evam evaitad ṛtvijo yajamānaṃ loke dadhati*, "As the seed is placed in the womb, in like manner do priests establish the sacrificer in the world (*loke*)."¹⁴⁶ This comes as an explanation of why the sacrificial fee should be paid to priests. The foetus goes on growing and the whole course of its further existence is one of physical growth—the model vṛddhi. Such a vṛddhi does the sacrificer attain in this world. But the tone of the sentence changes in the Kāṇva recension¹⁴⁶ which adds only the word 'svarge' before 'loke'. But the subsequent sentences in the passage show that the attainment of the heavenly world is not envisaged in it.

The extension of earthly prosperity to the other world does not in itself carry any moral tinge. But there was a closely similar idea—the assumption of divinity in the sacrifice which involved ethical elevation of the aim of the sacrifice.

This assumption of divinity does not mean the earlier noted establishment of identity between the sacrificer and the deity, whose aim was pragmatic.¹⁴⁷ Different from that is what one finds in ŚB. II. 1.4.7 and I. 1.1.4-6. According to ŚB. II. 1.4.7, the gods reside at the site of the sacrifice during the night before the sacrifice. This facilitates the process of the assumption of divinity which the sacrificer would temporarily do during the whole course of the ritual next day. Cf. ŚB. II.1.4.7, ".....he thereby draws nigh to the gods, and sets up his fires as one more godly, more subdued, more endowed with holy fervour." The assumption of divinity on the following day is

not aimed at heavenly or earthly prosperity as it was seen with the extension of the deity's being to the sacrificer. ŚB. I.1.1.4-6 clearly state that the aim is ethical,

"4. Twofold, verily, is this, there is no third, viz. truth and untruth. And verily the gods are the truth and man is the untruth. Therefore in saying (VS, I. 5b), 'I now enter from untruth into truth,' he passes from the men to the gods. 5. Let him then only speak what is true ; for this vow indeed the gods do keep, that they speak the truth ; and for this reason they are glorious : glorious therefore is he who, knowing this, speaks the truth. 6. After the completion (of the sacrifice) he divests himself (of the vow), with the text (VS, II. 28b) : 'Now I am he who really I am.' For, in entering upon the vow, he becomes, as it were, non-human (that is divine, D. B.) ; and as it would not be becoming for him to say, 'I enter from truth into untruth' ; and as, in fact, he now again becomes man, let him therefore divest himself (of the vow), with the text : 'Now I am he who I really am.'"¹⁴⁸

According to the passage the assumption of godliness is temporary. But what is attained is not merely the prosperity of the gods ; it is truth—divinity proper. The return from that assumption to manhood is not a total annulment of the divine attainment. The passage emphasises that the return to manhood should not mean ethical degradation.

What was meant for the expeditious operation of the law of the sacrifice is thus somehow metamorphosed into an ethical concept which enables us to see the element of higher religion in it. One should not fail to discover the same idea of divine attainment when the sacrificer promises to observe the sacrificial vow in the Agnyādheya with the following words, "From untruth into truth do I go, from manhood to divinity do I go, the divine word do I promise (Aps. V. 8.1)."¹⁴⁹ This progress could indeed make the aim of material gain lose its earlier value. The self-sacrifice which comes in a subsequent stage of development is a further change in the same direction. Gods are true and man is untrue. But the Upaniṣads know some-

thing transcending gods and mortals. The idea of submerging the individual into the universal soul could rise with this development.

8. Concluding remarks

In spite of the fact that the exact form of the Śrauta Agnyādheya is much late and omits or further develops some of the Ṛgvedic notions, a few of the most important Ṛgvedic notions regarding the birth of Agni find reflection even in this late form of the ritual. The greatness of the original abode of Agni in the womb of the universal waters, Agni's self-reproduction, his universalisation are all important features of the ancient story as well as of the ritual. But instead of the story of the release of cows the more ancient idea of the motherly waters appears in the ritual. However, the seven fathers are remembered.

Secondly, the idea of self-offering was so dominant in later speculation that it made a place for it, however small, in the Agnyādheya which was otherwise oriented towards mundane attainments. It is reasonable to infer that great importance came to be attached to the idea in the final period of the development of Vedic sacrifice. This development in the practical side of the Vedas (Karmakāṇḍa) was paralleled by similar developments in the other side (Jñānakāṇḍa). For, even the story of the birth of Agni did not remain as such in the speculative hymns of the ṚV and AV. AVP. II. 6.1 was at least close to the idea of 'becoming non-phenomenal'. Even later, as the philosophical element was divested of its mythological set up and was given independent treatment in the Upaniṣads, the state of release was idealised.¹⁵⁰

The parallel developments could not take place without a continued state of integrity of jñāna and karman, i.e. that of mantra and yajña as understood here. This means just the representation theory—a myth can be put into practice. But this became a dead thing in the post-Vedic period when the word *jñāna* was used only with reference to the Upaniṣads while

karman meant both the ritual and the mantra used therein. The unity of *jñāna* and *karman* and the unity of mantra and *yajña* expressed different concepts in these periods.¹⁵¹ Hence the Vedic ritual including the *Agnyādheya* had no further significant evolution in the post-Vedic period. However, the generation of fire is an important Tantric ceremonial. In the small chapter that follows this has been taken up for discussion.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. In the Tantras for example the body is regarded as a microcosm and yoga as microcosmic activity. See Dipak Bhattacharya in *Journal of Research*, Visva Bharati, II. 1, 1977-78, passim.
2. *BRV*, I, passim. See II. 5b above and also III. 7e infra.
3. Introd, *SBE*, XLIII (= *ŚB* translated, Part IV).
4. *ṚV*, IV. 1, IV. 2. 15-17 etc. See Ch. II. 1-3 above and III. 7e infra.
5. See Eggeling, *SBE*, XII, p. xxxi and XLIII, p. xiii. Also see III. 6a infra.
6. See n. 22 below.
7. See pp. 112-113 above.
8. *ŚB*, II. 1 and 2, and *TB*, I. 1 and 2.
9. The *KŚS* does not fulfil this condition. The *BŚS*, *Aps* etc. often fully state the mantras, but certain formulae are only referred to and are available in the *TS* or *TB*. For the efficacy of the principle laid down see n. 62 below and the concerned part of the chapter. Also see C. G. Kashikar in *SKE*, I, Preface, p. 24.
10. *RPVU*, p. 461. Also cf. *PB*, XII. 4. 13-14.
11. Cf. *ŚB*, IV. 6.4.2, *PB*, IV. 10, *JB*, II. 409, *TB*, I. 2.6.1 etc.
12. *PB*, V. 1.13-15 and V. 2.1.
13. *PB*, XVIII. 6. 1-2 ; XIX. 7.6 ; XXII. 5. 1-5 ; *AB*, IV. 26, etc.
14. See *PB*, V. 1.10ff ; V. 2.1, XVIII. 6.26 etc.
15. The name of *Prajāpati* appears in the *ṚV* (excluding the *Khilas*) only six times.
16. See II. 8, 9 above.
17. Only the *BŚS*, generally recognised as the oldest *Śrautasūtra*, has a few such legends.
18. This is one of the reasons for not taking Sylvain Lévi's *La doctrine du sacrifice dans les Brāhmaṇas* as a model. This is primarily a collection of the major speculative remarks in the *Brāhmaṇas* on the sacrifice ; and attempts to co-ordinate the unwieldy material are lacking.

19. The other Śrautasūtras have been conveniently referred to. For the different Śrautasūtras dealing with the ritual see *SKE. I*, pp. 1-52.
20. So indicated in the *Ādhānapaddhati (Viṣayānukramaṇa)* and also *SKE. I*, p. 1 and p. 12, n. 1.
21. See Dhūrtasvāmin on *Aps. V. 17.1*.
22. See Chinnaswami Shastri in the *Yajñatattvaprakāśa*, p. 1. For the priority of the Agnyādheya to all other Haviryāgas see also *SKE. I*, Preface, p. 27 and Hillebrandt, *HRL*, p. 105.
23. Gṛhya fire.
24. *anṛtāt satyam upaimi, mānuṣād daivyam upaimi, daivīm vācaṃ yacchāmi, Āpś. V. 8.1.*
25. *śalkair agnim indhāna ubhau lokau sanem aham / ubhāyor lokayor rddhvā 'timṛtyuṃ tarāmy aham // Āpś. V. 8.4.*
26. II. 2 and 4 above.
27. *ORV*, p. 42. See II. 5c above.
28. *VMH. II*, p. 71.
29. See III. 5b infra.
30. *OLD*, p. 304.
31. See infra, III. 3b, the comments on *Āpś. V. 10.2* and also III. 4.
32. See II. 5 above for the allusion.
33. See II. 1-3 above.
34. See II. 3 above.
35. See II. 2, 4 above and also III. 4 infra.
36. They are too many to be cited. Some of the more important ones have been noted in the present study.
37. Bhaṭṭabhāskara on *TS. I. 5.5.2*; this means that the Brahmaudanika fireplace later serves as the Gārhapatya fireplace according to Bhaṭṭabhāskara. See the sequel of the discussion.
38. Bhaṭṭabhāskara (*TS. II. 2.4.8*) gives an *adhiyajña* explanation. Here the verse is prescribed for a special ritual to be performed if the fire which is being carried from the Gārhapatya fireplace is extinguished. The *yoni* in this context means the extinguished embers. On *TB. 1.4.4* Bhaṭṭabhāskara has not paraphrased *yoni*.
39. Cf. *ṚV. IV. 1.11* (II. 1 above).
40. *Āpś. V. 4.12*, *Bhāradvāja, V. 3.1* etc. See *SKE. I*, pp. 20, 21 etc.
41. *BŚS. II. 13*.
42. Cf. n. 37 above.
43. *ṚV. I. 15.12*, *VI. 15.19*, *X. 85.27, 36* and *ṚV. I. 12. 6, 36.5* etc.
44. Also see III. 5c infra.
45. Eggeling, *SBE. XLIII*.
46. See n. 5 above.
47. See III. 7e infra.
48. See II. 7c, d above.

49. Both on VS. XVII. 75.
50. II. 4, 5a and 7c above.
51. See section 4 infra.
52. See *VNK*, 1ff and *OLD*.
53. *VMH*. II, p. 57ff ; *BRV*. I, p. 133. See III. 7e seq.
54. *VMK*, p. 46.
55. I. 2e above. According to Gonda (*GPV*, p. 55) their "activities are typical of those figures who, according to the belief of many peoples, initiated culture in the beginning of history." The myth then becomes more sociogonic than cosmogonic. Also see n. 138 below.
56. See n. 50 above.
57. *Āps*. V. 4.1 and V. 9.1.
58. Eggeling, *SBE*. XII.
59. Ibid.
60. After *RVG* on III. 3.5 ; the *ṚV* has *hārivratam* instead of *haritvacam*.
61. This verse is almost identical with one of the verses to be uttered after the placing of the fire according to *Āps* V. 12.2. For its translation see p. 156 infra.
62. This corroborates the methodological principle indicated in the introductory section of the present chapter—that it is not always enough to depend solely on the Brāhmaṇas while interpreting the rituals, for which the Śrautasūtras too should be consulted.
63. *ṚV*. III. 3.10. See II. 7b above for this and similar verses.
64. The first two mantras belong to the Sarparājñī formula (= TS. I. 5.3.1-4) consisting of four mantras.
65. *Kāthakasamhita* VII. 14.
66. See II. 7b above.
67. *VMH*, II. 89ff.
68. *VMH*. II, 96ff. Ludwig (*ṚV*, tr, III. 355f) had similar views ; so also Oldenberg (*SBE*. XXX, p.x, n.1) with certain reservations (*ORV*, 349f).
69. *Op. cit*, p. 101. Hillebrandt also states (p. 104, n. 3, p. 117) that the establishment of the fires in the Ṛgvedic period could have been performed in a different order, the position of the first fire being held by the Dakṣiṇa or the Āhavanīya.
70. *ṚV*. 1.12.6, 36.5 etc.
71. *śvātréṇa yāt pitrór múcyase páry ā tvā pūrvam anayann āparam pūnaḥ*. See *VMH*. II, p. 97.
72. See p. 157 above.
73. Śāṅkhāyana Śrautasūtra, vol. II, comm. p. 86 ; the fact is mentioned in *VMH*. II, p. 89.
74. Kashikar's translation, p. 116.
75. *ORV*, p. 349, n. 3 ; Hillebrandt in *VMH*, II, p. 89.

76. See II. 7b above for the development in the ṚV.
77. See II. 4, 5a and 7c above.
78. See III. 3 and 4 above.
79. See n. 71 above for the verse.
80. It should be noted that this notion was the main ground for Hillebrandt (*VMH*. II, 90ff) in maintaining that the Dakṣiṇa fire represented Agni in the atmospheric region. See p. 158 supra.
81. *VMH*. II, pp. 30, 82.
82. For this point of view see *LOV*, passim; also see M. P. Pandit in *Aditi*, 172ff and the sequel of the discussion, specially III. 7b and f.
83. *ORV*, p. 313.
84. *Ibid*, p. 315.
85. *Raghu*. I. 26, *dudoha gāṃ sa yajñāya sasyāya maghavā divam / sampadvinimayenobhau dadhatur bhuvanadvayam //*. For the Gītā verse see section 7f infra
86. See II. 1 and 3 above.
87. *RVG*. I, pp. 413-14. The words used are *sadhanitvá* (*RV*. IV.1.9) and *sadhānyā*.
88. *SBE*. XLIII, Introduction; the citation is from p. xv.
89. *BRV*. I. See III. 7e seq.
90. *SBE*. XLIII, p. xvi.
91. The idea was casually noted by Lüders (*Varuṇa*, 22ff) and also Oldenberg (n. 92 below). Gonda notes that 'a god may increase in greatness' (*GPV*, p. 68) but does not note the ritual connection. Also see Gonda in *Notes on Brahman*, p. 16 and passim.
92. *OLD*, p. 2.
93. See II. 4 above for this verse as well as for ṚV. I. 65.4 translated a few sentences above.
94. See *Introd*, 2f above for the difference between figurative descriptions of rituals and true myths.
95. *OLD*.
96. III. 4 above.
97. Cf. *Āps* V. 1.7, "utīḥ kurvāṇo yat pṛthivīm acarō guhākāram ākhu-rūpaṃ pratītya / tat te nyaktam iha sambharantaḥ śataṃ jīvema śaradaś savitrāḥ // ity ākhukarīṣam." "prajāpatīṣṭānāṃ prajānāṃ kṣudho'pahatyai suvitaṃ no astu / upaprabhinnam iṣam ūrjāṃ prajābhyaḥ sūdaṃ gr̥hebhyo rasam ābharāmi // iti sūdam."
98. See n. 94 above.
99. The translation is taken from *TSK*, p. 477 (*TS*. V. 7.9) where it is presented in verse-form.
100. *Āps* V. 10.11. Among the few sāmans that are sung, *SV*. I. 47 (*RV*. VIII. 103.1) prays for Agni's vṛddhi: *ūpo śú jātām āryasya vārdhanam agniṃ nakṣantā no gīraḥ //*.

101. ŚB. II. 2.2.14, Eggeling, *SBE*. XII.
102. Āpś. V. 9.1—TS. V. 7.9. See n. 99 above.
103. Āpś. V. 1.7 (*vaiśvānarasya rūpam* etc.); see p. 169 above.
104. Kāthaka. IX. 8-16, MS. I. 9, KKS. 8.11-12,
105. TA. III. 1-10, TB. II. 2-3.
106. For details see *SKE*. I, 199 f.
107. *RPVU*, p. 356. Keith must have taken the idea from Hillebrandt, (*HRL*, p. 166).
108. See Dipak Bhattacharya in *VIJ*, XVI. i, March, 1978 12ff for a more elaborate translation after Sāyaṇa.
109. Aurobinda cited by M. P. Pandit in *Aditi*, pp. 172-73.
110. See p. 171 above.
111. See II. 5b above and also n. 55 above and n. 138 below as well as the concerned parts of the chapter.
112. The choice of priests is not mentioned in Āpś. V—the chapter dealing with the Agnyādheya. The mantras translated occur in the *Ādhānapaddhati*. See n. 20 above and III. 2 above.
113. Āpś. V. 10.4. See n. 60 above.
- 114, 115. *SBE*. XLIII, p. xiii.
116. *RPVU*, p. 356.
117. For the views of Oldenberg in this regard see Introduction, 2a and Ch. II. 3 above.
118. See II. 1 and 3 above.
119. *BRVP*. I, pp. vi-viii.
120. *RLB*, p. 19.
121. *Ibid*, pp. 17, 19.
122. *ORV*, p. 51, n. 1 and *VMK*, p. 3.
123. See n. 116 above and *TSK*. I, CXXV ff.
124. For the views of Gonda in this regard see especially *GVP*, 23ff. Gonda does not distinguish between metaphorical descriptions of ritual and proper myths as understood in the present study (Introd, 2f). Some vague notion is reflected in *Triads in the Veda*; see review in *VIJ*, March, 1977.
125. *BRVP*. I, p. viii.
126. *Ibid*, p. xv.
127. *Ibid*, p. xiii.
128. Cf. Frazer *Golden bough* (Abridged), 48ff.
129. See infra for Bergaigne's views on the ancestral performance.
130. *BRVP*. I, pp. 104-5.
131. *Ibid*, p. 109.
132. See III. 7f infra.
133. See Dipak Bhattacharya, *Journal of Research*, Visva Bharati, II. 1. 101ff; Conze, *BTI*, p. 271, fn. on Hevajratantra.
134. See Ch. II, n. 88 above.

135. *BRVP*, I, 133ff.

136. *Loc. cit.*

137. *Ibid*, p. iii.

138. Like Bergaigne Hillebrandt (*VMH*, II, 57ff; also III, 3b(vi) above), too believed that the allusions to the ancestral performances were meant to add the glory of tradition to the current custom. Gonda (*GPV*, p. 55, see n. 55 above) recognises them as the initiators of culture. But the general significance of the Aṅgīrasas as the first embodiment of the mortal's enlightenment and as agents of creation as well as founders of clans was noted in II, 3 and II, 5d above.

139. *Op. cit.*, p. 123.

140. *ORV*, p. 106, n. 2.

141. See II, 7c, d above.

142. II, 5a above.

143. *VMH*, II, pp. 30, 82 etc.

144. II, 5b above.

145. *RPVU*, p. 461.

146. *ŚB* (Kāṇva), I, 2.2.5.

147. See III, 6 above.

148. Eggeling *SBE*, XII.

149. See n. 24 above for the text.

150. See p. 108 *supra* and Dipak Bhattacharya in *The Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 1978 (6), pp. 1-34.

151. Cf. Uvaṭa on VS.XL, 1. *samāptaṃ karmakāṇḍaṃ, idānīṃ jñānakāṇḍaṃ prastūyate*. According to this, the 40th chapter of the White Yajurveda viz. the Īsopanisad—belongs to the Jñānakāṇḍa while the verses in the previous chapters as well as the rituals in which they are used belong to the Karmakāṇḍa. The unity of jñāna 'knowledge' and karman 'work' in this context can only mean the unity of ātmajñāna 'self-knowledge' and yajña-karman 'ritual work', for which no sensible point of contact can be convincingly presented. Hence Śaṅkara is always in an advantageous position (cf. comm. IU, 2) in denying jñāna-karman unity. The idea of the unity of mantra and yajña is expressed in later periods in the well-known dictum *āmnāyasya kriyārthatvād ānarthakyam atadarthānām* etc. (Jaim. Mīm. Sū, I, 2.1). This means only the compulsion of using every mantra in the ritual. See Ch. I, n. 1 above and the present author in 'Cosmogony and riuto-philosophical integrity' etc., *VIJ*, XV, i, 1977.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BIRTH OF AGNI IN THE TANTRIC AGNIJANANA

1. Tantric Agnijanana

(a) *Preliminary* : Among the manuals current in Bengal the Tantric fire-ritual has been elaborately described in the *Tantrasāra* (ch. IV) by Kṛṣṇānanda Āgamavāgiśa (16th century?) and the *Śāktānandataranṅiṇī* (ch. XVIII) by Brahmānanda Giri (16th century).¹ These are collection works and quite naturally the citations from different works have not always been conducive to clarity regarding the order of items as followed in the original treatises. A systematic as well as close-fitting description is available in the *Śāradātilaka* (ch. V) by Lakṣmaṇadeśikendra who was a disciple of the Kashmirian master Utpalācārya (c. 10th cent.)² The Pañcarātra fire-ritual finds description in the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*,³ ch. XV. The present study mainly follows the ST with Rāghavabhaṭṭa's *Padārthādarśa* commentary (1550 Vikrama Saṃvat, c. 1492 A.D).

The Tantric fire-ritual is called Agnijanana—'generation of fire', or Homa, many of which are performed in it. Unlike the Agnyādheya the Agnijanana is not an independent rite but forms a necessary part of various other ceremonials. In the ST it is described among the rules of the initiation-ceremony (*dikṣā*). For this reason the active performer of the fire-ritual here is the high priest (*ācārya*) who acts as the guru of the individual to be initiated. The *Dikṣā* is described over three chapters—ST. III-V. The Agnijanana comes in ch. V as part of *kriyāvatīdikṣā* that is initiation consisting of external rites. But the rules relating to the fireplaces appear mainly in ch. III.

(b) *Synopsis of the ritual* : The fireplaces are called *kuṇḍas*. There are nine *kuṇḍas*. The major part of the ritual is performed with the *kuṇḍa* of the *Ācārya*. This *kuṇḍa* is square-shaped like the *Āhavanīya* fireplace (III. 48-52, V. 1).⁴

There occur eighteen perfections of the kuṇḍas after which three lines are drawn in these pointing towards the east and three pointing towards the north. These are then sprinkled with water (V. 2-10^{ab}).

Vāgīśvari is thought of as at the end of her period and then worshipped as united with Vāgīśvara (10^{cd}-11^{ab}).⁵

A fire is brought from the house of a Śrotriya, or is generated with a sun-stone, a portion of it is left out for the fire of the funeral pyre and three purifications of it are performed (11^{cd}-12). After certain contemplations with the fire the Ācārya moves the fire thrice around the kuṇḍa and finally places it in the kuṇḍas moving it in his own direction. At this time he also remains kneeling. Water is offered to the parents of Agni, the fire is kindled and praised with an appropriate verse (13-19).

The placing of the fire in the kuṇḍa is followed by the nyāsas which mean inducing in one's own body what can be called various aspects of Agni, his seven tongues or flames, the deities thereof, the jātis⁶ and the eight figures of Agni (20-33). Agni is contemplated as staying on a lotus holding his Śakti with two arms (34-35). The Ācārya sprinkles the girdles of the kuṇḍa with water and throws away the paridhi-sticks⁷ on all sides excepting the eastern quarter (36).

Next follow the worships. The figures of Brahmā and certain other gods are worshipped in the direction of the thrown away paridhi-sticks. The seven flames of Agni, the deities of the jātis, the eight figures of Agni and the Mothers are worshipped on a contemplated eight-petalled lotus, six of the flames of Agni at the corners and one at the centre, the deities on the filaments, the eight figures on the petals and the Mothers on the tips of the petals. The Guardians of the Regions (Lokapālas) also are worshipped (37-41, also ST. IV. 113ff).

The oblation implements—the spoons called sruk, sruva⁸ and the ghee-pot—are heated and made to undergo certain purifications (42-52). This is followed by ghee-oblations. Four oblations are made to Agni, Soma, Agni-Śoma and Agni-Sviṣṭakṛt for shaping the three eyes and mouth of Agni (53-59). The Smārta saṃskāras from conception to marriage, which are

prescribed for the twice-born castes are held for Agni and represented through oblations (60-64). The parents of Agni are worshipped and infused into oneself after the fifth saṃskāra, viz., Nāmakaraṇa (65). The tongues, their deities etc. as induced and worshipped earlier are also given oblations (66). Ghee is taken into the sruva, poured into the sruk and covered with the sruva. The performer of the rite stands erect and quiet and makes ten oblations with the mantras of Agni and Vighneśvara (Gaṇeśa). This is called the mouth of Agni (67-69).

Agni is now worshipped as the deity who has descended into the fire. Twenty-five oblations are made into the mouth of Agni. This is called the merging of the mouths (*vaktrai-kīkaraṇa*, 70-71). Through another series of eleven offerings the merger of the arteries (*nāḍīsandhāna*) takes place (72-73). After this the fire is taken to all the kuṇḍas where other priests make offerings (74-76).

The principal Agni affairs end here. After this the Ācārya performs the 'purifications of the six-ways' comprising grade (*kalā*), theory (*tattva*), region (*bhuvana*), word (*pada*), letter (*varṇa*) and mantra. These are thought of in the feet, genital, navel, heart, forehead and the crown of head of the disciple. Touching those one by one with a bunch of kuśagrass the Ācārya offers eight oblations and thus resorbs (*vilayaṃ nayet*, 96) the ways in Śiva in the crown of head, and then creates them again by effecting the reverse order of the process. Then the Ācārya's consciousness is made to devolve upon the disciple (78-97).

After that the completion-offering is made and the deity is brought from the fire to a jar already kept there for the purpose. The fire-ritual is concluded with the utterance of the Mahāvyaḥṛtis⁹ accompanied by oblations. The fire is united with the performer of the rite and is sprinkled upon. The paridhi-sticks are burnt (98-100).

2. Underlying idea

(a) *General remarks* : Only a summary of the description of the ST has been given above. What the various items of

the ritual signify is obtainable partly from the verses concerned and also from other parts of the text as well as from the commentary. Even from the summary it is not difficult to see that the birth of Agni is accomplished in the rite. However, the whole thing, as presented here, is different from the Agnyādheya in every respect—structure, basic theory, purpose and *modus operandi*.

In the Vedic rite the basic myth was one of the union of Agni with the cosmic waters for his own creation and subsequent universalisation. Here in the Agnijanana it is a different thing. The basic theory, as obtainable from the Padārthādarśa and also other philosophical works, consists of the conjoint principles of creation—Śiva and Śakti, called Vāgīśvara and Vāgīśvari and not Agni and the waters or what they symbolise in the Vedas. Moreover, the Tantric idea is not a myth according to the sense proposed earlier (Introd. 2e)—Śiva and Śakti being distinct metaphysical concepts.¹⁰ For this reason while the symbolism of Agni pertains mainly to the ritual and is clear, no mythological counterpart is evident. The said structural difference also proceeds from this. In the absence of a myth of the primeval birth and universalisation of Agni, the placing of Agni in the kuṇḍa has a different meaning and a different position in the sequence of items.

However, although the underlying sense here is generally clearer than in Vedic mythology (see below), the imagery of human reproduction continues to exist very prominently in the Tantric ritual and is dramatised consistently and more minutely than in the Agnyādheya where the imagery is partially ruined due to apparent obliviousness.

(b) *Different arrangement : analogy of reproduction* : The most significant features of the structure of the Tantric fire ritual are that, unlike in the Agnyādheya, (1) there is no prominent ceremonial meant for the generation of fire although the idea of the birth of Agni appears prominently with a different significance ; (2) the generation of fire that is to say its flaring up in the kuṇḍa does not take place simultaneously with the birth of Agni which is represented through certain

oblations ; (3) the placing of the fire in the kuṇḍa takes place not after but before the birth of Agni.

A fire is first brought from the house of a Śrotriya or is produced by sun-stone. This is not the ritual generation of fire. Cf. JS. XV. 58^{cd}-59^{ab} where it is clearly stated that the fire is brought for the production of fire. "First having brought some forest-fire produced by a sun-stone for the generation of Fire from Śakti belonging the Bhagavant.. "

This fire is subsequently placed in the kuṇḍa. But unlike in the Agnyādheya, this is a pre-natal affair for the yet-to-be-born Agni. The significance of the placing of the fire in the kuṇḍa is indicated by the following. Vāgīśvarī is thought of as at the end of her period and as united with Vāgīśvara. These mean Śakti and Śiva.¹¹ The kuṇḍa represents the body of the Goddess and the fire the seed of Śiva. "The fire is to be placed in the womb of the Goddess as the seed of Śiva." (ST. V. 16). This is undoubtedly *ādhāna*. The Vāyaviya Saṃhitā¹² actually uses the root *ā dhā*—*vahnibijaṃ samuccārya tv ādadhītāgnim āsane yonimārgeṇa...* . But this is *garbhādhāna*, i.e., the conception of Agni by the Goddess.

The Samayāntara as cited in the SAT¹³ is quite explicit. After the fire is placed the performer of the rite "should meditate upon God in the form of fire and as held by the uterine tube." The Padārthādarśa on ST. V. 16 cites a verse from some Saṃhitā which states that one should think of Agni as born through the worldly reproductive properties of his parents.

These show that in spite of some apparent similarity between the imagery in the Agnyādheya verse 'O Goddess Aditi, in your lap do I place Agni...' (uttered during the placing of the fire) and the imagery in the Tantric rule, 'The fire is to be placed in the womb of the Goddess', the former one accompanies a post-natal act while the latter one intends to arrange for the ensuing birth of Agni.

Similar ideas are found also in the Vaiṣṇava Tantras. For example, according to the Jayākhya Saṃhitā (XV. 51-58^{ab}) Śakti is first invoked into the kuṇḍa, and then the fire is placed in the kuṇḍa. The JS mentions this as the union of Agni,

thought to be God, with the Goddess (XV. 74) and also speaks of the eventual entrance of the seed into the womb of the Goddess (XV. 132^{cd}-133^{ab}).¹⁵

After this the fire is made to flare up in the kuṇḍa. This is the ritual production of fire, but as shown below the birth of Agni takes place even afterwards.

It is not only Agni's birth which is represented in the ritual, the whole course of his development from conception to marriage is dramatised. Each stage of the development is represented by one or more ghee-oblations. First take place certain pre-natal acts like the shaping of the eyes and mouth of Agni; these are followed by the three pre-natal Smārta saṃskāras namely Garbhādhāna,¹⁶ Puṃsavana and Simantonnayana. After this the Jātakarman takes place. This is Agni's birth. This includes the cutting of the cord connecting the mother and the baby (*nālāpanayana*) and also the ritual purification of Agni's birth. The *nālāpanayana* is done with five oblations. This is followed by Nāmakaraṇa—'Name-giving'. Agni is given a name like Kṛṣṇāgni, Durgāgni, Nārāyaṇāgni¹⁷ etc. according to the name of the deity of choice. Then the other saṃskāras upto marriage (or death in abhicāra-practices) follow.¹⁸

(c) *Purpose and modus operandi*: The Nāmakaraṇa or Name-giving ceremony is a clear indication of what the birth of Agni means. The deity of choice (*iṣṭadeva*) which means God as understood by the performer of the rite is made to descend into the fire. The point is quite clear also in the Jayākhyā Saṃhitā. According to this, after all the ten Saṃskāras have been performed the performer of the rite should think of fire as Nārāyaṇa (JS. 149^{cd}-150).

Agni is 'born' as God not only in the kuṇḍa but also in the Ācārya who is to initiate the disciple. The orientation of the rite to that end is evident first in the fact that when the fire is placed in the kuṇḍa the fire in the body, external terrestrial fire and fire in the material basis of creation co-existent with Śiva and Śakti (*baindava vahni*)¹⁹ are thought of as one (ST. V. 13). That the fire is placed in the kuṇḍa after being moved in the

direction of the performer of the rite (ST. V. 16^{ab}) also seems to facilitate that. The *nyāsas*, too, mean that Agni in his various aspects is induced into the body of the worshipper. 'The merger of the mouths' and the 'merger of the arteries' (*vaktraikikaraṇa* and *nāḍīsandhāna*, ST. V. 70-73)²⁰ mean the accomplishment of the said identity between God, fire and the performer of the rite. Cf., ST. V. 71, 'he should cause unity of self with the fire and the deity'. The *Padārthādarśa* gives the following citation from the *Śaivāgama* in the commentary to the said verse : 'The merging of mouths into the mouth of the deity is unity.' The same commentary explains the *nāḍīsandhāna* (ST. V. 72) as the 'merging of the arteries of Fire, God and self'. There is another citation in the *Padārthādarśa* to that effect in this connection : *svakāṃ brahmamayīm mūrtim sañcintyāgnau pratāpayet.*²¹

In the *Jayākhyā Saṃhitā* the verses enjoining the establishment of this identity are corrupt, but the sense is more or less clear : JS. XV. 151-152^{ab}, *tatra tajjanitaṃ (?) kuṇḍāj jvālāmārgena cāgatām/parānandaprakāśābhāṃ nāsikyā (?) dvādaśavadhi|| tato 'vatārayogena praviṣṭāṃ bhāvayed dhṛdi |*

This establishment of identity is not for the sake of extending the *vṛddhi* of Agni to the *Ācārya* as it is in the *Agnyādheya*. On the contrary it looks like a ritual enactment of what is theoretically stated in the *Mahāyānaśraddhotpādaśāstra*,²² according to which the Ideal manifests itself as the *Nirmāṇakāya* for the benefit of common disciples. Under the same principle God descends upon the person of the *Ācārya* to initiate the disciple into the path of salvation. In ST. I. 3 *gurus* are said to be of the nature of God. '...I hold the *gurus* on my head, who are of the nature of Śiva...' For this reason, when the *Guru* sees the disciple and exercises the act of purification upon him, he does it as a divine being and then makes higher consciousness extend to the disciple. Cf., ST. V. 78^{cd}-79^{ab}, "Having observed him (i.e. the disciple) with a divine look, the *guru* should purify the ways, after uniting that consciousness (placed) in the lotus of the heart with himself" ; again, ST. V. 97, "The *guru* while observing that child

with a divine look, should employ that consciousness, (so long) placed within himself, into the disciple.”

It is needless further to explain the fundamental difference between the entrance of Agni into the sacrificer for the extension of *vṛddhi* in the *Agnyādheya* and the *ekikaraṇas* of the Tantras aimed at adding the signs of divine grace to the act of initiation.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. For the dates see TCC, pp. 66 and 67.
2. See *Kashmir Shaivism* by J. C. Chatterji, p. 26a for the date of Utpalācārya ; and M. J. Bakshi's *Upodghāta* in the ST for the date of Rāghavabhaṭṭa and other information.
3. B. Bhattacharya (Foreword, JS, p. 34) places the work in the 5th century A. D.
4. Unless otherwise noted the references in parentheses are to the ST. Where only the verse-number is shown the 5th chapter of the ST is to be understood.
5. Literally the words mean the Mistress of Speech and the Lord of Speech. They mean Śakti and Śiva—the two conscious principles behind creation. See ST 1.1. where Śiva is described as *vācām ādhiṣam* and also the *Padārthadarśa* on the same.
6. The mantra-endings *namaḥ*, *svāhā*, *vaṣat*, *hum*, *vaṣat* and *phaṭ* are called *jātis*. See Rāghavabhaṭṭa on ST. IV. 33, 34.
7. Sticks encircling the *kuṇḍa*. See the *Śrautapadārthanirvacana*, Vishwanath Shastri, p. 13 ; three girdles (*mekhalā*) are raised just outside each edge of the *kuṇḍa*.
8. See ST. III. 94-105.
9. *bhūḥ*, *bhuvah* and *svar*.
10. For these terms see G. N. Kaviraj in the *Princess of Wales Sarasvati Bhavana Studies*, Vol. X, 21 ff and also *Tantra o agamashastrer digdarshan*, 1 ff.
11. See n. 5 above.
12. Cited in commentary to ST. V. 16.
13. SAT. ch. XVIII ; p. 314,
14. This is one of the mantras of the *Sarparājñī* formula (TS. I. 5.3) uttered during the placing of the fire according to *Āpś V. 11. 7*, for which also see III. 5a above.

15. See n. 16 below.

16. Garbhādhāna means conception. But the actual conception of Agni took place earlier with the placing of the fire in the kuṇḍa (ST. V. 16, JS. XV. 74). The present Garbhādhāna is to be understood as the ritual purification of the secular act. The Garbhādhāna ceremony has two sides—the secular act and also the religious, ritual solemnisation of the same (see *Hindu Saṃskāras*, R. B. Pandey, 84 ff). The anomaly in the Agnijanana regarding these, perhaps, rises on account of the difficulties involved in the simultaneous ritual dramatisation of the secular act and its religious solemnisation.

JS. XV. 74 understands the placing of the fire in the kuṇḍa as only the union of Agni and his Śakti, *kuṇḍamadyasthayā cātha śaktyā nārāyaṇā-khyayā / nāsāgreṇa tam agniṃ ca ghrātaṃ dhyāyet svahr̥dgatam //* But the Garbhādhāna saṃskāra which takes place later is different from this. Its characteristic features are distinctly told in JS. XV. 132^{cd}-133^{ab}, *śrikukṣi-kuhare yad vai bahiṣṭhasya praveśanam / garbhādhānaṃ tu tad viddhī saṃskāraṃ prathamam mune /*

17. See Rāghavabhaṭṭa on ST. V. 60-64.

18. The saṃskāras are mentioned in just five verses (V. 61-65) in the ST without much details. The explanations and the details given here are obtainable mainly from the commentary.

19. For *bindu* as primordial matter see G. N. Kaviraj in *Tantra o-agamashastrer digdarshan*, 1 ff. The Padārthādarśa cites two views : *binduḥ prasiddhaḥ ; paramātmarūpaḥ tasyāgnīśomatvāt, tadbhavo vahnir bāindavaḥ ; anye bindur bhrūmadhyam iti vadanti* (on ST. V. 13).

20. See IV. 1 supra.

21. On ST. V. 46 ; source not mentioned. This explains the purpose of heating the ghee-pot.

22. See Dipak Bhattacharya, *Journal of Research*, Visva Bharati, I., 1976-77, pp. 45-50.

CHAPTER FIVE

RETROSPECTION

1. The essential difference between archaic and higher religious ideology

As if by a circular journey we have come back to the point which Vedic mythology started with. The proto-Ṛgvedic myth of the universal motherly waters looks partially revived in the Tantras around 1000 A.D. which dramatise human reproduction, or better an imagery of human reproduction, in the remodelled fire-ritual of the Tantraśāstra. One is now forced to examine the value of Coomaraswamy's¹ remarks that it is not so much by its bewildering variety as by its monotony that the panorama of Indian mythology, ritual and art impresses us.

So far as mythology and ritual are concerned, the observation does not seem to be correct. Coomaraswamy took *jātavidyā* to have been the fundamental theme of Indian mythology and ritual. By *jātavidyā* (occurring in RV. X. 71.11) he understood the 'Beginning of All-Things'. This is undoubtedly the general subject-matter of Vedic mythology and ritual. The same is true for many other ancient societies, Greece for instance. Cf., Griswold :²

"Thus the Vedic thinkers were concerned at once with the origin of the gods (*devānām jānam*, X. 72.1) after the manner of the Theogony of Hesiod, and with the origin of things (*jātavidyā*, X. 71.11) after the manner of the early Ionic School. In other words, the philosophy of the Ṛig-Veda was a cosmology (also cosmogony, D.B) described in terms partly mythological and partly philosophical. The following points of contact with Greek philosophy may be noticed in passing. The place of *Kāma* 'love' in the Creation-hymn (X. 129.4) reminds us of Eros in the Theogony (v. 120) of Hesiod. The use of *vana* 'forest' and *vrkṣa* 'tree' with reference to matter as the building material of the universe (X. 81.4) is exactly the same as that of the Greek *ule*. The conception, too, of the original element as water (vid. X.

125.7 ; 72. 6-7 ; 121. 7-9 ; 190.2 ; 129.1, 3) reminds one of the theory of Thales and also of the similar view of the Hebrews.”

It is notable that in both societies the earliest thought pertained to becoming. And also according to the definition proposed earlier (Introd. 2e) a myth can be only a theory of becoming. Hence *jātavidyā* with the explanation of cosmic and microcosmic becoming was the ontology of archaic thought and, in its ancient-most phase, it took recourse to the language of myth.

But even the *Agnyādheya* with the incorporation of the *Daśahotṛ* formula foreshadows the eventual arrangement of rituals after *mokṣavidyā*—soteriology. In the ST this arrangement is complete.

It cannot, of course, be denied that in the Tantras *mokṣavidyā* is incomplete without *jātavidyā*. For instance, the model of the beginning of all things in the *Śiva-Śakti* complex finds reflection in the descent of God into the fire understood as the birth of Agni. But the main purpose of this representation of becoming is, unlike in the *Agnyādheya*, not *vṛddhi* but salvation.

Secondly, there is another new type of *jātavidyā* in the *Tantraśāstra* which does not relate to the beginning of all things. The extension of divine consciousness to the person of the disciple through the purification of ways⁹ means that it is not only Agni and through him the cherished deity that are born in the fire-ritual, the ritual means also a palingenesis for the disciple. Hence the term *śiṣu* is used for him in some verses describing some of the final ceremonials of the *Dikṣā* (ST. V. 94, 97, 104, 107). But this palingenesis is not coincident with Agni's birth ; it is accomplished through the purification of ways. This act consists of the enactment of the resorption-creation process. The disciple's profane existence is first destroyed by resorption and then he is created again, that is to say a new life is given to him. As such the disciple gets initiation from God through the *Ācārya*.

How can one ignore the element of *mokṣavidyā* in these.

This triumph of soteriology effects a reversion of the ideo-

logy of myth—a change from the ideology of worldly becoming to that of spiritual becoming away from the world. Coomaraswamy's emphasis on the continuous existence of myth in India's culture ignores the said historical transition to soteriology as the prevailing ideal.

This suggests that the mere re-appearance of an idea after a long gap—like the one of human reproduction in the Tantric ritual—does not mean unchangeability but may hide change of purpose.

The re-appearance, however, is interesting and calls for explanation. Many scholars including Coomaraswamy would find here traces of matriarchal modes of thought.⁴ However, the Tantric cult discussed above is not neolithic and consists of every element of higher religion. As to how the archaic forms of thought could survive in higher religion in advanced conditions of society, the theory of acculturation has been upheld by certain scholars.⁵ Very ancient societies still live in the periphery of Indian civilisation. It is true that they had been numerous in ancient and medieval India and that their absorption into the central stream of Indian society has left its trace in the acceptance of cults with traces of thought which could prevail only in matriarchal societies.

But this cannot mean that the Tantric cult is neolithic. For, as the evidence of the early Vedic religion shows, soteriology is a product of an advanced stage of society in India. It could not have existed in the neolithic stage. And soteriological re-interpretation of the syncretised archaic rituals and thoughts is clearly evident in the *Tantrasāstra*.

Hence whatever be the form of the post-Vedic ritual, its consciously effected soteriological re-interpretation makes it essentially different from any archaic myth-ideology—Vedic or extra-Vedic.

2. Some theories on myth and symbol

The non-idealistic approach of the present work might already have given some idea of our estimate of Coomaraswamy, and other idealistic interpreters of myth and symbolism.

Aurobindo's interpretation of the external ritual as an expression of inner sacrifice was evidently influenced by later views which undermined the external sacrifice against the inner one. Secondly, most of the idealistic interpreters regard Vedic thought as static, once-for-ever-made, without beginning and end, and ideologically uninfluenced by contemporary social movements. But the realities of the transition from the Vedic culture to the Classical civilization of India make it essential to distinguish between the archaic and soteriological stages, the symbol and the imagery. The first and the third elements invariably give way to the second and the fourth ones with the transition of society from proto-history to history.

* * *

There are many points of similarity between dream and myth. Their structural similarity is easy to establish. A series of fantastic imageries appears in both without any apparent logical connection. AVP II. 6 (AVŚ. II. 1) is a handy illustration.⁶ The poem begins with the picture of an indistinct station with some association with word ; this is replaced by a speckled cow yielding milk which changes itself into this world, and a host of women greeting the sun. Some Vena appears momentarily as a teacher, the poet travels around the world and sees something with some association with fire ready to be placed in. "Dramatic events happen which are impossible in a world governed by the laws of time and space",⁷ and the oldest creations of man reveal similarity with the products of our creativeness during sleep.

Myth resembles dream also by its symbolic language. Now, Freud⁸ finds only things of genetic nature represented in obscure symbols. The purpose is to hide the sex-content of the thought in sleep. "Dreams employ this symbolism to give a disguised representation to their latent thought". And this theory applies to myth too. "When one has familiarised oneself with the extensive employment of symbolism for the representation of sexual material in dreams, one naturally asks oneself whether many of these symbols have not a permanently established

meaning,... In this connection it should be noted that symbolism does not appertain especially to dreams, but rather to the unconscious imagination, and particularly to that of the people, and it is to be found in a more developed condition in folklore, myths, legends, idiomatic phrases, proverbs, and the current witticisms of a people than in dreams."

This assessment of symbolism as a disguised expression of inhibited sex-impulsed thought is only partial. The myths of Chapter II above leave nothing to doubt that Freud's understanding is far from sufficient. Could scientifically studied Vedic symbolism come to be compared with dream-symbolism, psycho-analysis would have been more fruitful for humanity than it has been.

The next noted psychologist to compare dream and myth, namely, C. G. Jung,⁹ had strong idealistic inclination. As with Coomaraswamy, with Jung too this idealism manifests itself in the failure to distinguish between soteriologically contemplated symbol-stories and pre-soteriological myths. Jung lacks not only in life, but also in science.

Eric Fromm¹⁰ stands on firmer ground in that he accepts symbolic language as capable of expressing any kind of thought, sexual and non-sexual. Fromm demonstrates this by the examination of certain famous themes: the Oedipus myth "as an attack against the victorious patriarchal order by the representatives of the defeated matriarchal system"; the Babylonian myth of Marduk killing Tiamat as a report of the victory of patriarchy over matriarchy; the story of Little Red-Cap as "a story of triumph by man-hating women, ending with their victory"; the Biblical Sabbath as symbolizing "man's victory over time". Fromm's interpretation of the Sabbath seems to have subjective elements; but about the other three themes he demonstrates that his approach stands on realistic grounds and historical principles.

Fromm is only a beginning. Far more penetrating analysis of rituals as well as the difficult task of defining the different stages in the development of direct thought from symbolism is necessary. It is also necessary to estimate properly the differ-

ence between the various categories of symbols : symbolic acts-like rituals, archaic tangible symbols and bio-morphic imageries in pre-classical literature, concrete imagery-symbols like icon, and finally, the end of literary symbolism in the ornate literature of the Classical period.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. *RLB.*, p. 20 above.
2. *Brahman*, p. 31.
3. *adhvavīśodhana*, ST. V. 78-79, 97 etc. See IV. 2c. above.
4. *NAV*, p. 2 ; Cf., Conze in *BTI*, p. 271, f.n. Also see n. 5 below.
5. For a general survey see S. K. Chatterji in *HCIP. I*, 159 ff ; for a reserved appreciation of the idea, Gonda, *Change and continuity in Indian religion*, 13 f : Also C. H. Chakravarti in *TCC*, pp. 45-46 ; D. P. Chattopadhyay *Lokayata darshan*, ch. III ; D. D. Kosambi, *MRK*, ch. III ; and 'Living prehistory in India' in the *American Review*, XII. 1, 39 ff. etc. The term acculturation has been used only by Kosambi (*MRK*, p. 109, *Amer. Rev.* XII. 1, p. 41) among the said scholars. Assimilation, compromise and syncretism or synthesis of culture are more popular terms (S. K. Chatterji, *HCIP*, I, 160, 166 etc.). Acculturation, as understood by Kosambi, is a two-way traffic—adoption of the local cult into the main society and the diffusion of advanced techniques into the local societies which thus merge into the main body. *MRE*, ch. IX. notes similar phenomena in Europe.
6. II. 9 above.
7. Fromm, *The forgotten language*, p. 6.
8. *The interpretation of dreams*. All the citations occur on pp. 333-34.
9. *Psychology and religion : West and East*, passim.
10. *The forgotten language*, ch. VII.

APPENDIX*

Reconstruction of AVP. V. 2 : MS variants and signs used

Explanation of signs : —below words indicates doubt ;
+ indicates reconstruction from readings
corrupted in all the MSS

Variants

1. Or. ... rāṣṭrety ... var. bhūminiṣṭau...śriṇanti...dhāsyau
K. yaṃ ... rāṣṭrayaty ... bhūminaṣṭhau ... suruca ...
śrṇvantu prathamassu dhāsyuḥ.
2. Or. ... yajñānaṃ ... āvaha ... ; K. vrahmā ... śimataḥ...
vudvyā upamāṃsa viṣṭhā ... assataś ca ...
3. Or. ... yajñe ... ūcāt ... adhi ... ; K. prā ... vidvā
... viśvāṃ devā ... uścā svadhayābhi ... ; also no
'brahma' in c.
4. K. jitaḥ ... vudhnyārāṣṭra ... bhyakraṃ.
5. See the main discussion.
6. Or. mahi .. janiṣṭhā dhā dvimanto vi vasant ariprāḥ ;
K. ... sa hi pṛthivyā ṛceṣṭhā mayi kṣāmaṃ bhrajasī ...
āryaś chakraṃ ... dhaniṣṭhā dhā bhyamanto ... ariprā.
7. K. yathāvā ... manasā vodatsva ... januṣyā dhatasyāgre
... devāṃ adhabhāyus svadhāva ; Or. ... acha.
8. Or. mūrdhā ... abo ... K. ... vāsanti ... bhinnad
... vimṛdordariti kanikradati gā svar apo jighāya.

*Cs. pp. 115-117.

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Aitareya Āraṇyaka
AB	Aitareya Brāhmaṇa
ABORI	Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute
AEV	Aspects of early Viṣṇuism (Gonda)
AGS	Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra
Aps/Āpś	Āpastamba Śrautasūtra
Aśv	Āśvalāyana Śrautasūtra
ASS	Anandasram Sanskrit Series
AV	Atharvaveda
AVP	Atharvaveda Paippalādasamhitā
AVP (Bh)	AVP, ed. D.M. Bhattacharya
AVŚ	AV, Śaunakiya
BIP	The beginnings of Indian philosophy (Edgerton)
BRV	La religion védique (Bergaigne)
BRVP	Paranjpe's translation of BRV
BS	Brahmasūtra
BŚS	Baudhāyana Śrautasūtra
BTI	Buddhist thought in India (Conze)
BU	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad
CU	Chāndogya Upaniṣad
ERV	Epithets in the Ṛgveda (Gonda)
EVP	Études védiques et pāṇinéennes, (Renou)
GPV	Some observations on the relations between "gods" and "powers" in the Veda, <i>a propos</i> of the phrase <i>sūnuḥ sahasaḥ</i> (Gonda).
GRV	ṚV, Grassmann's German trans.
HCIP	The history and culture of the Indian people, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan
HIL	A history of Indian literature (Winternitz)
HIP	A history of Indian philosophy (Dasgupta)
HOS	Harvard Oriental Series.
HRL	Rituallitteratur (Hillebrandt)

IP	Indian philosophy (Radhakrishnan)
ISIH	An introduction to the study of Indian history (Kosambi)
IT	Indian theogony (Bhattacharji)
IU	Īsopaniṣad
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JB	Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa
JBBRAS	Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society
JS	Jayākhyā Saṃhitā
K	Kashmirian AVP.
KKS	Kapīṣṭhala Kaṭha Saṃhitā
KŚS	Kātyāyana Śrautasūtra
LOV	Lights on the Veda (Kapali Shastri)
MK	Māṇḍūkyakārikās
MRE	Myth and reality (Eliade)
MRK	Myth and reality (Kosambi)
MS	Maitrāyaṇīya Saṃhitā
MU	Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad
MUK	MU with MK
MVR	A Vedic reader for students, (Macdonell)
N	Nirukta
NAV	A new approach to the Vedas, (Coomaraswamy)
NNG	Notes on names and the name of God in ancient India (Gonda)
OBG	On the origin of Brahmin gotras (Kosambi)
OLD	Vedic hymns, II (SBE XLVI) by Oldenberg
OR	Orissa MSS of AVP
ORV	Die Religion des Veda (Oldenberg)
P or Pā	Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī
Pā Dhā	Pāṇiniya Dhātupāṭha
PB	Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa – Tāṇḍyamahābrāhmaṇa
PPR	Poet-philosophers of the Ṛgveda (Kunhan Raja)
QHR	Quarante hymnes du Rig-veda (Bergaigne)
RI	The religions of India (Hopkins)
RLB	The Ṛgveda as land-nāma-bók (Coomaraswamy)
RPVU	The religion and philosophy of the Veda and Upanishad (Keith)

RV	Ṛgveda
RVG	Der Rigveda (Geldner, HOS. 33-35)
SAGS	Studies in ancient Greek society (Thomson)
SAT	Śāktānandatarāṅgiṇī
Sāy	Sāyaṇa
ŚB	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa
SBE	Sacred books of the East
SG	Sanskrit grammar (Whitney)
SBI	Bṛhaspati und Indra (Schmidt)
SKE	Śrautakoṣa, vol. I, English section
ST	Śāradātilaka
SV	Sāmaveda
TA	Taittiriya Āraṇyaka
TB	Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa
TCC	The Tantras—studies on their religion and literature (Chakravarti)
TMB	Tāṇḍya Mahābrāhmaṇa
TS	Taittiriya Saṃhitā
TSK	TS. trans. (Keith)
VID	Vṛtrahā Indra (Dandekar)
VIJ	Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal
VL	Vedic Lectures (Agrawala)
VMA	Veda-Mimamsa (Anirvan)
VMH	Vedische Mythologie (Hillebrandt)
VMK	Vedische Mythologie, Kleine Ausgabe
VMM	Vedic mythology (Macdonell)
VNK	Vedic studies I (Venkatasubbiah)
VS	Vājasaneyi-Saṃhitā
VSGP	Vedische Studien—Pischel, Geldner
VVP	The vision of the Vedic poet (Gonda)

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