

## **THE INDRA CULT AS IDEOLOGY : A CLUE TO POWER STRUGGLE IN AN ANCIENT SOCIETY**

(including a discussion of the semantics of R̥gvedic *ari* and its  
socio-political background)

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**ABBREVIATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY**

(The abbreviated forms are those used in the Notes)

- ABORI : Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona
- Añjali : AÑJALI : Papers on Indology and Buddhism, A Felicitation Volume presented to Oliver Hector de Alwis Wijesekera on his sixtieth birthday, ed. J. Tilakasiri; Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, 1970
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- Mahīdhara : See V. S.
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## I What Lies Behind Ṛgvedic *ari*?

Some years ago the present writer took up a project of writing a dissertation on the secular leadership in the Ṛgveda period. In the process of this work he found his attention constantly drawn to that peculiar Ṛgvedic word *ari* with its characteristically ambiguous sense.<sup>1</sup> The word occurred in numerous contexts which seemed distinctly connected with the subject with which the writer was then concerned.

The problematic nature of the word was already reflected in the oldest Indian commentarial work, the Nirukta of Yāska. This work renders *ari* as (a) an unfriendly person and (b) a potentate (i.e., *foe* and *lord*).<sup>2</sup>

In rendering the word *ari*, modern translators have also found it impossible to be consistent. Thus Geldner frequently uses the German equivalents of nobleman, rich patron, great lord, possessor of power and so on to translate *ari*; but at other times he uses rival, mighty foe, miser, etc. — thus bringing out the double character of the meaning of the word.<sup>3</sup>

In 1938 Paul Thieme, the respected German Indologist, published his famous monograph *Der Fremdling im Rgveda* in which he attempted the task of unravelling the meanings of this word.<sup>4</sup> He argued that if the 'prevalent' senses of the word are so divergent (as e.g., is reflected in the Nirukta comment), then its original significance could not have been either of these widely different meanings but something else from which these meanings should have developed in the course of time. In Thieme's view, that original meaning was *stranger*.<sup>5</sup>

Pondering on the contexts in which *ari* was used, from the point of view of one studying the problems associated with leadership, the present writer became convinced that all was not yet right with the interpretation of this crucial term.

The semantic common denominator for most uses of *ari* in the RV is that of association with wealth.<sup>6</sup> And the regular pattern of the statements regarding the *ari* can best be summed up in the form of a "norm and exception".

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1. F. pp. 5ff. esp. 8-10.

2. Nirukta 5.7. Yāska's explanatory words are *amitra* and *iśvara*, in that order. Yāska was not commenting on the history of the semantics of *ari*; so the order he followed is not material to our discussion. (Nirukta 5.7 Sarup = 5.2.2 of Calcutta ed., p.500)

3. F. pp.8 ff.

4. F. and M.A.

5. F.p.10

6. Mahīdhara on V.S.33.82 : *arya* = *dhanasvāmin*. Cattle constituted the main *dhana* in Vedic times. See also Geldner. Ved.Stud III, 83.

**Norm:** The *ari* has riches (: the source of glory).  
They are to be won from him. Help our *sūris* to win them.<sup>7</sup>  
The *sūri* is the good worshipper and the generous giver, not the *ari*.<sup>8</sup>  
The *ari*'s worship is below par.<sup>9</sup>  
Accept our worship, bypassing the *ari*'s.<sup>10</sup>  
The *ari* gives us trouble and pain, denies us our due.  
Give us aid to stand up to these.<sup>11</sup>

References to the *ari* are normally found in statements like the above ones, in invocations addressed to the Vedic gods, especially Indra.

**Exception :** The few statements that associate the *ari* with conditions contrary to those evident in the above statements constitute the exception.<sup>12</sup> Notably such exceptional statements depict the *ari* as a generous donor or an acceptable worshipper or one who promotes the *sūri* and encourages his liberal ways,<sup>13</sup> but again always as a wealthy man, a possessor of cattle.

To one who reflects on these statements, it would appear that the basic premise on which Thieme built his argument is open to question. After all, if the word carries the meanings *foe* and *lord*, the latter could well have been the original sense. If the chief (: lord) turns out to be hostile for some reason or other, then in the very position of chief he may become the object of one's displeasure and opposition. The one sense (: lord) would be the word's denotation, while the other (: foe) would be one of its significant connotations.

One does not have to go very far to look for similar words in other languages. Take, for example, a word like *capitalist*. Its denotative significance is the same to all, i.e., owner of capital. But its connotations would be distinctly different to communists or socialists on the one hand and to those with another political outlook on the other. To understand the distinction satisfactorily, one has to have an acquaintance with the facts of an ideological situation.

It would seem that *ari* too was such a word - whose true meaning lies hidden in the mist of our ignorance of its "social-political" context : the early tribal chieftaincy pattern and the stresses to which it must have been exposed in the first few centuries of the Aryan presence in India.

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7. See Ch. VII. 3, below.

8. Chh.VI, VII, VIII, below.

9. Ch.VII, below.

10. Ch. VIII. 6.

11. 2.23.12, 4.50.11, 6.59.8, 8.48.8, 9.79.3 etc.

12. Ch.IX below.

13. E.g.1.9.10. 1.126.5, 1.150.1, 4.38.2, 8.1.22.

After all, one of the first creative sociological events in Aryan history in India must have been the change from migratory tribe to the settled tribal state. This could by no means have been such a trifling event, involving as it must have done vast changes in habit, ritual and values. The adaptations called for might not have been palatable to all alike. In the stresses and strains of such a situation, the tribal leadership might have been exposed to certain kinds of opposition.

Thus, if the word *ari* meant 'lord', as the Nirukta would have it, then it would not be surprising that we may have to answer the question, "Did the chief turn out to be a foe, and if so how?" in order to unravel the further complexities of its semantics.

To put our problem in its true perspective, and in order not to overlook or under-estimate its extreme complexity, it is necessary to remember that it is from *ari* that the ethnic designation *ārya* (: Aryan) is derived.<sup>14</sup> This makes it doubly difficult to think that 'stranger' was the original meaning of the word.

And also, we cannot forget the other derivatives of *ari* : *arya* (explained by the Indian grammatical tradition as meaning *master* and *vaiśya*<sup>15</sup>), and *aryaman*, a deity of the Āditya group.

When one studies the usages of *ari*, *arya*, *ārya* and *aryaman* from the perspective of the evolution of leadership, it seems likely that *ari* was an ancient designation for the tribal chief and holder of wealth and that, due to reasons that remain to be clarified, the chief at some point of time became an object of dislike to some among the Aryans themselves.<sup>16</sup> If this was so, it would satisfactorily explain much of the complexity of the semantics of the word.

If we take the meanings given by Yāska as representing the denotative and connotative senses of *ari* as recorded in a tradition worthy of our respect, we could explain the semantic development of the cluster of words concerned somewhat as follows:

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14. F.,p.145. Cf also A. Debrunner, "Zwei altindische Probleme", Indian and Eastern Studies in Honour of F.W.Thomas, Bombay, 1939, p.71.

15. Pāṇini III.1.103

16. These include most of the well known families of Vedic *ṛṣis*. Cf. 1.4.6 (Maducchandaś Vaiśvāmītra); 1.33.3 (Hiraṇyastūpa Āngirasa); 1.70.1, 1.71.3, 1.73.5 (Parāśara Śāktya); 1.81.6/9 (Gotama Rāhūgaṇa); 1.84.1 (Agastya Maitrāvaruṇi); 2.8.2, 2.12.4/5, 2.23.13 (Gr̥tsamada Āngirasa); 4.2.12, 4.46, 4.16.19 (Vāmadeva Gotama); 5.2.12 (Kumāra Ātreya); 6.13.5, 6.6.16.27, 6.25.7, 6.47.9 (Bārhaspatya Bhāradvāja); 7.21.9, 7.34.18, 7.56.22, 7.83.5, 7.92.4, 7.97.9 (Maitrāvaruṇi Vasiṣṭha); 8.21.16 (Sobhari Kāṇva); 8.24.22 (Viśvamanā Vaiyaśva); 8.39.2 (Nābhāka Kāṇva); 8.48.8 (Pragātha Ghaura Kāṇva); 9.23.3 (Kāśyapa/Asita Devala).

*ari* : chief (as holder of wealth and power.)

*arya* : (a) pertaining to an *ari*; having power; chieflike; noble; hospitable.  
(b) pertaining to an *ari*; having wealth; *vaiśya*.

*ārya* : (a) of the community of tribes whose chiefs were *aris*.  
(b) chieflike; noble; elderly.

*aryaman*: god of chieflikeness (whence, of hospitality.)

The second, and in the RV commoner, connotation of *ari* as 'opponent' 'foe', should have evolved long after the above senses were established and should be reflecting later developments in the social, political and religious life of the Aryans which ultimately led to the passage of power from the hands of old-style tribal chiefs to other authorities.

Such changes did take place in fact, as we can conclude from the disuse of significant sociological terms like *viśpati*, *vidatha* etc. And we must always remember that such changes necessarily betoken a turmoil of ideologies and religious views.

But what could the prevalence of both senses, favourable and unfavourable, indicate?

It would seem that this can indicate several things:

- (1) The original meaning of *ari* was not only denotative but also carried connotations of respect and admiration.
- (2) The changes in tribal life due to which the word gathered unfavourable connotations did not take place at once over all the Vedic tribes.
- (3) The favourable references reflect a period of old institutions lingering on until new ones were firmly established.

And a further point to be considered would be whether the 'opponent' sense of *ari* does not signify some of the *functions* of an old Aryan tribal chief : an aggressive culture may have evolved institutions in which the chief by functioning as an opponent could aid the rise of a strong leadership in the respective tribes.

There thus seems to be a clear case for re-opening the investigation of the meaning of R̥gvedic *ari*. It appears that the major point of 'attack' should be an investigation of the political-social implication, which in other words is an inquiry into the evidence of 'ideology' in the R̥gveda Samhitā.



In the very nature of our documents, this evidence is likely to remain concealed in a mythological garb. As an example we may cite what is said about Indra's leadership of the gods when they were threatened by the prospect of Vṛtra's rise to power: the gods *conceded* to Indra the rights of rulership (*kṣatra*), through him to thwart the Dragon's challenge.<sup>17</sup> This seems to mythologize a historical experience of power passing into the hands of 'warlords' from other wielders of power: a shift from a patriarchal to a non-patriarchal arrangement. The mythologizing can be regarded as an attempt to legitimize the shift; in other words it may be viewed as an ideological act.

But since these trends may have arisen more early among some Aryan tribes than among others, it is desirable that we review the R̥gvedic evidence on the major tribes and the conflicts and strains to which they were exposed. We must take particular note of the use of *ari* in the allusions to these conflicts, as also of any comments or hints on the religious (ideological) views of adversaries found in these allusions. In this way we can open an investigation of the political and ideological situations depicted in the Samhitā. Such studies could lead us on to other interesting vistas of inquiry from which perhaps an approach for resolving the *ari* problem may eventually be envisaged.

## II. The Bharatas and their Opponents

### (1)

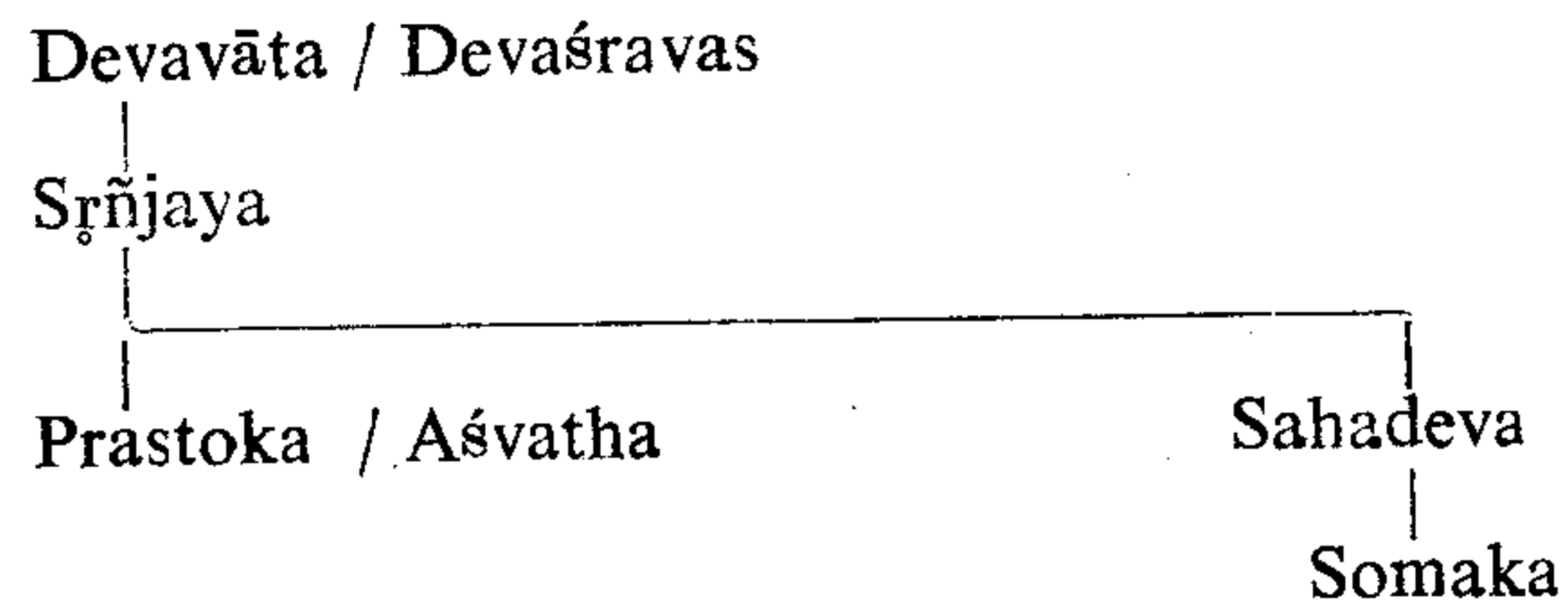
The RV refers to a large number of Aryan tribes or *janas*, but of these only three are mentioned frequently. These are the Bharatas, the Pūrus and the Turvaśas. Naturally, they are also the three that are most important from the historical point of view.

The evidence of the RV shows that there was a series of conflicts between the Bharatas (and/or their allies) with other tribes, including the Turvaśas and the Pūrus (who even made common cause with non-Aryans in order to fight the Bharatas). But ultimately the complex of Aryan *janas* that were active in the region between the rivers Paruṣṇī and Dṛṣadvatī during this period so integrated themselves that the later R̥gvedic hymns would refer to them as the *ārya varṇa* (literally, "the Aryan colour").

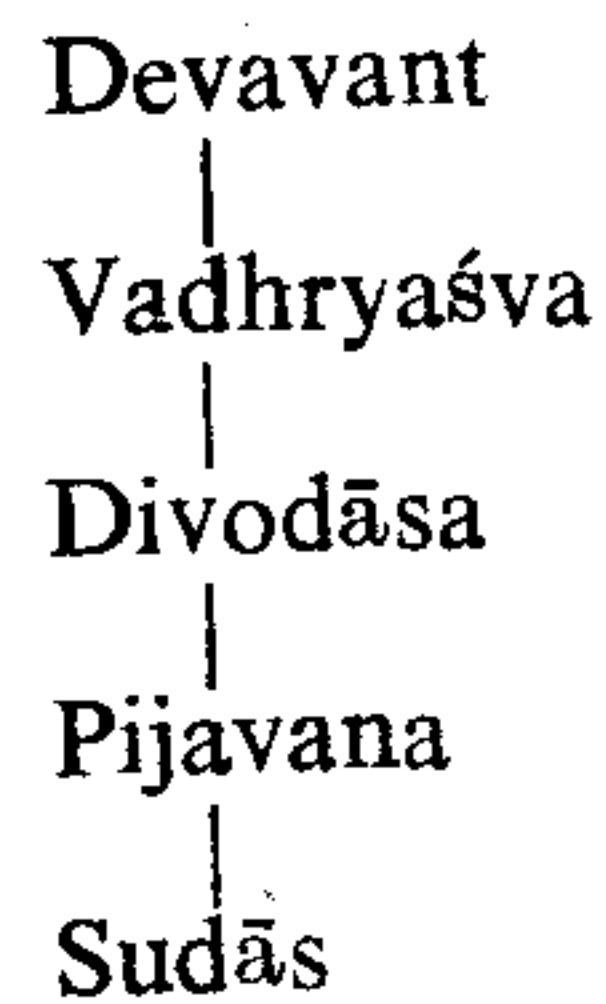
By carefully combining the evidence that is found scattered in various hymns of the RV, it is possible to construct a genealogy of the leading figures of the Bharata tribe that are mentioned in the Samhitā, beginning with Deva-vāta and Devaśravas of RV 3.23. If we link the evidence found in RV 3.23, 4.15, 6.47, we get the following genealogy:

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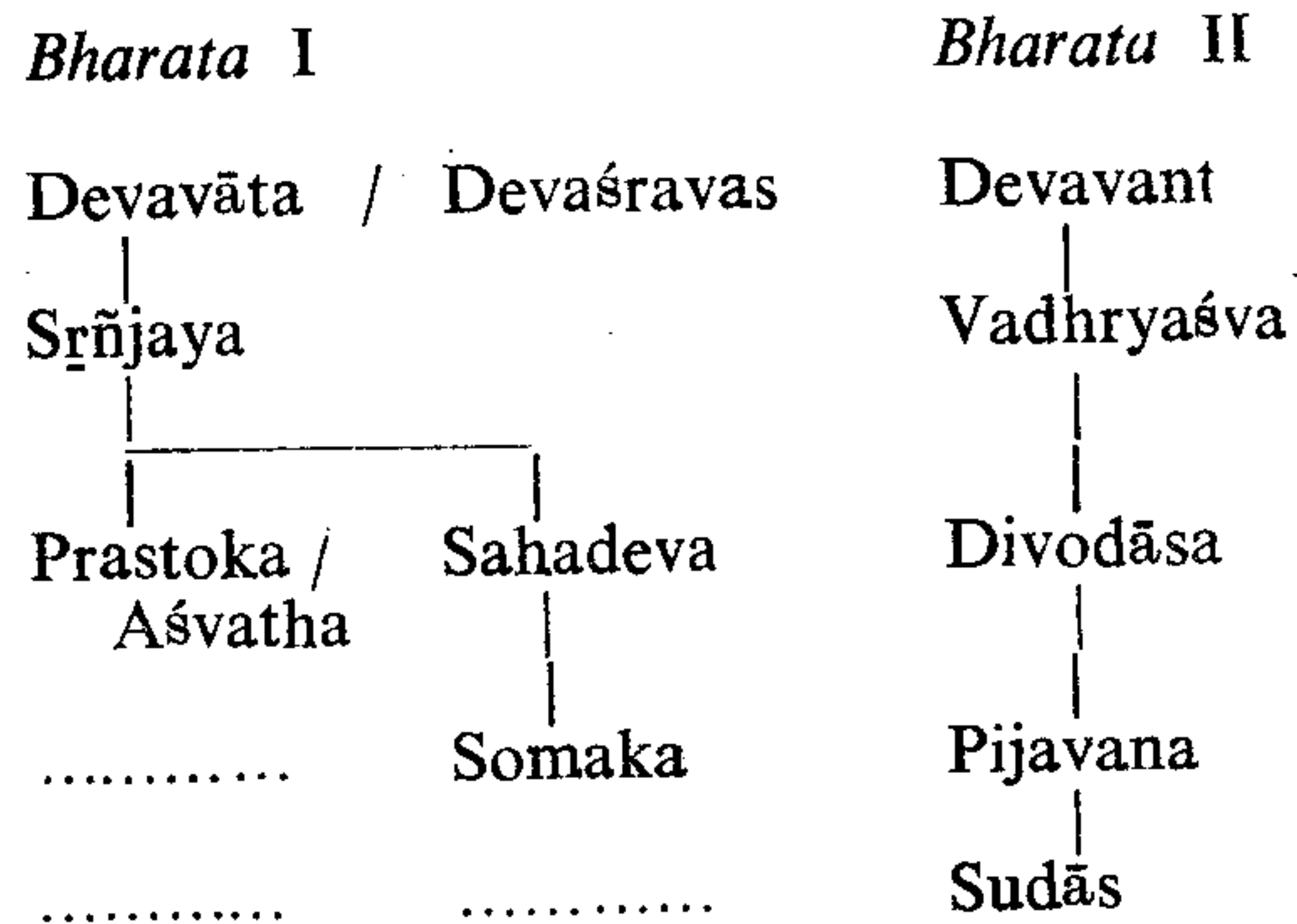
17. Ch. II. 7 below.



Some of the most famous Bharata figures are however not included in this genealogy. Among these is Sudās the Bharata (7.33.3-6 with 7.83.6), descendant of Pijavana (7.18.22/23) and of Divodāsa (7.18.25) and of Devavant (7.18.22). Another scion of this line is Vadhryaśva, the father of Divodāsa (6.61.1). On the basis of the evidence of their relationships, it has been shown<sup>18</sup> that the genealogy of these Bharata chiefs can be thus arranged:



On the strength of the contemporaneity of Prastoka of the first group with Divodāsa of the second — clearly evident from RV 6.47<sup>19</sup> - it is possible to correlate these two genealogies as follows:



Let us briefly review the careers of these five generations of Bharata chiefs with a view to gaining some insights relevant to the interpretation of the *ari* passages of the RV.

18. See C.H.I. p. 272 f. ; Vedic Index, s.v. Devavant.

19. 6.47. 21-25 ; stz. 22 refers to the gifts given by Prastoka and Divodāsa at the end of the battle against Śambara (and 24 those given by Aśvatha) to the Bharadvāja priests.

(a) Devavāta and Devavant

The similarity of the names Devavāta and Devavant is striking, but there is no way to determine their relationship or whether they refer to one and the same person.

The Bharatas at this time were living near the rivers Āpayā, Sarasvatī and Dṛṣadvatī. In RV 3.23 which mentions Devavāta,<sup>20</sup> the emphasis is entirely on the fire ritual conducted near these “holy rivers” (as the later tradition refers to them), and there is nothing to suggest the martial milieu of the entrance phase of Aryan prehistory, or that of the time of later Bharata leaders such as Sṛñjaya, Divodāsa and Sudās. The few notices regarding this period of time do not contain any references to the *ari*.

(b) Sṛñjaya and Vadhryaśva

From our correlated Bharata genealogy it would appear that Sṛñjaya and Vadhryaśva should have been contemporaneous, and it is noteworthy that separate references to them show that they were both placed in essentially a similar state of affairs, namely Bharatas being locked in battle with *Ārya as well as Dāsa* opponents. These opponents are referred to under various names and in various ways: Paṇis (6.61.1), Pārāvatas (which sounds like a nickname meaning “newcomers from a distant land”<sup>21</sup>) (6.61.2); “Dāsa and Ārya foes”<sup>22</sup> (10.69.6) and more interestingly, in the words of 10.69.12, “(enemies) who are unrelated and who are false relations”.<sup>23</sup> R.V. 6.27 refers to the enemies under their tribal as well as family or individual names (:Turvaśa, Vṛcivant, Varaśikha<sup>24</sup> and probably Pārthava); hence it is difficult to determine whether several tribal groups are indicated here.

From the point of view of the study of the word *ari*, it is important to recognize that almost from the start Bharata or pro-Bharata groups in Vedic India appear to have been facing hostility from other Aryan groups. The historicity of these hostilities is also occasionally attested to in later literature<sup>25</sup>; thus, for example, the Vāraśikha clan is considered to be only nominal *kṣatriyas*, in the Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa, because they did not conform to the ideology of the Brahmanistic elite:<sup>26</sup> this agrees with the fact that it was the Sṛñjaya (-Bharata) group that is favoured by the *ṛṣis* in 6.27, as against the Vāraśikhas.

20. *amanthiṣṭām bharatā revad agniṃ | devaśravā devavātaḥ sudakṣam || 3.23.2 ab.*

21. See Vedic Index, *s.v.* Pārāvata (2).

22. *dāsā vṛtrāṇy āryā* - 10.69.6b.

23. *ajāmīṃr uta vā vijāmīn...* (*śardhataḥ*) - 10.69.12 cd.

24. 6.27.4-7.

25. See Vedic Index, *s.v.* Vṛcivant, referring to Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa, XXI 12.8.

26. Bṛhad Devatā V. 126.

The war between Sṛñjaya (son of Devavāta) and the Turvaśas etc. mentioned in 6.27 took place near Hariyūpiyā and is one of the two best known military events referred to in the RV. The Turvaśas certainly were an Aryan tribe.

At the end of the war, the priests who supported the Sṛñjaya group, namely the Bharadvājas, are richly rewarded, obviously with captured booty as is usual after a battle (cf. 6.47.22). Since we learn from one of the stanzas of the hymn (stz. 5)<sup>27</sup> that only a part of the enemy ranks was destroyed, it is natural to expect that the remaining part would try to regain the captured wealth. That this however was impossible owing to the strength of the Sṛñjayas, or of the precautions adopted by them, seems to be the meaning of the statement: "Inaccessible is this gift to the Pārthavas" (6.27.8).<sup>28</sup>

This interpretation of RV 6.27.8 has to be emphasized. According to this, the Pārthavas were the enemies, or at least were among the enemies, of the (Bharata-) Sṛñjaya group. The only other persons who may be linked with the name Pārthava in the RV are Pṛthī/Pṛthu Vena and Vena Pṛthavāna. The former is referred to as an *ari* at 10.148.3,<sup>29</sup> while the latter is mentioned in 10.93 in association with one who is called Rāma, the *asura*.<sup>30</sup>

It seems probable then that the opponents of the (Bharata-) Sṛñjayas of 6.27 were Aryans who may be associated with leaders designated as *ari* and *asura* elsewhere in the Samhitā, Aryans who for some reason were disagreeable to a strong section of the ṛṣi authors of the RV hymns. The adverse reference to Vena in the Manusmṛti<sup>31</sup> and other late works is an indication of this early opposition, which is otherwise unrecorded explicitly.

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27. *han pūrve ardhe, bhīyasā 'parō dart* - 6.27.5d

28. *dūṇāseyam dakṣiṇā pāṛthavānām* - 6.27.8d To translate the line to mean that the gift was of the Pārthavas does not seem to make sense (Cf. Geldner : Kaum zu erreichen ist diese Schenkung der Pārthava's).

29. 10.148.3a refers to the *ari*'s songs (: *aryo girah*) and stz. 5, (lines *ab*), goes on to give a more specific expression to the same. ("Listen, O Indra, to the call of Pṛthī...you will be lauded with Venya's songs" : *śrudhī havam indra...pṛthyāh...stavase venyas-yārkaiḥ*. In treating *aryo gir-*, 10.148.3a = *pṛthyāḥ hava* and *venyasya arka* -, 10.148.5ab, we are in agreement with Geldner).

30. *pra tad pṛthavāne vene pra rāme vocam asure* -10.93.14 ab. The same Pṛthavāna Vena is referred to as a Pārthya at 10.93.15c : *sadyo didiṣṭa pārthyah*.

31. Manu Smṛti VII. 41 and IX. 66-67. This and other later sources regard Vena with disfavour but (his son) Venya with favour. See Manu VII. 42, Viṣṇu Purāṇa 1.13.14. See also Dowson, under PRITHI and VENA and Gonda, Numen 3.i, p.50 and fn 114.

Turning our attention to Vadhryaśva, we note that the hymn which refers to him, RV 6.61, shows that he and his people were living near the river Sarasvatī, but with a noticeable sense of insecurity, owing to the presence of many adversaries.<sup>32</sup>

(c) Prastoka, Aśvatha and Divodāsa

The R̥gvedic evidence on Divodāsa clearly establishes the complex nature of the hostilities that prevailed among the various ethnic and tribal groups of this time. On the one hand we have the clear evidence of RV 6.47 (stanzas 21-25) which speaks of the storming and destruction of the Dāsa stronghold of Śambara by Divodāsa, with the aid of Prastoka and Aśvatha. On the other hand, there is also evidence of hostility between Divodāsa and other Aryans.<sup>33</sup>

A close analysis of RV 6.47 in this respect reveals some interesting facts. 6.47 is the hymn which celebrates Divodāsa's famous victory over Śambara, the Dasyu chief. That the Bharata-s were at this time hard-pressed is obvious from stanza 20: "To a pastureless dwelling have we come, O gods! Constricted has the earth become, wide though she be!"<sup>34</sup> (And this becomes all the more meaningful when we remember that Divodāsa's father was represented as imploring the Sarasvatī, 'killer of them that come from the far distance',<sup>35</sup> not to let the Bharata-s depart from her side to unknown dwellings.<sup>36</sup> Obviously he too was feeling the threat of new enemies close at hand.) In 6.47, the poet's deep trepidation comes to light when he declares: "May not the *ari*'s wealth overpower us!"<sup>37</sup>

Can this reference to the *ari* be to Divodāsa's Dasyu opponents? Or was there also an Aryan foe with whom he had to contend in the struggle that 6.47 highlights - as may conceivably be expected in view of Bharata-Ārya hostilities of the previous generation, and also of the succeeding generations, as we shall soon see?

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32. 6.61 is addressed to Sarasvatī, who is said to have granted Divodāsa to Vadhryaśva as a "redeemer of his debts". Sarasvatī helps, or her help is sought, in crushing Panis, Pārāvatas, insulters of gods (*devanidaḥ*) and haters (*dviṣaḥ*) : stzz 1,2,3,10. Stz. 14 says: "May we not depart from thee to unaccustomed lands" : *mā tvat kṣetrāṇy araṇāni ganma*.
33. 1.53.10, 2.14.7, 6.18.13, 8.53.2 : Divodāsa against Tūrvayāṇa; 7.19.8, 9.61.2 : D against Yadu-Turvaśa. See also Vedic Index, under Tūrvayāṇa.
34. *agavyūti kṣetram āganma devā | urvī satī bhūmīr amhūraṇā bhūt* - 6.47.20ab.
35. *pārāvataḥni*- 6.61.2c. It is interesting to note that the Yadu / Turvaśa, whom Divodāsa opposed, arrived from *parāvat* - 6.45.1 ab.
36. See n. 32 above.
37. *mā nas tārīn...rāyo ayaḥ* - 6.47.9d. The best way to render this line seems to us to be : "Let it not prevail over us - - the *ari*'s treasures", being then a case of anacoluthon, as Geldner rightly observes. Contrast Thieme, F p. 57.

Indeed, one stanza of 6.47 makes this seem extremely likely. This is stanza 19 which asks Indra, the Vedic god of war: "Who will for ever stay on the foeman's side, the more so as (our) heroic princes sit in sacrificial session (to honour the gods)"<sup>38</sup> - which seems to imply that the god's favours were indeed at one time with the foes of the Bharata-s (i.e. they were winning at the latter's expense), but now their sacrificial rites could possibly not be ignored. It is unthinkable that the poet is suggesting here that Indra's favours were won by the Dasyu-s at any time. To us it appears that the poet in 6.47 is not thinking of a Dāsa opponent when he speaks of the *ari* in stz. 9; rather, he is referring to a specific Aryan foe of one of the tribes the Bharata-s had to reckon with from the moment of their appearance in the region around the Sarasvatī.

The hostility between these Aryan groups and Divodāsa is referred to in even less ambiguous form in other allusions. Thus there are references to Divodāsa's discomfiture at the hands of Tūrvayāna. The latter is identified by Macdonell and Keith<sup>39</sup> (on the basis of RV 10.61.1 f.) as a prince of the Paktha-s, whose Aryan identity is not in doubt. Besides this, there is also the important evidence of 7.19.8 which says that Indra, rendering aid to Divodāsa, struck down Yadu and Turvaśa,<sup>40</sup> tribes of the Ārya-s as is quite well known. It is no doubt the same tradition of Bharata-Turvaśa hostility that 9.61.1 and 2 reflect when they say that Indra shattered 99 forts when aiding Divodāsa, and that he destroyed Śambara, Turvaśa and Yadu as well<sup>41</sup>. Indeed it is quite possible to see such statements as references to Dāsa-Ārya collusion against the Bharata-s: this would cause us no surprise if we ponder on what happened in the War of Ten Kings just two generations subsequent to these events. The 3rd and 7th books of the RV clearly indicate the continued harassment of the Bharata-s by Dāsa and Ārya foes, so much so that the tribe became decimated and had thinned "like staves that drove kine"<sup>42</sup>, in spite of the victories of Divodāsa.

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38. *ko viśvāhā dviṣataḥ pakṣa āsata | utāsīneṣu sūriṣu | 6.47.19cd.*

39. Vedic Index, under Tūrvayāna.

40. *ni turvaśam ni yādvaṃ śiśīhy | atithigvāya śaṃsyam kariṣyān 7.19.8cd.*

41. *avāhan navatīr nava -- puraḥ... | divodāsāya śambaram | ...turvaśam yadum || 9.61.1c and 2.* Sāyana adds *vaśam ānaya ca* to complete the sense. Geldner's rendering of 9.61.2 is to be rejected in favour of Sāyana's. That Turvaśa, when mentioned with Yadu, is always Indra's protégé (Geldner, note to 9.61.2c) is not correct, as even Geldner's own translation of 7.19.8 shows.

42. *daṇḍā ived gojanāsaḥ - 7.33.6a.*

(d) Somaka and Pijavana

That Divodāsa's victory over Śambara did not stabilize the Bharata-s' position for a very long time is also proved by the comparative insignificance of the Bharata princes of the generation that immediately followed. The paucity of references to these princes and especially the lack of evidence of their patroncy of celebrated priestly clans gives added significance to what we have already mentioned : the Bharata tribe was steadily growing thin 'like staves that drove kine'.

(e) Sudās

And so at the beginning of his career, we find Sudās, the next Bharata prince, as a *nomadic* plunderer leading a life of incursions and forays aided by an Indra-worshipping *ṛṣi* who takes him across rivers far to the west of what was once the favourite habitat of the Bharata tribe<sup>43</sup>. In other words the reference to Sudās' early wanderings shows that Vadhryaśva's worst fears for the Bharata tribe had indeed been confirmed: they have been forced out of the hospitable lands around the Sarasvatī.

But Sudās appears to have chosen a new *purohita* in place of the Indra-worshipping *ṛṣi* of far-flung fame. This in itself must have been a crucial decision and its significance is worth pondering over - both to Sudās and to Vasiṣṭha, the new *purohita*. Says the text: "Vasiṣṭha became the (king's new) *purohita*, and then did the Tṛtsu tribe spread (far and wide)."<sup>44</sup> The Bharata-s, whose movements had so far been obstructed now gain "free space"<sup>45</sup>. Obviously the short epics of Vasiṣṭha's chaplaincy<sup>46</sup> lay much store on Sudās' wise decision to use the services of so able a priest (and, as it turned out, of so able a strategist, we may say.) Vasiṣṭha himself has not the slightest doubt that it was his chaplaincy that turned the tide for the Bharata tribe. At 7.18.15 he declares that the tribe, "vitalized by Indra, poured forth like released waters"<sup>47</sup> - a simile that draws heavily on the experiences from the Aryans' riverine life and is suggestive of victorious freedom gained after the frustrations of obstructed living. These descriptions which seem to depict the victory of the Bharata-s as an unexpected miracle help us to understand 7.18.17 which says that (in this war) "Indra killed a lioness by means of a ram"<sup>48</sup>.

43. 3.33 refers to Viśvāmitra taking the Bharatas across Vipāś-Śutudrī. 3.53.9 shows that the event is to be related to Sudās' time. So also Geldner, preamble to translation of 3.33. See also Ch. IV 3 below.

44. *abhavac ca puraetā vasiṣṭha | ād it tṛtsūnām viśo aprathanta* - 7.33. 6cd.

45. *urum... ulokam* - 7.33.5d.

46. i.e. 7.18, 7.33, 7.83.

47. *indreṇa veviṣānā āpo na sṛṣṭāḥ...* - 7.18.15 ab.

48. *siṃhyam cit petvenā jaghāna* - 7.18.17b.

Let us now turn our attention to some of the important aspects of the Ten Kings' War in which Sudās emerged as the victor, and which is the highlight of the career of this Bharata prince, one of the few secular chiefs whose fame outlived the R̥gvedic age.

An important aspect of the War of Ten Kings according to RV 7.18 is the clearly unequal distribution of forces in the war. On one side there is the single Tṛtsu (=Bharata) group, while against them stand on the other side the following: Śimyu, Turvaśa, Yakṣu, Matsyas, Bhṛgu, Druhyu, Paktha, Bhālāna, Alina, Viśānin, Pṛśnigu, Anu, Pūru, Aja and Śigru. There are also Vaikarna, Kavaśa and Bheda which appear to be personal names. It is indeed impossible to know exactly how many tribal groups are here involved and so there is no way to say who are the major 'Ten' on account of whom the war gained its famous name.

Why did so many tribes feel impelled to array themselves on one side in opposition to Sudās and the Bharata-s? We must certainly learn the answer to this query if we are to make sense of much that we find obscure in regard to early Vedic tribal life and the struggles that must have prevailed therein.

Whatever that answer is, it is obvious that the Bharata isolation was in great measure due to their violent and plundering habits of which a hint is found in the way they are described in RV 3.33: "cattle-hunters moving in hordes", "whose source of strength was Indra"<sup>49</sup> - expressions which gain in meaning only when we place them in the context of the views of the Indra cult."<sup>50</sup>

In any case, the Bharata-s found themselves badly 'besieged' and "they looked to heaven, like thirsting men, distressed"<sup>51</sup>. Sudās was 'obstructed'<sup>52</sup> and 'surrounded'<sup>53</sup>. The chaplain complains: "the ill-will of (other Aryan?) peoples has arisen against me".<sup>54</sup>

Another significant feature of the war is the characterization of the enemies of the Bharata-s as opponents of (the sacrificial) cult or as men whose fidelity to that cult was suspect. One of the best instances of such depictions

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49. *gavyan grāmaḥ... iṣita indrajūtaḥ* - 3.33.11b. As to what "Indra and his devotees" did to their opponents, see below Ch. IV. 6. Other references to Indra's character (cf. e.g., *paripanthin*-1.103.6c; *muṣāyan*-10.99.5d, *muṣe* 5.34.7a) throw a flood of light on how his devotees would have treated their adversaries.

50. See Ch. IV below.

51. *ud dyām ivet tṛṣṇajo nāthitāsaḥ* - 7.33.5a.

52. *bādhitam* - 7.83.6d

53. *pariyatta* - 7.83.8c.

54. *asthur janānām upa mām arātayaḥ* - 7.83.3c.



is 7.83.7 where the enemies of Sudās are called “ten kings who do not perform sacrificial rites”.<sup>55</sup> Another is 7.18.16 where they are described as “the party that is without Indra, that drinks the cooked libation” (i.e. who are not Soma-drinkers=Soma offerers).<sup>56</sup>

These expressions help us somewhat in understanding the remarkable statement at 7.18.19 which says that (the river) Yamunā and the Tr̥tsu-s (=Bharata-s) rendered aid (in this war) to Indra<sup>57</sup> -which seems to be an inversion of the usual R̥gvedic assertion that it is Indra who gives aid and protection to his devotees in war. It looks as though the poet’s feeling was that on this occasion the very worship of Indra was at stake, that the river and the god’s devotees insured the defeat of those at whose hands there was actually a threat to the faith.

These unequivocal indications of non-(or slender) adherence of the foes of Sudās to the Indra cult are supported by several other references in these hymns which depict them as distinctly of an unacceptable condition in matters of cult and worship. Thus the Pūru chief at 7.18.13 is described as one “who uses mis-spoken (?) utterances in the *vidatha*”.<sup>58</sup> It would seem that it is at least this very quality of ritual ineffectiveness that other expressions of a similar nature in 7.18 highlight (e.g. “vain utterances”.....“evil thoughts”... “futile words” - in stanzas 5,8, and 9)<sup>59</sup>. A not insignificant epithet in 7.18, applied to a foe of Sudās, is “measuring out meanly”<sup>60</sup> in stanza 15 - one that seems to emphasize the enemies’ rejection of the ethic of liberality: always a cherished quality in a true prince who follows the dictates of the cult as portrayed by the Vedic seers.

But it must be emphasized that the hymns in question do not portray the enemies of Sudās as irrevocably outside the boundaries of Vedic worship, in spite of their being called non-sacrificers in 7.83. This subtle distinction seems to us to be of vital significance. The evidence is that this distinction was indeed intended. We get this impression basically through the strange but unequivocal statement found at RV 6.83.6 where Vasiṣṭha says that when the gods aided Sudās who was besieged by the ten kings, “men of both sides” invoked the aid of Indra and Varuṇa.<sup>61</sup> We view this of course in conjunction with the other statements discussed above. What those other statements say may actually be not that the enemies of Sudās did not perform sacrifice, but that in the eyes of Vasiṣṭha their ritual for some reason was not acceptable

55. *daśa rājānaḥ...ayajyavaḥ* - 7.83.7a.

56. *ardham...śtapām anīndram* - 7.18.16a.

57. *āvad īndram yamunā tr̥tsavaś ca* - 7.18.19a.

58. *vidathe mṛdhravācam* - 7.18.13d. Patañjali insists that one should pronounce one’s words exactly in ritual acts (Mahābhāṣya, p.28). From Śatapatha Br. 3.2.1.13 we learn that the Asuras did not do just this, and Śatapatha 6.8.1.14 calls the Pūrus *asura-rakṣas*.

59. *aśastīh* - 7.18.5d ; *durādhyah* 8a ; *vadhriṅvācaḥ* - 9d.

60. *prakalavin mimānāḥ* - 7.18.15c, on which cf. Geldner’s translation ; “die kleinlich zumessen” and his note thereto: “D.h. die gegen Götter und Sänger geizig sind”.

61. *yuvāṃ havanta ubhayāsaḥ...yatra...sudāsam āvatam* - 7.83.6ab.

as a true form of worship of the gods. These aspects of the minutiae of religious differences discernible in these statements should properly be the subject of a study in themselves. At this juncture they only serve to highlight to us that a large segment of the adversaries of the Bharata-s were Aryans of a religious persuasion that was dissimilar yet not wholly different from that which the great ṛṣi-s espoused: it may be that other factors (political? sociological?) tended to show up these differences in an exaggerated form.

That Sudās' foes were both Ārya and Dāsa is explicitly declared. RV 7.83.1 says: "Slay the Ārya foes and also the Dāsa; aid Sudās, O Indra, Varuṇa!"<sup>62</sup> And at 7.18.7 the treasures the Tr̥tsu-s (= Bharata-s) won are said to be the Ārya's (possessions): "He who is our companion at the Soma draught brought the Ārya's (possessions) of cattle to the Tr̥tsu-s. With war has he come unto men."<sup>63</sup>

It would seem that it is just such an Ārya foe, an Ārya chief, that is referred to at 7.83.5 under the term *ari*: "The evils of the *ari* torment me - and the malice of his followers"<sup>64</sup>. And in this respect this reference to the *ari* is similar to other such references in 6.16, 6.47 and 9.61: they all refer to Aryan enemies of Bharata or pro-Bharata tribes.

## (2) Turvaśa-s

We found that one of the earliest Aryan opponents of the Bharata-s was the Turvaśa tribe. It is noteworthy that the Turvaśa-s in the RV are almost inseparably linked with the Yadu-s. (Of 25 references to the Turvaśa-s and Yadu-s, 17 mention the two groups together.)<sup>65</sup>

It is interesting that the earliest parts of the RV have only a few references to the Turvaśa-Yadu tribes. 17 out of 25 references are in the 1st, 8th and 10th books of the Saṃhitā. Conspicuously the opposite was the case in respect of the Bharata-s, who figure prominently only in the 3rd, 6th and 7th books. It must be stressed that this is a very noteworthy fact.

We found that the RV connects the Turvaśa-s with the following events:

- (i) Engagement against Sṛṅjaya Daivavāta<sup>66</sup>
- (ii) Engagement against Divodāsa Ātithigva<sup>67</sup>
- (iii) Engagement against Sudās Pajjavana<sup>68</sup>

62. *dāsā ca vṛtrā hatam āryāṇi ca | sudāsam indrāvaruṇā 'vasā vatam* - 7.83.1cd.

63. *ā yo'nayat sadhamā' ryaśya | gavyā tr̥tsubhyo ajagan yudhā nṛn* - 7.18.7cd.

64. *abhy ā tapanti mā | 'ghāny aryo vanuśām arātayah* - 7.83.5 ab.

65. Turvaśa and Yadus : I.36.18, 54.6, 108.8, 174.9; IV.30.17; V.31.8; VI.20.12, 45.1; VII.19.8; VIII.4.7, 7.18, 9.14, 10.5, 45.27; IX.61.2; X.49.8, 62.10. Turvaśas : I.47.7 VI.27.7 VII.18.6, VIII.41, 4.19; Yadus : VIII.1.31; 6.46, 6.48.

66. 6.27.7

67. 7.19.8, 9.61.2

68. 7.18.6

It would be useful to find out what other group beside the Yadu the Turvaśa-s are associated with. RV 1.108.8 refers to Anu, Pūru and Druhyu with the Yadu-Turvaśa-s, 8.4.1/2 to Anu and others and 8.10.5 to Anu and Druhyu. In 7.18 we find all of these - Anu, Pūru, Druhyu, Turvaśa and Yadu ranged against the Bharata tribe in the Ten Kings' War.

We have no evidence of any early hostility between the Turvaśa-s and the Dāsa-s. The 9.61.2 reference to them must be understood as meaning that Divodāsa defeated them as well as Śambara the Dāsa chief (and not as meaning that Indra defeated Śambara for Divodāsa and aided the Yadu-Turvaśa-s, as Geldner assumes.)<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, that the Turvaśa-s, like the Pūru-s and others, collaborated with non-Aryans in the Ten Kings' War is a well-established fact. The description "non-sacrificers" applied to the opponents of Sudās by Vasiṣṭha reflects that ṛṣi's attitude towards the Turvaśa-s as well. But, and this is quite instructive, the later portions of the RV<sup>70</sup> consistently portray the Turvaśa-s as regular adherents of the sacrificial cult, often under the guidance of Kaṇva priests. This contrasts so strikingly with the absence of even a single hymn that bears the stamp of having been composed to intercede on behalf of the Turvaśa antagonists of Sṛnjaya, (Vadhryaśva), Divodāsa and Sudās. It would seem that there lies behind this at least a conversion of attitudes if not of faith.

### (3) Pūru-s

Although it looks as if the Turvaśa-s were the earliest Aryan tribe to come into conflict with the Bharata-s, it is the Pūru tribe that really vies with the latter for pre-eminence in Rgvedic India.

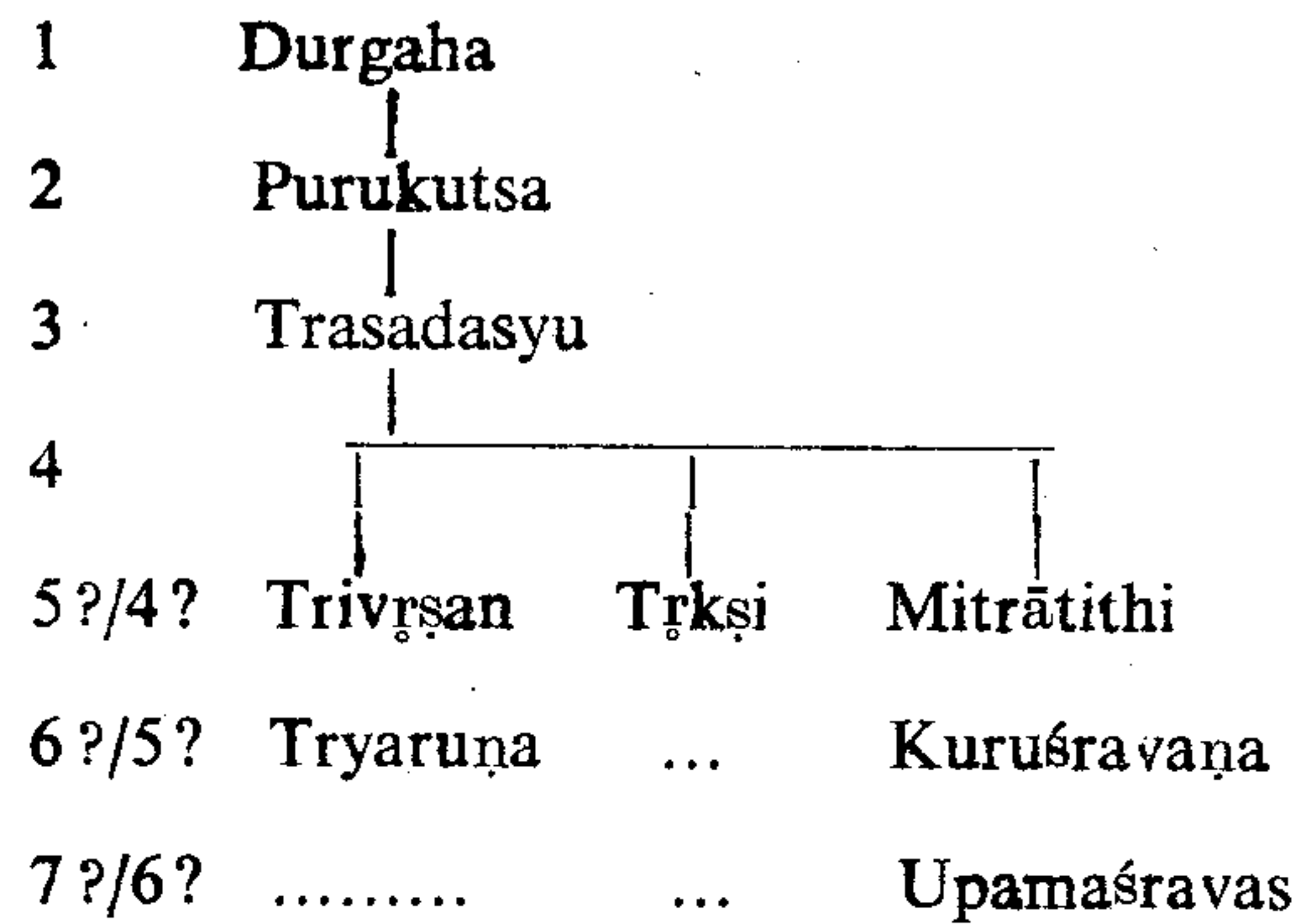
The distribution of allusions to the Pūru-s<sup>71</sup> is strikingly like that to the Turvaśa-s. The earliest books either ignore them or betray no knowledge of them, and the largest number of references to them is in the latest books. It is also interesting, that, as in the case of the Turvaśa-s, a distinctly hostile attitude to the Pūru-s is betrayed in the pro-Bharata references such as 7.8.4 and 7.18.13

69. See note 41 above

70. I.47.7, 108.8; VIII.4.1, 9.14, 10.5, 45.27

71. I.59.6, 63.7, 108.8, 112.7/14, 129.5, 130.7, 131.4, 174.2; IV.21.10, 38.1-3, 39.2, 42.8/9  
V.17.1, 27.1-3, 33.8; VI.20.10, 46.8; VII.5.3, 8.4, 18.13, 19.3, 96.2; VIII.8.21, 19.  
32/36, 22.7, 36.7, 37.7, 49.10, 64.10, 65.12; X.4.1, 32.9, 33.4/6/7, 48.5, 150.5.

More, however, about individual leaders of the Pūru tribe is known than is the case with the Turvaśa-s. The genealogy of Pūru chiefs of the RV is as follows<sup>72</sup>:—



Significant from our point of view is the Rgvedic treatment of the Pūru chiefs, particularly the unnamed Pūru of the Ten Kings' War, as well as Durgaha, Purukutsa and Trasadasyu. Let us pay some attention to this treatment.

The Pūru chief in the Ten Kings' War is depicted as of unworthy speech (in worship) and, by implication, a non-sacrificer and one not entitled to Indra's aid. He fights against the Bharata-s in the company of Dasyu-s.

Durgaha is almost a veiled and shadowy figure. We can surmise that he existed, only by virtue of the use of his name when referring to his descendants.

There is no evidence of these Pūru chiefs having had the support of any of the Vedic priests of repute.

Coming to Purukutsa, we see that he is not mentioned as a contemporary chief in any of the Vedic hymns.<sup>73</sup> We do not find any hymns that plead to the gods on his behalf. Yet obviously he was not a leader of minor standing. Later hymns<sup>74</sup> speak of him as a powerful opponent of the Dasyu-s, a breaker of their forts. In one of the hymns describing the birth of Trasadasyu<sup>75</sup> (his famous son), we are told that Purukutsa's wife prayed to Indra and Varuṇa and obtained from them that heroic son as a very special favour to the Pūru tribe. And Trasadasyu is said to have been born while Purukutsa was in captivity.<sup>76</sup>

72. Cf. CHI I.74. Ludwig, Der RV III.174, 182.

73. References to Purukutsa by name: I.63.7, 112.7, 174.2; VI.20.10. Other allusions to P. :I. 130.7, 131.4; VII.5.3. References to P. as father of Trasadasyu: 4.42.8/9; 5.33.8; 7.19.3; 8.19.36.

74. I.63.7, 174.2

75. 4.42.8/9

76. *daurgāhe badhyamāne* : 4.42.8b.

Trasadasyu, unlike these earlier Pūru chiefs, is a favourite with the Vedic ṛṣi-s. He is depicted as an implacable foe of the Dasyu-s and a munificent benefactor of the ṛṣi-s of the Gautama, Atri and Kaṇva clans.<sup>77</sup> The ṛṣi-s shower the highest praises on him and speak of him as a man who was known to them at first hand.<sup>78</sup>

Now this treatment of the Pūru-s contrasts sharply with that accorded to the Bharata chiefs, *all* of whom from the start are referred to in contemporary and intercessory hymns e.g. 3.23 for Devavāta, 6.27 for Sṛñjaya, 10.69 for Vadhryaśva, 6.47 and 6.61 for Divodāsa and 7.18 for Sudās. (Sudās is also celebrated in 3.33, 7.33, and 7.83). On the other hand the treatment accorded to the Pūru-s is (a) hostile or indifferent at the start, (b) ambiguous in the case of Purukutsa and (c) favourable after Purukutsa.

This intriguing treatment of the Pūru-s raises several important questions:

Why did the Pūru-s, having fought with the Dāsa-s against Sudās, turn against them subsequently?

Why do the ṛṣi-s refer to Purukutsa's role as an opponent of the Dāsa-s only posthumously?

How did the attitude of the ṛṣi-s change so profoundly as to allow a descendant of a "non-sacrificer" to be hailed as a demi-god in RV 4.42, as a hero granted by Indra and Vaiṇa to the Pūru tribe?

These questions are naturally linked with others no less important: What happened to Sudās after the Ten Kings' War? Was the Pūru participant in that war killed by Sudās? And what was the over-all position of the Aryans in relation to the Dāsa-s at the end of this war?

The war could well have assumed an internecine character for the Aryans. Many of their tribal chiefs are said to have been drowned or killed. A close scrutiny of the statements made in respect of each person<sup>79</sup> involved shows however that the Pūru chief was "sought" by the Bharatas "to be subdued":<sup>80</sup> it is not said that he *was* subdued, killed or defeated. And for some strange reason what we hear about him in this war is the last that is known of Sudās the Bharata in the RV Saṃhitā. He apparently ceases to be an effective force, while the Aryan conflict with the Dāsa-s assumes a new character in that the Pūru-s become involved in it against the Dāsa-s. We may surmise that the

77. Gautama: 4.38, 4.42; Atri: 5.33; Kaṇva: 8.19.

78. Cf. e.g. *sūns trasadasyor...vahantu mā dāsa syetāsaḥ* (5.33.8); *adān me... pañcāśataṃ trasadasyur vadhūnām* (8.19.36).

79. These are found in 7.18, stzz 5-6, 7-9, 10-14, 18-19.

80. *jeṣma pūrun vidathe mṛdhraṇvācam* - 7.18.13.

Dāsa-s utilized the weakened position of the Aryans to take on all comers, or that the Pūru-s, like all participants in tripartite conflicts turned on their erst-while collaborators soon after the war.

In any case, the all-important fact is that after the Ten Kings' War, the Bharata-s no longer occupy the paramount position that we would have expected them to occupy. In this situation it is easy to understand why the ṛṣi-s proclaim Trasadasyu as a gift of Indra and Varuṇa to the Aryans, a demi-god comparable with Indra himself, as the text portrays.<sup>81</sup> It looks so like an attempt to rally the Aryans behind him, with no exceptions whatsoever. He justified the Aryans' profoundest hopes and became such a vanquisher of foes that the ṛṣi-s fondly espoused his cause. Certainly he belongs to an age when the Pūru-s, and not the Bharata-s, were the hope of the Aryans.

But not so Purukutsa. His position in the Saṃhitā is very anomalous. He wears neither the veil that Durgaha does, nor the halo that Trasadasyu does. He is certainly not ignored, but he is also not contemporaneously praised and supported by the ṛṣi-s. It is as a legendary character that his praises are sung. That his wife is shown to have prayed to Indra and Varuṇa and obtained a son while he was held in captivity is clearly an attempt to portray that son in glowing colours. The *posthumous* glorification of Purukutsa appears to us as a reflection on the one hand of an attempt to glorify Trasadasyu and on the other of an opposition to Purukutsa on the part of the ṛṣi-s while he was yet alive.

This inclines us to think that Purukutsa himself might have been the Pūru that figured in the Ten Kings' War. The Pūru of that war could definitely not have been Trasadasyu to whom epithets such as "non-sacrificer" and "user of misspoken words" would scarcely apply. Therefore that Pūru should have been either Durgaha or Purukutsa. The strangely anomalous way in which the latter is depicted and the fact of his becoming an opponent of the Dāsa-s make us think that he fought against Sudās, escaped death and lived to see the demise of the Bharata-s and to lead the Aryan forces against the Dāsa-s, who probably were then trying to take advantage of the weakened position of these new-comers to their land.

If we assume that Purukutsa was the Pūru referred to in 7.13 and that he survived the Ten Kings' War, we may ask ourselves whether the RV offers any evidence howsoever indirect on his subsequent activities.

If we accept Ludwig's suggestion<sup>82</sup> that the text of RV 1.637 c is faulty and that *sudāse* there should really read *sudāsam*, it would appear that Purukutsa not only survived the war, but that the victor in that war was himself

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81. See below, nn. 96,97

82. Der RV II,174, V.22. See also Vedic Index under Sudās, fn.6 and Geldner fn to 1,63.7.

subsequently conquered by Purukutsa. Translated in accordance with Ludwig's suggestion, RV 1.63.7 should read somewhat as follows:— "You O Indra, then shattered the seven forts, fighting for Purukutsa's sake. When you effortlessly 'squeezed' Sudās, like *barhis* grass, then did you bring freedom from confinement to the Pūru (chief)."<sup>83</sup>

This emendation of text raises an important issue. If Sudās fell in this fashion engaged against the Pūru chief, why is the RV silent on this point, except for this isolated stanza, which too yields this sense only with this deliberate change of the traditional text?

That is not so big a problem as appears at first sight. The Vedic priesthood had already taken a strong stand against the Pūru chief in the Ten Kings' War and it was their considered view that his position in matters of cult and worship was quite unacceptable. Of course there must have been more to this than we can as yet understand. Later Vedic singers, however, were patronized by this early Pūru's descendants and they had good reason to please and glorify these patrons by referring to the might of their ancestors. In this way the body of R̥gvedic poetry may have come to contain several references to the heroic deeds of Purukutsa in respect of the Dāsa-s and only one to his heroism in respect of his Bharata foe, Sudās. It may be because some strong influences in the circles of Vedic orthodoxy were uneasy at this reference to the overthrow of the prince of the Bharata-s that the single stanza that referred to Purukutsa's conquest of Sudās suffered for its outspokenness by the early mutilation of its original text.

Moreover, we cannot ignore the significance of the fact there are no hymns in the RV that mention (leave alone support) any son or descendant of Sudās the Bharata. As far as the evidence of the RV goes, with Sudās the greatness of the Bharata-s came to an end. If Sudās died with the tribe at the zenith of its power after the gains in the Ten Kings' War, this would be almost inexplicable.

It is interesting to note that the later Vedic tradition mentions that the descendants of Sudās did not see eye to eye with the Vasistha-s who saved the Bharata-s in the War. And a very late, but nevertheless surprising, piece of evidence suggests that Sudās came by an unhappy end. This is Manusmṛti VII. 41 which says that Sudās the son of Pijavana lost restraint and was destroyed in consequence thereof.<sup>84</sup>

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83. *tvam ha tyad indra sapta yudhyan/puro ...purukutsāya dardah | barhir na yat sudāse  
vrthā varg | amho ... varivah pūrave kah | 1.63.7 (amhaḥ : aus Not - Geldner)*

84. *vinasto... sudāḥ piḥavanah - Manu. VII.41.*

All this favours the adoption of the textual emendation proposed by Ludwig. And there is also a further argument in support of a reappraisal of the accuracy of the accepted text in this instance: this is that the text as it stands is almost completely incapable of yielding any coherent sense.

Nor is this all. We must also ponder on the meaning of 'confinement' (amhas=constriction, state of siege etc.) found in RV 1.63.7. A clear instance of the Pūru chief coming by a state of affairs that can be so designated is provided in the situation depicted in the description of the Ten Kings' War. Sudās was looking for the Pūru in order to vanquish him. The result of Sudās thus pursuing the Pūru would easily amount to a state of siege or confinement for the latter. And if, as 1.63.7 seems to say, the Pūru chief obtained release from this state, that could well mean the destruction of Sudās his oppressor. (Is 4.21.10: "You brought freedom to Pūru"<sup>85</sup> a further echo of these events?)

It then does not seem very unreasonable to assume with Ludwig that RV 1.63.7. depicts Purukutsa as defeating Sudās - thus pointing at the contemporaneity of the two leaders and the identity of the Pūru mentioned in 7.18.

### **Trasadasyu**

Trasadasyu is not only the first known Pūru king to have patronized the regular Vedic priesthood, he is also the only leader about whom any close personal information is supplied by the RV Saṁhitā. (Cf. 4.42: his parentage and birth; 4.38: his great standing with the Pūru-s; his war-horse Dadhikrāvan; 5.33: his gifts to Saṁvaraṇa; 8.19: gifts to Sobhari Kāṇva) His praises are sung by Gautama, Atri, Kaṇva and Vasiṣṭhā : a fact which eloquently reflects the high regard in which the ṛṣi-s held him.

Trasadasyu's very name implies that it was on account of his subjugation of the Dasyu-s that he earned his fame. In the consecutive series of leaders figuring in the destruction of the Dasyu-s, he appears to be the last significant member. Among the later kings whose relative position can be established, the name of Dasyave Vṛka may suggest hostilities with the Dasyu-s, but he appears to be a leader of comparatively minor stature. References to Dasyu-s in some of the late Ṛgvedic hymns indicate their peaceful subordination as opposed to their earlier spirit of resistance. In all probability therefore Trasadasyu the Pūru almost completed the Aryans' task of *dāsahatya* and this earned him the acknowledgement of most of the wellknown families of Vedic ṛṣi-s.

Of great interest to us is the occurrence of the words *ari* and *arya* in some of the hymns dealing with events of Trasadasyu's time.

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85. *varivaḥ pūrave kaḥ*. 4.21.10.



Among these hymns is RV 4.38. This hymn bespeaks the tremendous importance that Trasadasyu's war-horse and car implied to the "five peoples" (among whom the Pūru-s were a particularly important group and) who according to RV 4.38.10 were brought under the unified rule of Trasadasyu<sup>86</sup> an event which must be regarded as a landmark in the history of Vedic tribes. In this hymn the warhorse Dadhikrā earns a special measure of praise. He is a gift of the gods to the Pūru-s<sup>87</sup>, a delight to each and every member of the tribe,<sup>88</sup> and he is "worthy of the *ari*'s praise as is a heroic prince"<sup>89</sup> One wonders if *ari* here refers to Trasadasyu himself, for in this context we can think of him only as having the standing that confers the ability to compliment another prince.

The word *ari* occurs three times in 5.33. It is our belief that the scene which formed the background of this hymn is a festival of ritual contests whose institutor is referred to as *ari*. Trasadasyu appears as one of the contesting princes in this hymn, which is sung on behalf of these contestants.<sup>90</sup> We would render the relevant passages of 5.33 containing the words *ari/arya* as follows:

5.33.2 Advance, subdue the *ari*'s men.<sup>91</sup>

5.33.6 I shall praise the gift of him who is more liberal than the *ari*.<sup>92</sup>

5.33.9 Cyavatāna, the *arya*, giving me thousands, sang the *ānūka* as though for glory's sake.<sup>93</sup>

Apparently, *ari* here refers to a tribal chief of a group closely linked or related to the (Pūru) princes mentioned by name, one of whom appears to be indicated by the derivative form of *ari* viz. *arya*. These statements about the *ari* can become fully comprehensible only with a knowledge of the salient features of

86. *ā...śavasā pañca kṛṣṭih...tatāna* - 4.38.10ab. The subject of the verb is *dadhikrāh*, as befitting the hymn which is to glorify this renowned war-horse of Trasadasyu.

87. *pūrubhyaḥ...dadathuḥ* - 4.38.1bc.

88. *viśvaḥ pūrur madati harṣamāṇaḥ* - 4.38.3b.

89. *carkṛtyam aryo-nṛpatim na sūram* - 4.38.2e.

90. They are referred to in 5.33.5 thus: *vayaṃ te ta indra ye ca naraḥ | śardho jajñānā yātāḥ ... ā asmān jagamyāt...*: "We, O Indra, and these heroes who, forming into a group, have come (to the ritual festival : *vājasāti*) ... Do you come toward us (i.e. arrive here to aid us win the prizes offered)". These heroes and the gifts they gave after obtaining victory, are individually referred to later in the hymn as Trasadasyu, the *sūri* (stz.8), Vidatha Mārutāśva (9ab), Cyavatāna (9c) and Dhvaṇya Lakṣmaṇya (10ab).

91. *vakṣo abhi prāryaḥ sakṣi janān-5. 33.2d*. On *sakṣi*, cf., Sāyane: *parābhava*; Geldner : "Wede mit ... fertig"; Gonda, Aorist, p 72: "get even with ..."

92. *prāryaḥ stuṣe tuvimaghasya dānam* - 5.33.6d.

93. *saḥasrasā me cyavatāno dadāna | ānūkam aryo vapuṣe nārcat* - 5.33.9cd.

the competitive festivals which seem to have occupied a prominent position in the cultural life of the early Aryan tribes. We shall be dealing with that aspect of our problem at a later stage.

In RV 8.19 *arya* occurs again. It may be that here too Trasadasya appears on the scene as a young prince, rather than as the formal chief of the tribe. In any case, the line which contains the word may be rendered as follows :

8. 19. 36 (Trasadasyu).....the most liberal *arya*, the chief of the(ritual-) house.....<sup>94</sup>

It is noteworthy that all five references in these three hymns yield a consistently unitary sense when we assume that *ari* and *arya* mentioned therein are (1) a tribal chief and (2) a scion of a family of such a chief. The contexts help us to decide that the families concerned are of the Pūru tribe and/or tribes closely linked to them. And we found above that in the pro-Bharata hymns too, the word *ari* seemed to have been used to refer to the antagonists of the Bharata chiefs who significantly were of Pūru and pro-Pūru tribal groups.

We might observe that the result of the application of Thieme's hypothesis to these passages was conspicuously different.<sup>95</sup>

#### **Legend of Trasadasyu's Birth**

Most interesting to a student of the history of the Vedic tribes are the allusions to the birth of Trasadasyu in RV 4.42. The events mentioned there are as follows :

- (a) Daurgaha was in captivity (lit. "being held in bondage").
- (b) The seven great *ṛṣi*-s won Trasadasyu by sacrifice, a conqueror of *vṛtra*-s like Indra, a demigod,<sup>96</sup>
- (c) Purukutsa's wife made offerings to Indra and Varuṇa and then the two gods gave her Trasadasyu, the *rājan*, a killer of *vṛtra*-s, a demigod.<sup>97</sup>

94. *trasadasyur | mamhiṣṭho aryah satpatih* - 8.19.36 bc.

95. F., pp. 21, 76, 82, 85. Thieme's renderings do not yield a unitary sense and he has almost abandoned the hope of rendering 5.33.2 and 9 in conclusive way.

96. *sapta ṛṣayo...ā yajanta trasadasyum...indram na vṛtraturam ardhadevam* , 4.42.8bcd

97. *purukutsānī ha vām adāsadd | havyebhir indravaruṇā ... athā rājānaṃ trasadasyum asyā | vṛtrahaṇaṃ dadathur ardhadevam* -4.42.9

We must connect these sayings with what is said in 4.38 about Trasadasyu: "He showered many gifts upon the Pūru-s. Indra and Varuṇa had granted (them) (this) striker of the Dasyu-s."<sup>98</sup> His fierce opposition to the Dasyu-s is certainly the chief reason for his popularity with the ṛṣi-s, just as it also gave him his name: "the terror of the Dasyu-s." At the time of his appearance, the Dasyu-s obviously were the overpowering menace to the Vedic Aryans.

We can therefore agree with Norman Brown<sup>99</sup> when he expresses the opinion that it was perhaps the Dasyu-s that held Trasadasyu's father in captivity. According to him the official (: this should mean "sanctioned and proclaimed by the ṛṣi-s") version of the birth of Trasadasyu during the captivity of Purukutsa was that he was partly of divine parentage - i. e., son of Indra and Varuṇa and of Purukutsa's wife. In keeping with this version, Norman Brown interprets stanza 3 of 4.42 as a "self-praise" by Trasadasyu: "Indra am I, and Varuṇa."<sup>99B</sup> This appears to be a very much better interpretation of this stanza than any hitherto offered.

Why was it prudent on the part of the ṛṣi-s to ascribe partial divinity (cf. *ardha-devam*..... 4.42.8/9) to Trasadasyu and why was he so uniquely likened to Indra ("a *vṛtrahan* like Indra" :4.42.8)? Not merely because his birth had somehow to be explained away, surely? Rather, it must have been to confer a unique position to him, perhaps to rally *all* the Aryan tribes under his leadership - whence possibly the explanation of his appearance among the Pūru-s as a gift of both Indra and Varuṇa, in many respects the two gods who are most distant each from the other in the RV, as generally assumed. Here we should also bear in mind what Rv 4.38.10 says: "With his might he *overspread* the five peoples", which we understand as saying that he brought them under a single rulership.

After the events of the Ten King's War, the annihilation of the Dasyu-s and bringing the various tribes under one rule should have appeared to the ṛṣi-s as the most difficult and yet most desirable goal for the Aryans to achieve.

#### *Descendants of Trasadasyu*

We shall deal with only those descendants of Trasadasyu who are of any significance from the point of view of understanding the *ari* references.

One among such descendants of Trasadasyu is Kuruśravaṇa referred to in 10.32 and 10.33. Both hymns are attributed to Kavaṣa Ailūṣa.

98. *dātrā santi pūrvā / yā pūrubhyas trasadasyur nitoṣe / ... dadathur ghanam dasyubhyaḥ* 4.38.1.

99. "King Trasadasyu as a Divine Incarnation, a note on RV 4.42" in Kunhan Raja, pp. 38 ff.

99B *aham indro varuṇaḥ... - 4.42.3a.*

10. 33 describes how at Kuruśravaṇa's death his *purohita* fell into neglect. He had been a successful bard, but now (at the death of Kuruśravaṇa) the cry at the court is "An evil speaker has come!"<sup>100</sup> In the lines that follow, the poet describes his patron's generosity<sup>101</sup> and expresses his profound loyalty to the prince whom he calls his 'companion'.<sup>102</sup> The hymn provides us with a glimpse of the extent of patronage the Pūru-s extended to their panegyrist and priests and of the intimacy of the relationship between the prince and his court priests.

Kavaṣa, the bard of Kuruśravaṇa cannot be for obvious reasons the same as the "the famous old Kavaṣa" referred to in 7.18.<sup>103</sup> If the authorship of a Kavaṣa is right, as it may be, then this Kavaṣa could be a descendant of that old Kavaṣa (from whom the period of this prince is removed by at least 3 generations). It is interesting to note that the original Kavaṣa was among the opponents of the Bharata-s. That a priest who probably was a descendant of him is turned away from a latter-day Pūru's court and is called an "utterer of evil" (- reminiscent of derogatory epithets with nuances of cult-hostility such as *mṛdhravāc*, *dūḍhi* etc.) suggests the long-continued nature of the dissensions centred round religious differences that seem to lie concealed in many veiled references in the RV.

Kuruśravaṇa's name is also important. It means "the glory of Kuru-s" and is considerably similar to Kuruṅga and Kaurayāṇa in two other late hymns.<sup>104</sup> These names, which connect several earlier tribal groups with the Kuru-s, lend support to the view that the latter were an (Aryan) amalgam of Pūru-s, Bharata-s and others<sup>105</sup> that lived and moved around the Sarasvatī and nearby river lands of what came to be known as Kurukṣetra in later times. That such a name came into vogue, rising in importance above the original tribal names such as Bharata and Pūru, is in keeping with the forging of a pan - Aryan ethos after the War of Ten Kings.

### **Tryaruṇa**

Tryaruṇa is mentioned in RV 5.27. However the hymn is not intended to be a panegyric of him or to be intercessory for him. The singer's real patron is a prince named Aśvamedha.<sup>106</sup> This is a very interesting fact that helps us considerably to understand the features of a Vedic ritual festival.

100. *duhśāsura āgād iti ghoṣa āsīt*-10.33.1d (See Geldner's introductory note to translation of 10.33).

101. *mamhiṣṭhāṃ vāghatām* - 10.33.4c.

102. *yuj-* - 10.33.9c.

103. *śrutam kavaṣam vṛddham* - 7.18.12a.

104. Kuruṅga : 8.4.19b; Kaurayāṇa: 8.3.21b.

105. See Vedic Index under Kuru.

106. Cf. 5.27.4ab: *me...aśvamedhāya... sūraye*.

Tryaruṇa however is a keen admirer of the Vedic ritual practices. One stanza of 5. 27 refers to his appreciation of the ritual song. As a token of his appreciation he seems to make a special donation to the singer of Aśvamedha.<sup>107</sup>

At the beginning of this hymn, Tryaruṇa is described in a significant manner. He is called "the mighty lord, (asura) more distinguished than the munificent one."<sup>108</sup> The epithet *asura* is applied to men only in a few other instances in the RV, such as at 1.126.2 and 10.93.14. In 1.126 the person mentioned is also directly called an *ari* (stz.5), while in 10.93 he is closely associated with another who, or a close relative of whom, is called an *ari* in another hymn.<sup>109</sup> And so, the fact that Tryaruṇa who is called an *asura* in 5.27 hails from a line of princes of whom certainly several were already indicated by the word *ari* seems to us to be a matter of considerable significance.

### III - Diversity of Religious Views

#### (1)

A curious feature in the description of the War of Ten Kings was that the enemies of Sudās the Bharata were called "kings who do not perform sacrificial rites" and "the party that is without Indra". And yet, almost in the same breath, it was said that the very same kings invoked the aid of Indra in the battles they fought.

Indra in fact is often said to have been invoked by contending forces. RV 4.24.3 insists (as does 4.39.5) that it is (emphatically) he that is so invoked.<sup>110</sup> On the face of it, this may indicate nothing more than that

- (a) Indra was the Vedic war-god whose aid every Aryan fighter sought, and
- (b) there were frequent clashes among the ancient Indo-Aryan tribes.

107. *yo me girah...yuktena abhi gṛṇāti* - 5.27.3cd. Cf. Geldner's translation. On the interpretation of 5.27, see discussion in Part II of this work.

108. *cetiṣṭho asuro maghonaḥ* - 5.27.1bc.

109. The prince who is called an *asura* at 10.93.14 is Rāma, who is mentioned alongside Pṛthavāna Vena. The latter is surely to be linked with Pṛthī Venya of 10.148.3 who in the same hymn is indicated as an *ari*. See Ch. II, 1b. and notes 29, 30 above.

110. *tam in naro vihwayante samāke* - 4.24.3a (:" Nur ihn rufen die Männer in der Schlacht von beiden Seiten" - Geldner): *indram ived ubhayam vi hvayante* / 4.39.5a, referring to the almost mythical Dadhikrā.

To assume that that is all this kind of statement indicates is an over-simplification. It does not take into account the extraordinary significance of an epithet such as *ayajyu* (: not observing sacrificial rites, or, more properly, not observing the true ritual), or of an epithet such as *anindra* (: not with Indra = not worshipping him properly and not eligible for his aid). The overwhelming dedication of the Vedic Aryans to the sacrificial religion is a factor we should never underestimate. Given that factor, to call a man a 'non-sacrificer' seems to us to be the ultimate style of repudiating his acceptability.

To revert to the subject of the Ten Kings' War. Here indeed is no mere tribal clash, but the most crucial event in the whole of the Vedic Aryan pre-history. And here ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha refers to the opponents of Śudās, among whom are the Pūru, Turvaśa and Anu tribes, distinctly as though they were cultural inferiors if not cultural aliens. How are we to account for this?

(2)

Let us keep in mind the slight clues the references to the Ten Kings' War provide.

"They summon Indra and yet they do not qualify for his aid. They are truly not to be regarded as sacrificers"—Vasiṣṭha seems to say of his adversaries. And of course the adversaries included the Pūru-s, the tribe from whom is derived the great Paurava clan of later times.

It certainly is a matter of much importance to be able to identify the group whom the ṛṣi denounces and whom he supports. But in this section let us primarily face the question: Is there any other evidence to support the clues that RV 7.18 and 7.83 provide? Were there in fact any variations of view among the Aryan tribes in regard to sacrifice and the worship of Indra?

Such questions of course immediately remind us of statements in the RV Saṃhitā such as e. g. the following in 8. 100: "There is no Indra, so some declare; who has seen him? Whom shall we be praising (in praising him)?"<sup>111</sup> It is worth reflecting on the significance of so startling a statement.

What is the idea behind the words? We cannot forget that the poet is thinking in the framework of conceptual categories that were very familiar to him. He is speaking of a particular kind of person who seems to be at least baffled by the cult activities centred around the concept of Indra.

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111. *nendro astīti nema u tva āha / ka iṃ dadarśa kam abhi śtavāma* - 8.100.3cd.

The root  $\sqrt{stu}$ - which the poet uses here is the same that gives us important cult terms such as *stotra*, *stava* and *stoma*. To *eulogize* is eminently a cult function, a sacrificial act. So the question means : "In singing a *stoma* for Indra what are we doing? Is this cult-act really meaningful?"

The men who are bewildered thus cannot surely be outsiders? They cannot be non-Aryans, but Aryans who seriously asked questions about the significance of at least this cult-activity associated with Aryan religious life. It seems obvious that the poet is thinking of men of his race holding a different stance from his own in matters of worship and faith.

Let us also consider for a moment a statement like the one in RV 2.12.5. The entire Indra epic of which this stanza is a part addresses itself to the members of an Aryan *jana*. The refrain<sup>112</sup> proves that conclusively. Says the stanza in question:

Of whom, the terrible, they ask: where is he?  
or of whom they say: he is not.....  
have faith in him, he O men is Indra.<sup>113</sup>

An even more telling reference to the kind of situation we are discussing seems to be found in RV 1.4:

"Of Indra, the quick un-conquered one, go ask the wise priest - who is worthier than your friends. And let our detractors say: 'Depart to another place, you who offer worship pre-eminently to Indra'.\* "Or let the *ari* and (his?) people describe us as well-off men. In Indra's refuge we would (yet) remain." (1.4.4-6)<sup>114</sup>

It is hard to subscribe to Thieme's views<sup>115</sup> on the interpretation of this extremely interesting passage, which we have discussed briefly elsewhere.<sup>116</sup> The difference in his approach is understandable, since he was looking at it in isolation from the tribal and religious situation which we are trying to elucidate.

112. *sa janāsa indraḥ* - 2.12 refrain.

113. *yam smā pṛcchanti kuha sa iti ghoram | utem āhur naiṣo astīty enam... śrad asmai dhatta, sa janāsa indraḥ* - 2. 12. 5

\* (The validity of this interpretation is borne out by RV 8.1.1, where we see the ṛṣi himself saying to his colleagues: 'Do not recite anything else. Friends, do not make blunders. Praise *only* Indra at the Soma ritual ..... mā cid anyad vi śamsata | sakhāyo mā riṣanyata | indram it stota... sute- ... || See also Geldner's translation.)

114. *parehi vigrām aśṛtam | indram pṛcchā vipāścitam | yas te sakhībhyā ā varam || uta bruvantu no nido | nir anyataś cid ārata | dadhāno indra id duvaḥ || uta naḥ subhagāṁ arir | voceyur dasma kṛṣṭayaḥ | syāmed indrasya śarmanī | 1.4.4-6.*

115. F. pp. 37-38.

116. Añjali, pp. 90-91.

What does this remarkable passage communicate?

Geldner, who, it seems to us, has interpreted these stanzas more accurately than Thieme, points out the priest of Indra has here in mind the institutor of a sacrificial rite. That, in the opinion of that priest, this patron needed (i.e. lacked) knowledge of the unconquerable Indra and that that priest had to contend with detractors (notice the many R̥gvedic references to *devanidāh*, *brahmadviṣaḥ* etc.)<sup>117</sup> who scoffed at the pre-eminent (if not exclusive) place that was given to this god is the least that this context reveals.

Not only does this passage bring up the question of the identity of the *ari* who, along with others, seems to object to the ṛṣi's preponderant worship of Indra and wishes to prevent him from receiving gifts - on the ground of his wealthiness - a viewpoint that could earn for the *ari* such a description as that found in RV 8.51 : "a treasure-guarding (niggard)"<sup>118</sup> - but also it puzzles us by the reference to the *ari*'s friends and his people. In spite of the fact that the whole scene is situated in Aryan ritual environs - and indeed this is *the* fact not to be overlooked - one is tempted to think that the *ari* and his friends must have been somewhat different in their attitude to Indra-worship than was the ṛṣi who composed this hymn.

One is struck by the resemblance of the implication of this reference to that of several other highly interesting passages in the RV.

As an example of this latter we may cite RV 4. 24. 3 ff. Here it is said of two warring groups that they both call on Indra's aid. But some seek Indra's aid in the very sight of battle (: *abhīke*): When locked in battle they pray for the Indra-might (or, following Geldner, make offerings to the Indra-name). And then, we are told further, the cooked (oblation) shall surpass the *puroḷāśa* (:den Reiskuchen - Geldner). What the distinction is is not completely clear, but the repetition of the idea in verse 7 makes it obvious that the offerer of "cooked oblation" and of roasted grains is the one that is favoured by Indra with "the stallion's vigour". And also stanzas 5 - 7 make it quite clear that it is the Soma-offerer who gains the alliance of Indra (6,7); indeed Soma will clearly set the non-presser apart (stanza 5).<sup>119</sup> And all of this provides for us the background that is needed for the understanding of the highly interesting stanzas 8-9 which incidentally contain an important reference to the *ari* once again.

117. Añjali, p. 94, nn. 28-30

118. *śevadhipāḥ* - 8.51.9b. See note 321 below and the relevant text.

119. *tam in naro vi hvayante samīke | ... ād in nema indrayante abhīke || ād idd ha nema indriyaṃ yajante | ād it paktiḥ puroḷāśaṃ riricyāt | ād it somo vi papṛcyāt asuṣvīn || ya itthendrāya somam .. sunoti | tam it sakhāyaṃ kṛṇute samatsu || indrāya somam ... sunoti | ... tam it sakhāyaṃ kṛṇute samatsu || ya indrāya sunavat somam adya | pacāt paktīr uta bhr̥jjāti dhānāḥ || ... tasmin dadhad vṛṣaṇaṃ śuṣmam indraḥ ||* from 4.24.3-7



We shall not attempt to dwell at length on this reference at this stage as we will be discussing it in another context later on.<sup>120</sup> It is however pertinent to point out what the two stanzas say in essence: the encounter has been severe, the *ari*'s contest a long affair; when she has seen that, the (*ari*'s) wife invokes the aid of Indra, who, however, by this time has been regaled to a feast of Soma by the offerers of that libation; hearing her call, Indra muses or says: he (the *ari*) has indulged in low trading for a thing of value, but (the other) has relinquished "not a little thing" for a thing of high value.<sup>121</sup>

Obviously then, what the poet says is that Soma is the great thing by which alone one may hope to win the favour of Indra. And he who does not worship Indra in the form, with the substances and at the times that are appropriate to that worship, will not gain that god's sustaining aid: in other words, they are *anindra* or "without Indra's aid". So it seems to us that the order of ideas is not different in RV 4.24 from that in RV 7. 18: Aryan divisions having an important religious dimension.

(3)

In a sense, the specific manifestation of the hieratic thought of Vedic India is the concept of Brahmanaspati (= Bṛhaspati), even more than Indra. He, the Lord of Brahman, is a creation and reflection of the priestly genius of the Vedic *ṛṣi*-s. It is interesting, in view of this, that there are nonetheless traces in the RV Samhitā of a prevalence of some kind of unfriendly attitude to the cult of Bṛhaspati.

Evidence for this is found in RV 1.190. Stanza 5 of this hymn charges some "powerful ones" with having considered Bṛhaspati as an *usrika*,<sup>122</sup> which normally would have to be rendered as a "little calf". It is a risky thing to try to evaluate the significance of such comparisons, especially when we remember that Indra is often called a *vṛṣan* (: bull). But the diminutive form cannot be without significance and, in any case, the rest of the verse makes it quite clear that the poet here has no kindly thoughts about the ritual acceptability of the worship that these "powerful ones" offer to Bṛhaspati. For here they are portrayed as "evil men depending on the noble one for their living"<sup>123</sup> and

120. In Ch. VI of this work.

121. *yadā samaryaṃ vyaced ṛghāvā | dīrghaṃ yad ājīm abhy akhyad ayaḥ | acikradad vṛṣaṇaṃ patny acchā | duroṇa ā niśitaṃ somasudbhīḥ || ... bhūyasā vasmam acarad kanīyo | sa bhūyasā kanīyo nārireṇī,* | 4. 24. 8 & 9ac.

122. *ye tvā devosrikaṃ manyamānāḥ* - 1.190. 5a.

123. *pāpā bhadram upajīvanti pajrāḥ* ..... - 1.190. 5b.

this is followed by a request to Bṛhaspati not to bestow blessings on “him, of evil intent”<sup>124</sup> - and we must here remind ourselves of the nuances of the original Vedic term employed in the context i.e. *dūdhī*. It is typically a word of denunciation for a man whose priestly functions (*dhī* - in fact indicates one paramouly important aspect of these) were unacceptable in the ‘ṛṣi-s’ eyes.

The prevalence in Vedic society of a divergent attitude towards Bṛhaspati, the arch - deity of Brahmanism, is brought out again in RV 2.23 addressed to this god. This hymn refers in sharp terms to ill-intentioned revilers of gods from whom the singer wishes the highest good to be held away. Particularly instructive is stanza 16: “Give us not away to thieves who, hanging on to the ‘footprint’ of falsehood, are greedy for victuals, the cheats that they are. In their hearts they reduce the strength of gods. They, O Bṛhaspati, know nothing above the *sāman* (chant).”<sup>125</sup>

“Know nothing above the *sāman* (chant)” - what does this signify? And, “reduce in their hearts the strength of the gods”? It would be really interesting to understand exactly what these remarkable statements were meant to convey, in this passionate diatribe directed against “revilers of gods” and “haters of *brahman*” and “false reciters”<sup>126</sup>. One is entitled to ask: could they possibly refer to religious approaches other than the Brahmanical one, approaches which in the eyes of this ṛṣi were tantamount to insulting the gods? Could the ṛṣi be having in mind any tendencies which admitted as active rites no more than the *sāman* chant? To ask this question is not to suggest that the answer should be ‘yes’; but yet it would not do to suppress that question which naturally presents itself.

The question is all the more pertinent when taken in conjunction with what some other Ṛgvedic passages declare. Let us take for example 10.105.8: “Through ṛc - recital let us put down the men who do not recite ṛc. No sacrifice without *brahman* (ritual eulogy) will succeed or make pleasure in you.”<sup>127</sup>

Or 7.26.1: “No unpressed *soma* pleases Indra, nor (even) the pressed sap, that (comes) not with *brahman*”.<sup>128</sup>

124. *dūdhye* - 1. 190. 5c.

125. *mā nas stenebhyo ye abhi druhaspade | nirāmīno vipavo’ nneṣu jāgrdhuh | ā devānām ohate vi vrayo hṛdi | bṛhaspate na paraḥ sāmno viduh |* 2. 23.16

126. *brahmadviṣaḥ* - 2. 23.4c ; *devanidaḥ* 8c ; *duḥśamsaḥ* 10c.

127. *ṛcā vanemānṛcaḥ | nābrahmā yajña ṛdhg joṣati tve ||* 10. 105. 8bc

128. *na soma indram asuto mamāda | nābrahmāno ..... sutāsaḥ* -7. 26. 1ab.

What do these passages hint at, while laying a very self-conscious emphasis on the active aspects of the ritual, such as the pressing of *soma* and the recital of *ṛc* verses ? A pointer as to what the answer should be, it seems to us, is RV 6.52.1-2. Here a Bhāradvāja priest speaks of a person who purported to perform what was 'more than a sacrifice' (: *atiyāja* - with perhaps sarcastic overtones). Not only does this man 'think himself above us', but he also would "wish to pour scorn on the ritual that is being expressed in action"<sup>129</sup>. The subsequent stanza asks why the god looks on while his singer and his party are insulted and requests that a burning missile be hurled on (this) hater of *brahman*.<sup>130</sup> Could these words in some way be an anticipation of the debate between the proponents and opponents of the 'way of works' of later time ?

Here we are also reminded of RV 4.2.12 which incidentally contains another important reference to the *ari*. Geldner, it seems to us, is basically right in the way he renders this stanza into German and explains its purport in the notes attached to his translation - except for the (not insignificant) error of equating *ari* with *sūri* (- a problem which we hope to discuss at length in the pages to follow). From of old, the stanza in effect says, the ritual fire, symbolizing the god Agni, has been entrusted to Āyu i.e, the Vedic priesthood. From Āyu's dwelling, Agni could unmistakably see his intentions which are clear by virtue of the visible rites that are done with (? hands and ) feet. On the other hand, the *ari*'s secret intentions the god could see only through his active dispositions.<sup>131</sup> The visible rites of Āyu and the hidden intentions of the *ari* : this is not an insignificant contrast when taken in conjunction with the other things that are repeatedly said in the RV about the *ari*'s cultural distance from the ideals of Vedic *ṛṣi*-s.

In any case, it seems clear that in the RV there already are some signs of the prevalence, among the Aryans themselves, of religious trends that did not emphasize those aspects of their worship that the *ṛṣi*-s usually emphasized.

129. *atiyājasya yaṣṭā / ati vā yo .... manyate no / brahma vā yaḥ kriyamānaṃ ninitsāt / 6.52.1d 2ab.*

130. *kim aṅga naḥ paśyasi nindyamānān / brahmadviṣe tapuṣiṃ hetim asya / 6.52.3cd.*

131. (*kaviṃ śasāsuh kavayo adabdhā/nidhārayanto duryāsv āyoh/*) *atas tvam drśyām agna etān / padbiḥ paśyer adbhutām aya evaiḥ - 4.2.12.* On the interpretation of this stz. see Geldner's notes to his translation of it.

(4)

Statements that seem to be out of step with the main R̥gvedic line of thinking are rather exceptional in the Saṃhitā, but a few are occasionally met with, particularly in its later portions. Such an unusual statement is found in RV 10.82. The 7th stanza of this hymn says: "Covered in mist and prattle do the utterers of hymns wander, delighting in (the taking of) life"<sup>132</sup> - which, as Geldner rightly observes, is an obvious objection to the slaughter of animals in sacrifice.

Ritual slaughter and the offering of *soma* were practices that were predominantly associated with the cult of Indra, the god of war. This is particularly well illustrated by RV 10.27. Here the singer, in his part of a *saṃvāda* dialogue, makes a promise to Indra of cooking a vigorous bullock for him and pouring a sharp libation of Soma for 15 days.<sup>133</sup> And Indra replies that he knows of no one who speaks thus *after* victory has been achieved ; it is on perceiving the fierce *impending* battle that they promise him a pair of bulls!<sup>134</sup> (It is interesting to note that the idea of the right offerings\* is an important element in 10.27 as well : ritual offerings of beef and Soma in stanza 2;<sup>135</sup> condemnatory allusion to "those without Indra, the drinkers of *śṛta*"<sup>136</sup> as opposed to Soma, hence those who do not offer Soma, who 'insult the ally'<sup>137</sup> - in stanza 6. These references clearly follow the same order of ideas as in 7.18 and 4.24 which we discussed above).

It does seem then (a) that there was some criticism of the ritual slaughter of animals on the one hand and (b) that on the other there was explicit voicing of the idea that to obtain Indra's aid as the god of war one necessarily had to offer Soma and the animal sacrifice and that not merely when war was at hand. Not to do so was an insult to him and a departure from the cult. What was deplorable was that some sought his aid while rejecting these rites or performing them only at the sight of war. (4.24 and 10.27)

132. *nīhāreṇa prāvṛtā jalpyā cā | 'sutrṣṭā ukthasāsas caranti* - 10.82.7cd.

133. *amā te tumraṃ vṛṣabhaṃ paścāni | tīvraṃ sutam pañcadaśam ni siñcam* /10.27.2cd.

134. *nāham taṃ veda ya iti bravīty | adevayūn-t-samarāṇe jaghanvān | yadā' vākhyat samaraṇam ṛghāvad | ād idd ha me vṛṣabhā pra bruvanti* // 10.27.3.

\* Perhaps more accurately, right offerings made at the right time. That some are reminded of Indra and think of offering him "bull-sacrifice" *only when* the din of war is heard is what the ṛṣi scornfully says in 4.24 (at 4d, 5a, 5b and 5c) and in 8.21 (14d) and 10.27 (3d). In all six cases the temporal phrase used is *ād it* whose actual force would be best brought out if we translate it as "and only after that".

135. *tumraṃ vṛṣabham..... tīvram sutam* of 10.27.2cd.

136. *anindrān..... śṛtapān* - 10.27.6a.

137. *ye niniduh sakhāyam* - 10.27.6c.

(5)

Let us reflect a little more on the significance of Soma offering and Soma drinking in the Ṛgvedic period - a time that was marked by the dominance of the Indra cult, by a conscious advocacy of it by the elite of the Vedic ṛṣi-s whose compositions have come down to us in the RV Samhitā.

We may consider a reference like the one in 8.21 which informs us of men who preferred *surā* (a strong drink other than Soma) and scoffed at Indra but who felt impelled to seek his aid when plunged into war, like little ones longing for fatherly support:

“Never a rich man will you find fit for alliance (with you). They, sharpened by *surā*, scoff at you.(But) when you raise the cry of war and bring (contenders) into confrontation, *then* are you invoked like a father.” (8.21.14)<sup>138</sup>

Why the reference to *surā*?

It is extremely doubtful if the high priests of Indraism regarded *surā* as a respectable drink or a fit substitute for Soma. It is true that RV 1.116.7 refers to the Aśvins' gift of 1000 jars of *surā* to the singer Kakṣivant<sup>139</sup> as if it were a valued gift<sup>140a</sup> - but there is some reason to think Kakṣivant did not enjoy a very great respect among the priesthood we are here thinking of. The<sup>140b</sup> Aśvins themselves do not originally seem to have belonged to the circle of gods who were honoured with the Soma libation. The Yajurveda describes them as not entitled to the Soma drink.<sup>141</sup> The later Vedic literature preserves some valuable evidence which suggests that the followers of the Indra cult viewed the worship of the Aśvins with disfavour.<sup>142</sup>

In the later ritual of the *sautrāmaṇi*,<sup>143</sup> *surā* is mingled with Soma but this very ritual seems to reflect the original unacceptability of *surā*. In the old story connected with this ritual, it seems that Indra appears as poisoned by Namuci (= Vṛtra) by means of a mixture of Soma and *surā*. The mingled Soma could

138. *na kī revantaṃ sakhyāya vindase | pīyanti te surāśvaḥ | yadā kṛṇoṣi nadanum samūhasy | ād it piteva hūyase || 8.21.14.*

139. Cf. Hillebrandt, VM I pp. 244ff. esp.p. 250: *surā* as the drink of Aryans living unbrahmanistically; and p. 253: opposition between drinkers of *soma* and *surā*. See also Vedic Index: *surā*

140A *śataṃ kumbhāṃ asiñcataṃ surāyāḥ* - 1.116.7d. However, 1.117.6 refers to the gift as *śataṃ kumbhān...madhūnām*.

140B Cf the statement of 1.190.5 *pāpā...pajrāḥ* which Geldner regards as a reference to the “Rivalität zwischen den Māniden und den Pajra’s”. Pajra was “the name of the family from which Kakṣivant sprang”: Vedic Index, under Pajra (referring to 1.117. 10, 1.122.7—8, 1.126.4—5).

141. Aśvins were originally *asomapa* : M.S.IV.6.1.

142. Jaim.Br. iii. 121-128. See also Vedic index under Cyavana.

143. Hillebrandt, RL p.159 f. ; Geldner on 10.131.4a ; Vedic Index, fn 72 under Soma.

be made drinkable by means of a *vipāna* (:“drinking separately” - dexterously extracting the desired component of the mixture). The original *sautrāmaṇi* was a purificatory ritual instituted in memory of this. Therefore it was to be particularly celebrated by an enthroned king and by one with whom the Soma drink did not agree. The whole point that emerges from this is that although in course of time the priesthood changed its position with regard to the ritual acceptability of *surā*, originally only the Soma was regarded as fit and acceptable and respectable for the *sūri* to consume. The evidence of RV 10.89.5 is a valuable pointer in this direction:

“Soma (is) the draught of wrath, whose first fresh drink is sharp (?), (the stuff) that shakes, the impetuous holder of darts, prepared from *ṛjīṣa*-. All substitute shrubs and plants deceive not Indra hitherward.”<sup>144</sup>

It was a part of the early Vedic ritual that both the *yajamāna* and the priest partook of the sacred sap. At RV 10.167.4, (Indra as) the first *sūri* speaks of coming after a victorious contest to his (*purohita*) priests Viśvāmitra and Jamadagni and taking a (ritual) drink of Soma<sup>145</sup>. From other references, we gather that Indra here speaks of the typical conduct of a *sūri* and that the privilege of the draught extended to the *yajamāna* as well. Thus 9.99.3 says “We cleanse this gladdening drink of his, that which kine took into their mouths of old, and princes take it now.”<sup>146</sup>

The hymn 9.98 also gives definite evidence on this point. Stanza 8 of this hymn addresses the Soma drinkers and says that the sap is “a means to strength” and that it “gives high renown to *sūri*-s”. Stanza 10 describes the sap as being extracted in order to be drunk by Indra as well as the “man that offers the *dakṣiṇā*”<sup>147</sup>

In 8.68 stanza 14 refers to princes Indrota Śrutarvan and Pūtakratu approaching (their *purohita*) priest “in the stimulation of Soma.”<sup>148</sup>

As to priests drinking the Soma draught the RV provides ample testimony. To quote just a few instances:

144. *āpāntamanyus ṛpalaprabharmā | dhuniḥ śimivāñ charumāñ ṛjīṣi | somo viśvāny atasā vanāni | nārvāg indraṃ pratimānāni debhuḥ || 10.89.5*

145. See n. 284 below and relevant text.

146. *tam asya marjayāmasi | ... yam gāva āsabhīr dadhuḥ | purā nūnam ca sūrayaḥ || 999.3acd*. Translation quoted is Griffith's.

147. *pāntaḥ* : soma-drinkers; *dakṣasādhanam* (9.98.8b); *yaj...sūriṣu śravo bṛhad dadhe ...*(8cd); *indrāya pātave ... nare ca dakṣiṇāvate* (9.98.10 ac).

148. *somasya harsyāḥ* . 8.68.14b.

3.53.10: "Ye Kuśika-s, drink up the Soma's savoury meath."<sup>149</sup>

8.32.1 : "Kaṇva-s tell forth with song (the deeds) of Indra..., wrought in Soma's wild delight."<sup>150</sup>

8.48.3: "The Soma we have drunk, immortal have become, to the light gone, the gods discovered."<sup>151</sup>

When we appreciate this ancient ritual significance attached to the Soma draught, by prince and priest alike, it is easy to understand the harsh characterization by the Vedic priests of all those who rejected the Soma rite and also who apparently took objection to its use among themselves. (Cf. "drinkers of *śṛta*" in 7.18 and 10.27).<sup>152</sup>

So he who did not conform to the Soma ritual was roundly condemned in the Ṛgveda and the commonest way of doing this was to call such a person a 'non-presser' (: *asunvant-*). The term has been coupled with others like 'brahma-hating', 'not given to generosity' and "unapproachable", which are all words that describe those who did not comply with the life-style favoured by the *ṛṣis*.<sup>153</sup>

Not to be a Soma offerer : this was a high offence in the eyes of the Vedic *ṛṣi*-s. Not only that, it was also a high offence not to be a Soma-drinker.

Thus the over-riding position of the Soma ceremonial in the early Indra cult is an unquestionable fact. Yet signs are not wanting in the RV itself that circumstances had tended to weaken the power of this ritual (- either the presence of Aryan groups who had adopted other practices, or the growing irrelevance of the ritualistic modes of a militaristic cult; the two may in fact be not unrelated to each other). Thus e.g. RV 1.122.9 refers to the dishonest man who cunningly prepares the Soma sap (as thin) as water<sup>154</sup> and 2.30.7 voices the priest's desire that he (even he!) should not tire of the Soma rites: "Let it not exhaust me nor tire me. Let us not say, 'press no Soma'."<sup>155</sup>

149. *vi pibidhvam kuśikāḥ somyaṃ madhu* || 3.53.10

150. *kaṇvā indrasya gāthayā, made somasya vocata* || 8.32.1

151. *apāma somam amṛtā abhūma | aganma jyotir avidāma devān* - 8.48.3. cf. also 9.8.9 *tvā ... indrapītam ... bhakṣīmahī*.

152. Geldner commenting on *śṛtapām anindram* of 10.27.1 notes the similarity of phraseology with 7.18.16ab: *ardham... śṛtapām*. (We have noted above other points of similarity between 7.18 and 10.27). Geldner says *śṛta* here means cooked milk, as part of the Soma brew and asks whether *śṛtapā* could mean "drinker of (only) milk" as opposed to the Soma-drinker. But clearly *śṛta* as a constituent of the Soma brew makes no sense in this reference to men who are *anindra* and who even deride the great Indra (*nid*— 10.27.6c). Falling off from Soma rites was a necessary accompaniment of going outside Indra-worship. Hence *śṛtapā* as an epithet of the party of *anindra* men must mean something more than what Geldner thinks is the case.

153. Cf. *na sunoti somam...* and *brahmadviṣaḥ* : 10.160.4bd; *asusvīn... aprṇataḥ* : 6.44. 11d; *asunvantam... dūnāśam* 1.176.4ab.

154. *janaḥ... abhidrugḥ... apo na sunoty aksnyādhrk* - 1.122.9

155. *na mā taman no śraman nota tandran | na vocāmā mā sunoteti somam* | 2.30.7

(6)

Is this situation of conflicting positions on matters of cult a characteristic of Vedic India only, or do we also have any comparable features in ancient Iran?

The question about Iran is inevitable since we know that in later times Zarathustra denounced certain aspects of earlier Iranian religious life which cultivated the very practices that the protagonists of the Indra cult seem at times (defensively?) to advocate.

Let us in this connection read what R.C. Zaehner says in "The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism":

"Yima's crime would seem to have been not so much that he had introduced meat eating among his people as that he had slaughtered cattle in sacrifice to the ancient gods. This sacrifice would appear to have been associated ... with ritual intoxication... it would seem clear that Zoroaster is attacking a traditional cult in which a bull was slaughtered... in honour of the *daevas*: this rite was accompanied by another in which the juice of the Haoma plant was extracted and ritually consumed."<sup>156</sup>

Zaehner observes elsewhere in the same work: "The Haoma cult goes back to Indo-Iranian times..... We cannot avoid the conclusion that originally the Haoma rite must have been more typical of the *daevas* than it was of the *ahuras*. In all probability no clear distinction was made between the two until shortly before the birth of the prophet... we can only say that the Haoma cult was practised both by the followers of the *daevas* and by those of the *ahuras* at the time the prophet saw the light of day."

If this was the case, it might appear intriguing why the prophet was regarded as taking any stand at all in regard to this cult: In answer to this Zaehner continues: "The daevis cult was no doubt orgiastic, violent and cruel ... Whatever Zoroaster himself may have thought, the later tradition did not interpret his words as meaning that he condemned anything but drunkenness in connection with the Haoma rite or that he condemned animal sacrifices as such, but only the cruelty associated with it and the lack of moderation in the use that was made of it."<sup>157</sup>

The least that the Iranian evidence boils down to is then this: that the ahuric view of the cult tended to be less in favour of the orgiastic and more in favour of the non-violent; the daevis tendency on the other hand was more impetuous and aggressive : corresponding roughly to the two ends of the spectrum of religious practice widely evident almost everywhere. In short the two cults seem to express and typify the dichotomy of men's attitudes: dynamic and orgiastic at times and austere and non-violent at others. But it is impossible to speak of the two in terms of mutual exclusion.

156. Zaehner, p.38

157. Op. cit. pp. 88-90



The similarity of the religious situation in Ṛgvedic India to what Zaehner surmises as the position in pre-Zoroastrian Iran is indeed remarkable. In India, to all appearances, the *deva* par excellence was Indra, while Varuṇa seems to have been rather more typical of the asuric trend. But those whom the ṛṣi-s would describe as “without Indra”, as men who scoff at Indra, and as “(kings) who do not sacrifice” to the *deva*-s, nevertheless call on his aid when face to face with war. “Insulters” call a Viśvāmitra singer an extremist devotee of Indra, but the Viśvāmitra-s have obviously acknowledged the divinity of Varuṇa (although they have not devoted entire hymns to eulogize him in their *maṇḍala* of the RV Saṃhitā). In other words, there is no question of an exclusive *asura* (or Varuṇa) religion or of an exclusive *deva* (or Indra) religion in India, any more than in Iran. It was perhaps because the early Aryans in India had to encounter stiff and prolonged resistance to their advance in the new land that early Vedism tended to remain an Indra-centred cult with a predilection for the “orgiastic, violent and cruel” traits that Zaehner ascribes to early daevism in Iran. And it was, we would surmise, because of the evidence of a softer attitude emerging among some Aryans towards the non-Aryan “resisters” (= *vṛtra*-s), that the Indra-centred elements reviled them as if they were also foes and aliens - thus throwing a smoke-screen through which it is rather hard to see the outlines of the tribal and religious situation that seems to have prevailed in early Indo-Aryan times.

(7)

When on the subject the *deva* - *asura* distinction, a very instructive hymn of the RV is 10.124. We read it in the light of the ideas expressed by Lüders and others on Ṛgvedic cosmology. The hymn appears to be in line with the late Ṛgvedic representation of the celestial waters, the sources of light and fire and the heavenly Soma, as having their abode and resting place in the highest heaven. The creative powers of the universe according to this view have to constantly maintain these celestial waters (and all the treasures contained therein) free from the grip of *Vṛtra*. What is especially interesting about RV 10.124 is that it seems to portray *Vṛtra* as *Father Asura*, and to refer to his enclosing or inclusion of Agni, Varuṇa and Soma within his domain. *Vṛtra*'s imprisonment of these powers cannot be regarded as an unusual idea in view of their close association with the heavenly waters, but what is remarkable is the suggestion of their asuric extraction : the hymn seems to reflect a view that there was a time when Agni, Varuṇa and Soma were asuric. It says that in this condition Agni was not fit to receive the sacrifice. Indra as the dynamic, creative force now appears and calls Agni out of the dark, to come to the immortal, the sacrificial. Agni follows, but with an aching conscience (without friendliness, I leave him who was friendly... choosing Indra, I abandon the Father..... 10.124.2/4). Varuṇa and Soma follow suit. With this the

lordship of the Asura-s comes to an end. And then Indra offers Varuṇa co-rulership in the new kingdom and enlists Soma's support to kill Vṛtra. The hymn ends showing the world re-established and the waters freed. They stand away with disgust from the fallen power (Vṛtra), like tribesmen opting for a *rājan*. (See translation of RV 10.124 attached to the end of this chapter).

An echo of these important ideas is found in another hymn, i.e., RV 6.59. Here, stanza 1 addresses Indra-Agni and declares:

Killed are your elders (literally, fathers), the god-foes. You two, Indra, Agni are alive<sup>158</sup>.

Apparently, some at least among the ṛṣi-s were keen on spreading the notion that the chief gods had, at some point in the history of the celestial powers, rebelled against their elders (: the elders came to have the gods as foes: *devaśatravaḥ*) and done them to their death - or something of that sort. Says 4.18.12, addressing Indra:

“Who has made your mother a widow? Who sought to kill you, as you were lying (still), (or) as you were moving (about) ? What god was gracious toward you when you seized the father by (his) feet and destroyed (him)?”<sup>159</sup>

To us these sayings appear to be informative not only on aspects of a continuing development of religious views, but also of social institutions and practices and on the passing of tribal authority from elderly chiefs to a ‘chosen’ (ritually installed) ruler, the *rājan*, the *kṣatriya*.

(8)

On the basis of what we discussed above, we may justifiably say that in Vedic worship the shift from the *asura* to the *deva* trend seems to be reflected differently in three detectable conditions of the cult:

- (a) Cult regards Indra as fit for invocation (in the way characteristically associated with this god) in times of war, but not pre-eminently in any other sense.
- (b) Cult rejects orgiastic and violent traits and is sceptical about the very existence of Indra.
- (c) Cult gives unvarying emphasis to Indra and rejects *asura*-s altogether, but assimilates Varuṇa.

158. *hatāso vām pitaro devaśatrava |indrāgnī jīvatho yuvam| | 6.59.1cd*

159. *kas te mātaram vidhavā acakra|chayum kas tvām ajighāmsac carantam|kas te devo adhi mārḍika āsīt|yat prākṣiṇāḥ pitaram pādagrhya||4.18.12*

It would seem that what ultimately came to occupy the position of the 'official' cult of the R̥gvedic Aryans was a version of (c) which gave a clear and unambiguous position to powers that at first sight might seem to be asuric in character. In other words, the RV Samhitā represents to a great extent a conscious development of a religious viewpoint and a cult system paying due regard to a variety of preexisting aspects of a common worship which can be subsumed in the single concept *yajña*: sacrifice. In social terms the RV reveals the participatory role of an elite priesthood consciously advancing the thrust of an ethnic-cultural expansion, emphasizing and synthesizing the various items of this 'variety of aspects' as and when that expansion required.

It the Samhitā represents the synthesizing of a variety of pre-existing aspects of a common worship (as viewed from our distance from the document), it becomes clear that the story of Vedic cultural and political development cannot be reconstructed as a 'historical' narration unless we succeed in unravelling a tangled skein : the lines of demarcation that must have at one time existed between those various aspects of the sacrificial cult. This is well nigh a hopeless task, but a slender prospect of arriving at some reasonable hypothesis seems to exist. And that is to investigate the *deva* cult as possibly enshrining a vision with implications of a distinctively political and social kind.

**RV 10.124 : Appendix to Ch. III<sup>160</sup>**

*Indra* : Come to this sacrifice of ours O Agni. You will be the carrier of oblation and the chief of ritual. Too long already have you lain in darkness (1)

*Agni* : Secretly departing from the *adeva*, as (a) *deva* do I come forth, the (prospect of) immortality seeing. When I, without friendliness, leave him who was friendly, I go from my own friendly realm for an unknown lineage. (2)

...I speak a kindly word to Father Asura: "Exclusion from the sacrifice I leave, to participation therein." (3)

160. RV 10.124 : *imam no agna upa yajñam ehi/ ... aso havyavāl uta nah purogā/jyog eva dīrgham tama āsayiṣṭhāh/* (1) *adevād devaḥ pracatā guhā yan/prapaśyamāno amṛtatvam emi / śivam yat santam aśivo jahāmi/svāt sakhyād arañim nābhim emi/* (2) ... *śamsāmi pitre asurāya sevam / ayajñiyād yajñiyam bhāgam emi /* (3) *bahvīḥ samā akaram antar asminn/ indram vṛṇānah pitaram jahāmi/agniḥ somo varuṇas te cyavante/ paryāvad rāṣṭram tad avāmy āyan/* (4) *nirmāyā u tye asurā abhūvan/ tvam ca mā varuṇa kāmāyāse/ ṛtena rājann anṛtam viviñcan/ mama rāṣṭrasyādhipatyam ehi/* (5) ... *hanāva vṛtram nir ehi soma / ...* (6) *kaviḥ kavivā divi rūpam āsajad / aprabhūti varuṇo nir apah sṛjat/ ...* (7) *tā asya jyēṣṭham indriyam sacante/ tā im ā kṣeti svadhayā madantiḥ / tā im viśo na rājānam vṛṇānā / bibhatsuvo apa vṛtrād atiṣṭhan /* (8)

Many a year was I active within him. (Now) choosing Indra, I abandon the Father. They, Agni, Soma, Varuṇa leave. Rulership has changed. Coming, I favour it. (4)

*Indra:* The Asura-s have lost their *māyā* power. If you would like me, O Varuṇa, (then) to the sovereignty of my kingdom come, distinguishing *ṛta* from what is not *ṛta*. (5)

Come out, O Soma, let us two destroy Vṛtra..... (6)  
The *kavi* with his *kavi*-like quality has fixed his form in the sky.  
Devoid of might, Varuṇa released the waters. (7)

They (the waters) follow his loftiest Indra - might. They linger by him, revelling in their inherent strength. Abhorring, they stood apart from Vṛtra, like folks (when) choosing the *rājan*. (8)

#### IV Significance of Indra Cult : An Impetus to Power

(1)

It is but apt that this chapter should commence with some words in explanation of its title.

The depiction of Indra in the RV has a character of its own. At the same time we have no evidence to think that there was a distinct "Indra Religion." The Indra cult is part of the larger religion of the *yajña* that we find depicted in all the scriptures of the Veda. Within the confines of that larger system however, Indraism carries with it an element of self - consciousness, certain individual features which seem to us to be deliberate and not merely incidental or accidental. This historically interesting aspect of the Indra cult seems to us to reflect a well-thought out response to actual earthly realities on the part of a segment of the *ṛṣi* elite of the Vedic age, or perhaps a response whose origins may well go beyond the Vedic age.

A word of caution however has to be added, mainly to set the limits of the view which we seek to expound. It is not being argued that the Vedic religiousness is merely a response to a given challenge, that it is, so to say, a creature of circumstance. The Vedic religiousness, as every form of human religiousness, is emphatically a more profound phenomenon on whose nature no new opinion is here expressed. On the other hand, it appears that the developed Indra cult is quite a distinctive phenomenon whose purpose seems to have been to direct the energies of a culture that was nurtured on this religiousness to a particular goal, a goal which today we would visualize as an expansion of power. In that sense the Indra cult has distinct political overtones, though in an idiom that may sound strange as a political expression.

Let us examine some prominent delineations of this trend in the hymns of the RV Samhitā.

In the first place this kind of motivation of the cult is most often expressed mythologically. Thus it is part of the Indra myth that he aided Manu (= the Aryan) against the Dāsa, and in the contest in which he characteristically figures as the hero, he slays an opponent who is all too obviously Dāsa-like.

Before we go to examine some striking expressions of this legendary material, let us remind ourselves that myth and legend in the Vedic system as elsewhere were never merely narrative in purpose. A myth or a legend about those whom one venerated and worshipped is always a commendation of a given course of conduct and a recommendation of it to the worshipper. In short it is an emphatic call to those of the present age to do what the gods and heroes did of old.

In the Manu legend, Manu clearly represents the Aryan standing in opposition to the Dāsa. Let us quote some examples of this characterization.

1.130.8 Indra helped the sacrificing Aryan in battles...he made the dark skin subject to Manu.<sup>161</sup>

2.20.6/7: (Indra) rose for Manu's sake, carried away...the head of Dāsa Arśāsāna; he shatters the Dāsa (strongholds) open, with the dark men in their wombs.<sup>162</sup>

8.98.6: Indra is the breaker of forts, a slayer of the Dasyu, favourer of Manu.<sup>163</sup>

10.43.8 : (Indra), who makes the waters to have an Ārya lord, finds light for Manu, the presser (of Soma), the offerer of oblations.<sup>164</sup>

What is stated here of Indra (and in numerous other passages of the same type) is said about other gods in some other contexts, but this appears to us to be not so much a part of the *deva* depiction as such, but a projection to other gods of a function that is strictly ascribed to Indra among those Aryans in whose cult-practices Indra occupied a paramount place.

161. *indraḥ samatsu yajamānam āryam | prāvad ..manave|tvacaṃ kṛṣṇām arandhayat|*  
1.130.8

162. *ūrdhvo bhuvan manuṣe... arśāsānasya... śiro bharad dāsasya ... kṛṣṇayōnīḥ dāsīr*  
*airayad vi... -from 2.20.6-7*

163. *indro dartā purām ... hantā dasyor manor vṛdhah | -8.98.6*

164. *yo aryapatnīr akṛṇod imā apaḥ | sa sunvate ...| avindaj jyotir manave havīsmate||*  
10.43.8 bcd.

Thus in the sixth book of the RV (ascribed to the Bhāradvāja family) the *gods* are characterized as “they who made Manu superior to the Dāsa”<sup>165</sup> and in the tenth it is said that the *gods* brought up Purūravas in order that the Dasyu-s be destroyed.<sup>166</sup>

In the tenth book again, it is said of the divinized Soma drops that “their countenance, shining with might, found for Manu the sun, the Aryan light”<sup>167</sup> “Winning the sun” in the RV is a characteristic term for sacrifice as well as war; and, when what is won in the course of that is described as the Aryan light gained for Manu’s sake, the statement simply means that Soma wins for the Aryan *his* light: Manu here as elsewhere in the RV stands for the Aryan as opposed to the Dāsa.

In several references to Indra’s fight against the Dragon or Vṛtra, the latter is depicted as a Dāsa or as symbolizing Dāsa power. Thus 1.32.11 says the serpent (= Vṛtra) guarded the waters and so the latter are “in Dāsa subjugation”; Indra slays Vṛtra and uncovers the waterhole.<sup>168</sup> In this context, as Sāyana the commentator observes, it is Vṛtra that is depicted as the Dāsa. Our point is that such a depiction is extraordinarily meaningful.

Indra is said to have been born to slay Vṛtra<sup>169</sup>: this notion illumines the context of such a saying as the following : “At his very birth, he conquered all the waters that were under Dāsa subjection”.<sup>170</sup> Here too it is all too clear that Vṛtra = Dāsa.

Another of the famous exploits of Indra is his subjugation of Śuṣṇa. It is important to note that in many references to this myth Śuṣṇa is described in identical terms as are applied to the Dāsa - Dasyu. Thus Śuṣṇa is *the Dāsa* for whom Indra “will make the earth a pillow”<sup>171</sup>; he is the Dasyu “full of evil power” and “devoid of the sacred word”<sup>172</sup>, “the Dasyu” on whom Indra’s bolt is to be hurled,<sup>173</sup> “who does not practise sacrificial rites and is devoted to other practices.”<sup>174</sup>

165. *ye manuṃ cakrur uparaṃ dasāya* -6.21.11

166. *purūravo ’vardhayan dasyuhatyāya* -10.95.7

167. *eṣām anīkaṃ śavaśā davidyutat | vidat svar manave jyotir āryam ||* 10.43.4 cd

168. *dāsapatnīr ahigopā atīsthan |... āpaḥ... | apāṃ bilam... | vṛtram jaghanvān apa tad vavāra||* 1.32.11. Cf. with this the co-occurrence of Śuṣṇa, Pipru, Śambara and Vṛtra-as in 1.103.8 : *śuṣṇmaṃ pīpruṃ kuyavaṃ vṛtram indra|| yadāvadhīr vi puraḥ śambara sya |*

169. *jāyathāḥ vṛtrahatyāya* -8.89.5ab = 1.51.6 (n.196)

170. *yat...ajanīsthāh... |viśvā apo ajayad dāsapatnīh|* 5.30.5 (Cf. *tvam apo ajayo dāsa-patnīh |* (1.96.18d).

171. *kṣām dāsāyopabarhanīm kaḥ* -1.174.7b. See Geldner’s comments on 1.174.7 ab.

172. *māyāvān abrahma—dasyuh* /4.16.9b. See Geldner on 4.16.9

173. *śuṣṇe...| vajraṃ jaghantha dasyavi|* 8.6.14.ab

174. *akarmā dasyuh... (amantur) anyavrataḥ ..* 10.22.8ab. See Geldner on 10.22.7—10.

Elsewhere, Śuṣṇa as well as his supporters are characterized as Dasyu-s (plural)<sup>175</sup>. They are further described approximately as “Dasyu-s of improper speech, that are not in possession of (the sacred) word” (*anāso dasyūn mṛdhravācaḥ*)<sup>176</sup> - a typical description of the Dasyu-s as the characteristic cult-opponents of the Vedic Aryans. (*anās* - occurring only here is analysed by Sāyaṇa as *an-ās*, lit ‘mouthless’, which Geldner would render as approximating to *dumb*. To us it appears surprisingly close to *abrahman*, *amantu* and *avāc* appearing at 4.16.9 and 10.22.8 respectively).

Śuṣṇa’s hideouts again are referred to exactly in the same terms as are the strongholds of the Dasyu-s (: fortifications, forts etc.),<sup>177</sup> and Śuṣṇa is characteristically mentioned alongside such well-known Dāsa chiefs whom Indra is said to have slain as Śambara, Pipru and Ilībiṣa<sup>178</sup>.

In statements such as these which refer to legendary figures like Manu, Vṛtra and Śuṣṇa, Indra is depicted as the real maker of Dāsa defeat (or the defeat of the Dāsa-like). But the notion of Indra’s initiative in subjugating Dāsa power and extending Arya sovereignty also finds numerous other expressions, in which he is the bringer of Aryan triumph and the model for the Aryan warlords to emulate.

(3)

An interesting idea expressed in the hymns to Indra is that it is he who personally leads (or should lead) the fighting hosts of the Aryan chiefs. He “leads troops and stands at the head of the heroic men”;<sup>179</sup> he is “the wide shield and the pioneer fighter”<sup>180</sup> and the one that will “stand at the fore front.”<sup>181</sup> “In his command are the horses and cattle, the mobile groups and all the cars.”<sup>182</sup>

175. *dasyūn* : 4.16.12c, 5.29. 10c, 5.31.7d.

176. 5.29.10cd.

177. e.g. *śuṣṇasya dṛmhitāḥ* -1.51.11d; *śuṣṇasya puraḥ*: 4.30.13 ac; *vṛnak...śuṣṇam indrah puram cyautnāya śayathāya ...* 6.18.8cd.

178. Cf e.g. 1.33.12 (Ilībiṣa and Śambara) 1.101.2 (Śambara, Pipru and Śuṣṇa) ; 1.103.8 (Śus., Pip. and Śamb.); 2.14.5 (Śus. and Pip.); 2.19.6 (Śus., Kuyava, Śamb.) ; 6.18.8 (Śus., Pip., Śamb.)

179. Cf.7.20.5c : *pra yaḥ senānīr adha nṛbhyo asti*

180. *tvam varmāsi saprathah — puroyodhas ca vṛtrahan—* 7.31.6ab.

181. *sa no vājeṣu ... puraḥsthātā— maghavā vṛtrahā bhuvat—* 8.46.13

182. *yasyāśvāsah pradiśi yasya gāvo/yasya grāmā yasya viśve rathāsah/2.12.7ab*

This last quotation seems to refer to the separate constituents involved in early Aryan fighting. It reminds us of RV 1.100.10 *a* which describes Indra as gaining triumph by means of *grāma-s* (= mobile hosts) and (battle-) cars.<sup>183</sup> Wilhelm Rau has clearly shown the significance of the reference to 'mobile groups' or *grāma-s* in the later Vedic texts.<sup>184</sup> As in those texts, here too *grāma-s* certainly do not mean, "villages" (the standard meaning in Classical Sanskrit). Another clear example is RV 3.33 which refers to the Bharata hordes crossing the Vipās and Śutudrī as "a *grāma* looking out for cattle".<sup>185</sup> In the light of what Rau has said, we assume that here a whole tribe was on the move and in this mobile state they were liable to come into conflict with others whom they met and whose goods they would attempt forcibly to take. Our interpretation of the condition of the Bharata-s as reflected in RV 3.33 was based on this assumption. (above, Ch II. i.e)

It is interesting to note that another word by which the "commoners" of such a group were indicated is *sajātāḥ*. They would form the bulk of the fighters of the tribe.<sup>186</sup>

It is in the strident call to the *sajāta-s* to "be heroes in the style of Indra" found in RV 10.103 that one can perhaps find the best example of the *ṛṣi-s* depicting Indra with what can be regarded as deliberate "political - militaristic motivation". The song addresses Bṛhaspati and Indra first and then these 'kinsmen of the clan' (= *sajātāḥ*, following the etymology of the word; in reality it meant "commoners"). We quote the relevant part of this battle-song:

"Bṛhaspati, fly round with your car, killing the *rakṣas*, driving foes away, breaking up armies, crushing, winning through battle. Be the helper of our cars. Indra - to be known through strength, hero pre-eminent, powerful, triumphant, exercising might, above every hero, above every fighter, born in might - mount the winning car, finding cows ! Him, cleaving cow-opens open, finding cattle with bolt in arm, winning the race and rushing forth with vigour - be heroes like him, O kinsmen of the clan ! Hold fast to him, O comrades! Plunging with prowess into cowpens, Indra the uncompromising hero, of wrath hundredfold, subduer of troops, hard to be fought with - may he in battles be our aid!"<sup>187</sup>

183. *sa grāmebhiḥ sanitā sa rathebhīḥ*/ 1.100.10

184. Rau 36 (pp. 51 ff.)

185. *gavyan grāmaḥ* - 3.33.11

186. Rau 37 (p.54f).

187. 10.103.4-8 : *bṛhaspate pari diyā rathena/rakṣohā' mitrām apabādhamānaḥ/ prabhañ-jant-senāḥ pramṛṇo yudhā jayann/ asmākam edhy avitā rathānām// balaviññāyah sthaviraḥ praviraḥ/ sahasvān vājī sahamāna ugraḥ/ abhivīro abhisatvā sahojā/ jaitram indra ratham ā tiṣṭha govit// gotrabhidaṃ govīdaṃ vajrabāhuṃ/ jayantam ajma pramṛnantam ojasā / imaṃ sajātā anu vīrayadhvam/ indraṃ sakhāyo anu saṃ rabhadh-vam// abhi gotrāni sahasā gāhamāno/ dayo vīraḥ śatamanyur indraḥ/ duścyavanah pṛtanāṣāl ayudhīyo/ asmākam senā avatu pra yutsu//*



And it is worthy of note that here Indra in person is called upon to mount the battle cars of these troops as they set out in their campaigns for booty and for power.

The image of Indra's physical 'participation' in the martial under-takings of the Aryan warlord is conceived of in many ways. The feeling of Indra's divine alliance with him is often expressed by words like *yuj-* and *sakhya* (participation, comradeship). "Through alliance with Indra we will crush the foe" (7.48.2).<sup>188</sup> "For alliance" the priests would invoke Indra (1.101.1-7).<sup>189</sup> As Schmidt observes, "Indra and his comrades in war are *friends*".<sup>190</sup>

(4)

What all this amounts to obviously is this : that in vanquishing the Dāsa-s and other resisters (*vṛtra*-s) the Aryan warlords execute Indra's work. In other words, the *ṛṣis* represent the *sūri* (=the Aryan hero) as the instrument of Indra's divine might.

In fact this is quite explicitly stated. Thus in one instance, whose background is clearly an impending raid or contest or military engagement, it is hoped that Indra "would win the sun by means of our heroes"<sup>191</sup>. "Win the sun" would no doubt sound queer to modern ears. It certainly is an unusual way of expressing the idea of gaining victory. In the Ṛgvedic setting, it emphasizes the ritual significance of war. Indra triumphs over the Dāsa-like *Vṛtra* and ensures the freedom of the heavenly waters and the powers of light: so his triumph is a *winning* of those waters and the sun. On earth the warlord's triumph over his foes is not only a ritual re-enactment of Indra's feat, it is actually a performance of one of *his* tasks.

A later stanza of the hymn from which we quoted the above line makes it clear that Indra's 'winning the sun' there means an earthly triumph: Indra "shall slay the Dasyu-s and the Śimyu-s and with spear stretch them upon the earth. With his fair (-skinned) companions, he shall win the land, shall win the sun and win the waters".<sup>192</sup>

188. *indreṇa yujā taruṣema vṛtram* / 7.48.2. Note the word *vṛtram* which probably might have been better translated as 'resister'.

189. (*marutvantam*) *sakhyaṃ* (*havāmahe*) : the refrain in 1.101.1-7.

190. Schmidt, p. 148.

191. *asmākebhīḥ nṛbhīḥ sūryam sanat* / 1.100.6

192. *dasyūñ chimyūñś ca...* / *hatvā pṛthivyā śarvā ni barhāt* / *sanat kṣetram sakhībhiḥ śvit-nyebhiḥ* / *sanat sūryam sanad apah* // 1.100. 18. Cf also 1.100.6cd : May Indra be this day our succour : *asminn ahan...* *no bhavatu indra ūti*.

The same idea one finds expressed elsewhere too. Thus “through fighters and heroes of ours”<sup>193</sup> Indra will achieve his heroic deeds, “through our men win the sun”.<sup>194</sup> “His sovereign might would he extend; through kings he slays the foes”.<sup>195</sup>

Indra thus is the real *dasyu-han* (killer of Dasyu-s) and it is for the killing of them that he is born”.<sup>196</sup> He subjugates them that have deviated from (Aryan) vows and crushes opponents “through the agency of followers”<sup>197</sup>.

In one interesting stanza Indra is depicted as claiming credit for a victory which elsewhere is simply stated to be the triumph of a Bharata prince: “I have invigorated Atithigva for the benefit of the Guṅgu-s. I stablished (that) slayer of foes among (his) people - their strength as it were - as I spread (my?) fame on the occasion of the killing of Parnaya, or in the great battle, the destruction of Karañja”.<sup>198</sup>

(5)

If the earthly warrior's battle is a re-enactment of the heavenly contest of Indra, we should expect to see a similarity of depiction of the two. This is indeed the case.

The classic battles of Indra in heaven are those against Vṛtra and Vala. It has been shown that *vṛtram* (neuter) means ‘resistance’ or obstruction.<sup>199</sup> ‘Vṛtra is the arch demon of the RV and he and his cohorts represent evil’<sup>200</sup> he is the very opposite of the divine and it is Indra's task to resist the emergence of his power. “When the *adeva* (:‘anti-god’ = Vṛtra) raised himself above the gods, then did they choose Indra, in (the contest of) winning the sun.”<sup>201</sup>

193. 2.30.10 : See n. 257 below.

194. 8.15.12 : See n. 256 below.

195. *upa kṣatram pṛñcīta hanti rājabhiḥ*/ 1.40.8

196. 8.89.5 (see n. 169 above) ; *dasyuhatyāya jajñiṣe* : 1.51.6 Indra is *dasyuhan* at 1.100.12, 1.103.4, 6.45.24, 8:76.11.,8.77.3 etc.

197. ...*randhayann apavratān ... ābhuhīḥ ... śnathayann (anābhuvah)* - 1.103.4

198. *aham guṅgubhyo atithigvam iṣkaram/iṣam na ... vṛtraturam vikṣu dhārayam/ yat par-  
nayaghna uta vā karañjahe/ prāham mahe vṛtratūrye aśuśruvi*// 10.48.8

199. Benveniste and Renou, p.6

200. W. Norman Brown, *Mythology of India*, in Kramer, p.282.

201. *adevo yad abhy auhiṣṭa devānt- svarṣātā vṛnata indram atra* // 6.17.8cd.

The two (Indra and Vṛtra) then are locked in contest to win this treasure, the sun. (Often the object is represented as the sun and/or the waters. The sun is in any case involved, as the heavenly waters are said to contain the sun.) "As long as Vṛtra ruled, the world was dark, and it was Indra's triumph that brought the light."<sup>202</sup> And the objective is the same in the Vala myth, which has been shown to be a priestly version of the more popular Vṛtra myth. "The two myths bear features so similar to each other...that the singers occasionally mix up the two."<sup>203</sup>

The cosmological meanings attached to these myths have been well explained by Lüders in his monumental work on Varuṇa. Says he: "For the Vedic Indians, or at least the Vedic poets, the point of issue of rain is not the cloud... in the aerial spaces, but the flood of waters in the heavens...<sup>204</sup> which (flood) is more often called the *samudra*<sup>205</sup>... It is from the heavens the gods send rain<sup>206</sup>. The heavenly sea in which are found the waters, Soma and the celestial luminaries is enclosed in a rock, a stony container. So Indra in the Vṛtra myth always struggles against 'the rock'. It is the stony enclosure of heavenly waters that Vṛtra has devoured. The very same rock is the Vala out of which the dawns are released...<sup>207</sup> Several times the waters are called *svarvatīh*... 'consisting of the sun'. Everywhere the reference is to the winning of these waters... The *svarvatī* waters are everywhere the waters in which the sun sojourns and whose winning is striven for even by human beings, because in the last analysis the rain issues out of them."<sup>208</sup>

The goal of Indra's contests, an enclosure full of valued objects guarded by a hostile power, is the exact likeness of the target of a Vedic warlord's attack: the *enclosure* of cows and horses<sup>209</sup> in the protection of another chief and his men. (Instructive in this regard is Rau's disclosure of how a Vedic *grāma* encamped when it reached a hospitable area: the tents pitched round a central enclosure giving it protection all round. They would live there as long as the district provided grass and water for the animals.)<sup>210</sup>

202. Geldner, note on 1.51.4d.

203. Lüders, p.193

204. " p.116

205. " p.118

206. " p.118

207. " p.174

208. " p.295

209. Cf. e.g. 8.32.5: (addressing Indra) *gor aśvasya vi vrajaṃ/ puraṃ na... darśasi/* "You will break open, like a fortress, the cattle-and-horse enclosure"; 3.43.7d : *apa gotrā vavartha*; 4.20.8 : *vrajaṃ apavartā' si gonām* ; 6.45.24 : *vrajaṃ gomantam... apa varat* ; With these may be compared 6.62.8, said of *sūri* aided by Maruts : *sa vrajaṃ dartā*.

210. Rau, 36 (p.54)

As the goal, so the mode of setting about the onslaught. Indra goes to war secure in the knowledge that he as a warrior is not a solitary force. His might is his leadership, but such a struggle essentially requires the cooperation of other forces:<sup>211</sup> the spiritual power which the (heavenly) ṛṣi-s and Brhaspati, their chief, represent, as well as the sheer physical force which the common fighters (i.e. in this case the Maruts) bring. It is with such co-operation of forces that Indra triumphs.

It is with the aid of sacred power that Indra breaks up the Vala rock (2.24.3)<sup>212</sup>; the Aṅgiras (representing priestly power) help him with sacred songs, with their (mighty) 'roar' (1.71.2),<sup>213</sup> the Uśijs with ritual and incantation (2.21.5).<sup>214</sup> It is with Brhaspati as ally that Indra overpowers the "godless tribes" that come up against him (8.96.15)<sup>215</sup> - where clearly Indra represents the *rājan* and Brhaspati the *purohita*, the priestly counsellor and strategist.<sup>216</sup> And, more emphatically, "it is the sacrifice that protects Indra's thunderbolt in the destruction of the dragon" (3.32.12)<sup>217</sup>.

This last sentence needs to be emphasized. Indra as the chief in the celestial war needs the sacrifice, needs his *purohita* and his priests. And the celestial priests obtain their ritual rewards no less than the terrestrial. The Uśij-s obtain "treasures and cows" under Indra (2.21.5)<sup>218</sup>. It is when (Brhaspati) the divine *purohita* carries away the booty that Indra's victory is complete and the sun is able to shine (2.24.9)<sup>219</sup>. So Indra's functions are to be "the slayer of Vṛtra, the winner of booty and the giver of gifts", in that order (4.17.8).<sup>220</sup>

The whole position is neatly expressed in one memorable stanza: "The chief of *vipra*-s (i.e. Brhaspati), came offering his alliance. The rock yielded in ripeness its 'foetus' to the great actor (i.e. Indra). The *youthful* hero won, with the young (warriors') aid, demonstrating the quality of his leadership (or of his generosity). Forthwith the Aṅgiras became the singer of praise." (3.31.7)<sup>221</sup>

211. Cf. 2.21.5, 3.34.4, etc...: Uśijs render priestly aid to Indra; 1.71.2, 1.62.5: The Aṅgiras aid Indra; 2.24.3/9, 6.73.3, 10.67.5, 10.68.9: Brhaspati plays a major role in Indra's triumphs. See also note 216 below. 3.47.4, 5.30.6: Maruts help Indra; 6.20.2: Viṣṇu allies himself with Indra.

212. 2.24.3 *abhinad brahmaṇā valam*

213. *ukthaiḥ ... raveṇa*: 1.71.2

214. 2.21.5: See n. 267 below.

215. *viśo adevīr abhyācarantīr/ brhaspatinā yujendraḥ sasāha* / 8.96.15

216. Brhaspati as Indra's *purohita* accompanies him to war: Geldner, in note to 10.103.4

217. 3.32.12: *yajñas te vajram ahihatya āvat*.

218. 2.21.5: See n. 267 below.

219. *sa purohitah, ...yad vājam bharate ...ād it sūryas tapati* -2.24.9

220. *hantā ... vṛtram, sanitā ... vājam, dātā maghāni* -4.17.8

221. *agacchad u vipratamaḥ sakhīyannn / asūdayat sukṛte garbham adriḥ / sasāna maryo yuvabhīr makhasyann/ athābhavad angirāḥ sadyo arcan* // 3.31.7

Here the god's mythical act is an exact replica of the tribal warlord's conquest of booty with a *purohita's* ritual aid, and the common warriors' physical aid. And the act is rounded off with the chief's show of liberality and the priests' celebration in song of the warlord's might and munificence (: *dāna-stuti*).

In passing we must not fail to notice the extremely significant stress that we find laid here on Indra's *youthfulness*. That emphasis can also be detected elsewhere, as for example at 4.19.2 which says that as Indra assumed control (in anticipation of the war with Vṛtra), the other gods fell back "like old men".<sup>222</sup> We must bear in mind the possibility that Indra's protégés (: the *sūri-s*), like Indra himself, may be youthful heroes contrasted with old tribal chiefs.

(6)

Let us now turn our attention to another fact of the nature of the depiction of Indra in the RV Samhitā which we discussed above. This is the fact that most of the time the opponent that Indra is beseeched to fight against, or is indicated to be fighting against, is portrayed as a "cultural alien." Hence these opponents are quite often characterized as 'godless', 'not sacrificing', 'not pressing Soma', 'not being liberal' and so forth; and in contrast those who receive his support are portrayed as devout sacrificers and offerers of the Soma libation. The alienness of the opponent is somehow or other stressed, positively with (the above or other similar) offending epithets or negatively by instantly underlining the *sūris'* own devotion to the Indra and Soma cults.

Such statements are extremely numerous: "He forcibly collects the Paṇi's (means of ) sustenance, that he may plunder it, and he bestows splendid treasure upon the worshipper."<sup>223</sup> The Paṇi is "the rich irreverent man who makes no offerings" to Indra, "who neglects the practice of generosity".<sup>224</sup> "With the Paṇi who presses no Soma Indra makes no alliance. He takes away his property and strikes him nude. Solely for the presser of Soma is he available, for him who cooks offerings (to him)".<sup>225</sup> "He is (the gatherer) of the property of the irreverent (man), and the giver of wealth to him who makes a splendid libation of Soma."<sup>226</sup>

222. *avāsrjanta jivrayo na devāḥ* - 4.19.2a.  
Indra as a youth also at 1.11.4a, 2.20.3a, 3.46.1b, 6.45.1c, 7.20.1c, 8.21.2b, 8.45.1-3c, 8.46.7a etc. (In these references as *yuvan*). Indra's associates, the Maruts, as a *yuvā gaṇaḥ* at 1.87.4a, 5.61.13 etc.

223. *sam im paṇer ajati bhojanaṃ muṣe | vi dāsuse bhajati sūnaram vasu ||* 5.34.7

224. *yas te revāṃ adāsuriḥ | pramamarśa maghattaye ||* 8.45.15

225. *na revatā paṇinā sakhyam indro- ...asunvatā .. sām grñite | ā'sya vedah khidati hanti nagnaṃ | vi susvaye paktaye kevalo bhūt ||* 4.25.7

226. *adāsūṣo gayasya | prayantā' si .....susvitarāya vedah ||* 7.19.1

So goes the strident call to Indra in the RV hymns. "Destroy the non-pressers and root out the non-givers!"<sup>227</sup> Strike him at once, (him) who presses no Soma, the unapproachable one that is not to you a pleasure; and on us bestow his wealth!"<sup>228</sup> "Be a refuge to the generous donors.....when you put the overbearing ones to rout. May we divide (among us) the wealth of him who is slain by you. Bring us the property of the unapproachable one!"<sup>229</sup>

Clearly thus "he who honours the gods shall prevail over the godless; he who is zealous shall battle (even) him that is hard to subdue. The sacrificer shall appropriate the non-sacrificer's sustenance."<sup>230</sup> And Indra, "like a bold plunderer on the highways, goes deliberately distributing the property of the man who sacrifices not."<sup>231</sup>

And if Indra himself is not always the actual killer of all such cult opponents, he is at least to invigorate his devotees to perform that task themselves: "Stimulate the generous patrons in the conquest of foes (*vrtra*-s)– (patrons) who offer gifts that please!"<sup>232</sup>

It seems reasonable to conclude that in the usage of *vrtra* in such contexts as this, it means not merely 'enemy' but essentially also 'cult opponent'. The noteworthy statement that Indra with heroes destroys these resisters in (i.e. through) the sacrifice (7.19.4)<sup>233</sup> suggests that the *vrtra*-s are of necessity inimical to the sacrificial system, or, more accurately, to the particular development of that system as the Indra cult.

(7)

Indra's function as the symbol most characteristically invoked for promoting Aryan aggrandisement at the expense of the Dasyus is sometimes pithily expressed in the form of a straightforward request to him, as for example in RV 1.103.3 cd : "Throw (your) missile on the Dasyu, augment Aryan authority and glory!"<sup>234</sup> That Indra was *the* god to whom it was most apt to make such a request is the best evidence for this chapter's theme : the cult of Indra signifies an impetus to power.

227. *jahy asuṣvīn pra vrhāpṛṇataḥ* // 6. 44. 11

228. 1.176.4 see n. 400 below.

229. *bhavā varūtham .....maghonām | yat samajāsi śardhataḥ | vi tvāhatasya vedanam bhajemahy ā dūnāśo bharā gayam* // 7.32.7

230 *devayann id adevayantam abhyasat | suprāvīr id vanavat pṛtsu duṣṭaram | yajved ayajyor vi bhajāti bhojanam* / 1.103.6.

231. *ya ādṛtyā parīpanthīva śūro | 'yajvano vibhajann eti bhojanam* / 1.103.6

232. *maghonaḥ sma vrtrahatyēsu codaya | ye dadati priyā vasū* / 7.32.15ab

233. *tvam nr̥bhīr.....devavitau | bhūr̥iṇi vrtrā .....hamsi* / 7.19.4

234. *dasyave hetim asyā' ryaṃ saho vardhaya dyumnam.....* / 1.103. 3cd

Depicting the *sūris* as the instrument of Indra's might, as they whom the divine warrior in person aids, the *ṛṣis* surely have attempted to represent Aryan expansion as a divine mission, as a religious undertaking. This is clearly an attempt to provide what must be called an ideological basis for Aryan expansion: and of course it was the only ideological basis possible in terms of the thinking of those times.

It would indeed be hard to find a cult more closely oriented to the aggrandizement of temporal power than is the Vedic Indra cult. Yet in fairness to the *ṛṣis* we must emphasize that it was for them a genuinely divine imperative that the power of the devotees of Indra must assert itself and not go under Dasyu onslaught or be debased by adulteration with other cults.

(8)

Before we conclude this chapter we must also pay attention to a significant statement often made about Indra in the RV - a statement which seems to us to be revelatory in regard to the shift of authoritative power in the Vedic tribes. The statement in question, worded in diverse ways, is to the effect that Indra's supremacy among the gods is the result of a deliberate transfer of sovereignty or lordship or power or might to him by the other gods when they were confronted by a 'military situation' i.e. when they had to fight against the Dragon or Vṛtra. It is said that he was accepted as their head by the other gods, that the right to the Soma draught was conceded to him or the *vajra* was committed to his hands. The *vajra* was the "most essential symbol of kingship and delegated power".<sup>234B</sup>

Let us briefly note some instances of this noteworthy idea :

*kṣatra* conceded to Indra: 4.17.1 ; 7.21.7 ; 6.25.8 (The last says that it was absolute power that was granted to Indra). 4.19.1 and 6.25.8 say that this was when the gods had to destroy Vṛtra.<sup>235</sup>

*āsurya* conceded: 6.20.2, 7.21.7. cf. also 6.36.1. According to the last two, as Indra bore this power among the gods, he became the distributor of booty.<sup>236</sup>

234B Coomaraswamy. p.3.

235. *tubhyam anu kṣatram manyate* / 4. 17 . 1 ; *devās cit te asuryāya pūrve* / 'nu *kṣatrāya mamire sahāṃsi* / 7. 21.7ab ; *anu te dāyi maha indriyāya* / *satrā te viśvam anu vṛtrahatyē* / *anu kṣatram anu saho yatre* / 'ndra *devebhīr anu te ṛṣahye* / | 6.25.8 ; *tvām .....devāsah .....ekam id vṛnate vṛtrahatyē* / 4.19.1

236. *tubhyam anu... asuryam devebhīr dhāyī viśvam ...yad vṛtram han* / 6.20 .2 ; *vājānām abhavo vibhaktā yad deveṣu dhārayathā asuryam* / 6. 36.1 ; *indro maghāni dayate vi sahya* / 7. 21.7c

*vīrya* / *tavasya* conceded : 1.80.7 ; 2.20.8 ; 3.31.13 (: *Dhiṣanā* ordained him to pierce him who waxed strong, and all powers were conceded to him.)<sup>237</sup>

Indra placed at head of gods: 1.131.1 ; 6.17.8 (in order to fight, when the *adeva* raised himself above the *deva*-s) 8.12.22/25 (to kill *Vṛtra*, in the battle)<sup>238</sup>

Indra chosen as sole chief : 4.19.1 ((: All gods.....chose solely the exalted Indra .....in the killing of *Vṛtra*.)<sup>239</sup>

Right to Soma conceded : 5.29.5<sup>240</sup>

*vajra* entrusted to Indra : 2.11.4; 2.20.8; 10.52.5<sup>241</sup>

In the last mentioned reference, Agni as the divine *viṣpati* and *purohita* declares :“I have placed the *vajra* in Indra’s hands. Now shall he win these battles at all” So this is a depiction and an exaltion of the (ritual) confirmation by the priestly class of the warlord’s right to head people, over and above other (tribal) authorities : a concept of conferred power as opposed to other forms of authority.

#### V. Indra Cult. (Cont d.) : Links Forged Between Priest and Prince

(1)

In classical India the Brahmanical counsellor of the king (i.e. the *purohita*) was the most influential minister in his employ. The institution has its roots in Ṛgvedic times. So intimate was the relationship between the *brahman* and the *rājan* that it has been compared to the ‘marriage bond’.<sup>242</sup>

If we go by the genealogical evidence of the RV, the first *purohitas* who assisted the *rājan*-s in battles should have been those of the Bhāradvāja stock, (6.27 and 6.47) and in one of the hymns of the family book of the Bhāradvāja-s the praises are sung of “our manly *sūri*-s who have placed us ahead (of themselves)”.<sup>243</sup> The other celebrated *purohiti* service in war in the RV was that of Vasīṣṭha to Sudās (7.18, 7.33, 7.83).

237. *ubhyam.....anuttam vīryam* / 1. 80.7; *tasmai tavasyam anu dāyi...devebhiḥ* / 2. 20.8 ; *tviṣvā indrāya taviṣīr anuttāḥ* / 3.31. 13

238. *indram viṣve devāso dadhire purah* / 1. 131. 1 ; *viṣve purah.....devā* / *ekam tavasam dadhire bharāya* / .....*adevo yad abhyauhiṣṭa devān* / *vṛnata indram atra* / 6. 17.8 ; *indram vṛtrāyu hantave* .....8.12.25

239. See n.235 above.

240. *tubhyam devā anu viṣve adadhuh somapeyam* / 5.29. 5.

241. *vajram bāhvor dadhānāḥ* - 2.11.4 ; *asya vajram bāhvor dhuh* / 2.20. 8 ; *ā bāhvor vajram indrasya dheyām* / *athemā viṣvāḥ pṛtanā jayāti* - 10 .52.5

242. Heesterman, p. 56. Cf also op. cit., p. 75. f. and Gonda, Numen, 3. 2 pp. 150 ff.

243. 6. 25. 7cd : See n. 294 below.



In other contests too, the priest who aided the *sūri* (- a term for the secular lord that pre-eminently reflects priestly admiration and intimacy) had undoubtedly a *purohita* -like function. The theory of the fundamental need of a *purohita* to a *rājan* is lucidly expressed already in the RV. Thus 4.50.8 says: "The king under whom the *brahman* has precedence - he dwells in peace and comfort in his house; to him for ever holy food flows freely and to him do people in free will pay homage."<sup>244</sup>

As usual this is a reflection *in embryonis* of the overall (political) structure that was eventually to emerge in Aryan India. The classic strategem of the *brahman* class to make the limbs of that structure cohere with mandatory effectiveness was to portray its celestial parallel with vivid emphasis.

We saw how Indra's wars had all the common aspects of a *rājan*'s military encounters. One of these aspects was Indra's indebtedness to the celestial counterpart of the *ṛṣi* - now *Brāhaspati*, now *Agni*, now the *Angiras*. The whole position is forcefully stated at RV 8.100.1 where *Agni* as priest says to *Indra*: "I in person go before thee.....and if thou givest me (my) share then shalt thou through me perform heroic deeds"<sup>245</sup> And we have already referred to 10.52.5 where again *Agni* says, in a succinct statement of the link that was desired to be forged between these two groups of the Vedic elite: "I have placed the *vajra* in *Indra*'s hands. Now shall he win these battles all!"<sup>246</sup>

(2)

The intimacy of the *sūri*-s and the priests is indeed remarkable. Let us consider, for example, such statements as the following:

Mighty beings who give us the sun  
- with cattle, horses, wealth and gold -

Ever may the *sūri*-s win in wars, O *Indra*, *Vāyu*,  
with fast steeds and with heroic sons ! (7.90.6)<sup>247</sup>

Or the following:

Bring, O *Uṣas*, generous one,  
brilliance and lofty fame,  
for them who made us share  
their gifts of horses, cows  
- the *sūri*-s (here). (5.79.7)<sup>248</sup>

244. *sa it kṣeti sudhita okasi sve | tasmā ilā pinvate viśvadānīm | tasmai viśaḥ svayam evā namante | yasmīn brahmā rājanī pūrva eti || 4. 50.8*

245. *ayam ta emi tanvā purastād | .....mahyam dīdher bhāgam..... | ād in mayā kṛṇavo vīryāni || 8. 100. 1 (Translation after Coomaraswamy).*

246. See n. 241 above.

247. *īśānāso ye dadhate svar no | gobhīr aśvebhīr vasubhīr hiraṇyair | indravāyū sūrayo viśvam āyur | arvadbhīr vīraiḥ pṛtanāsu sahyuḥ | -7. 90. 6*

248. *tebhyo dyumnam bṛhad yaśa | uṣo maghoni sūriṣu | ye no rādhāṃsy aśvyā- | gavyā bhajanta sūrayaḥ || 5.79. 7 (Almost the same notion in 5. 79 .6).*

At once we see the earnest wish of the priest to foster the success of the *sūri*-s; and we see that the *sūri* is clearly the priest's benefactor.

And how does the *sūri* profit from this relationship? Let us look at the text for the answer:

Augment their living treasure, nutriment,  
O Agni, of our *sūri*-s here!  
Through song have they, the heroic men  
come by their bounteous wealth. (5.10.3)<sup>249</sup>

Thus they do not triumph singly: for this they need the singer's song, the priest's ritual act. Their victories are really shared achievements.

Come now to us, O Agni,  
praised, do bring us treasured gift.  
We here, and the *sūri*-s,  
together we'd good luck gain.  
So be with us in contests - that we may thrive! (5.16.5)<sup>250</sup>

So the priests and the *sūri* are *comrades* in war and contest :

We (here) and you, the *sūri*-s,  
as comrades let us win  
that fore-effulgent (wealth),  
which brings a chariot-load of gain,  
a houseful of gain! (9.98.12)<sup>251</sup>

It is in one single achievement that the two parties win their hearts' desire:

To the *sūri*-s immortal fame and wellbeing,  
and to us - winnings rich with cattle! (7.81.6)<sup>252</sup>

On occasion the singer seems to betray a different inner sentiment, that he really is the dominant actor, that it is *his* rivals that the prince has to subjugate, as though the whole exercise is for his sake (and won through his intervention) :

249. *tvam no agna eṣām | gayam puṣṭim ca vardhaya | ye stomebhiḥ pra sūrayo | naro maghāny ānaśuḥ || 5.10.3*

250. *nū na ehi vāryam | agne grnāna ā bhara | ye vayam ye ca sūrayaḥ | svasti dhāmhe saco | taidhi pṛtsu no vṛdhe | 5. 16. 5*

251. *taṁ sakhāyaḥ purorucaṁ | yūyam vayam ca sūrayaḥ | aśyāma vājagandhyam | sanema vājapastyam | 9. 98. 12. Cf. also 6.44. 18 : "Provide us in these battles with great free space, a handsome path: and make the sūris a party to the winning of waters" āsu smā nah .....pṛtsu | asmabhyam mahi varivaḥ sugaṁ kaḥ | apām...jese.....sūrīn kṛnuhi smā no ardham||*

252. *śravaḥ sūribhyo amṛtam vasutvanam | vājāṁ asmabhyam gomataḥ | 7.81 6ab.*

We with our heroic lords  
shall dare our challengers,  
vanquish our assailants! (8.40.7)<sup>253</sup>

Naturally the poets' words reveal that they regard the *sūri-s'* triumph not only as a means for their own welfare, but also as an achievement of power over men and over tribes :

O Agni, well invited, dear be to you the *sūri-s*  
- who dominate men -  
and many a cow-pen have they given  
- the generous ones! (7.16.7)<sup>254</sup>

One may detect the same idea in such a verse as the following:

Even the tribe that thinks  
itself as blessed with power,  
deliver even that tribe  
to these heroic men  
among whom I am,  
O wielder of the bolt! (6.19.12)<sup>255</sup>

The *sūri-s'* search for power and wealth aided by the priests is well expressed when the singers implore the war-god to "win the sun by means of their heroic men":

When, Indra, each after his thoughts  
men diversely seek your aid,  
then win the sun  
here with *our* heroic men ! (8.15.12)<sup>256</sup>

And again the same idea in the following lines :

With our valiant heroes, Hero great,  
achieve those heroic tasks  
that are thine to be done! (2.30.10)<sup>257</sup>

253. *asmākebhīr ṛbhir vyaṃ | sāsahyāma pṛtanyato | vanuyāma vanuṣyataḥ | 8. 40.7cde.*

254. *tve agne svāhuta | priyāsaḥ santu sūrayaḥ | yantāro ye maghavāno janānām | ūrvān dayanta gonām | 7.16. 7*

255. *janam vajrin mahi cin manyamānam | ebhyo ṛbhyo randhayā yeṣv asmi | 6 19. 12ab.*

256. *yad indra manmaśas tvā | nānā havanta ūtaye | asmākebhīr ṛbhir|atrā svar jaya| 8.15.12. "Sun" and "wealth" are associated notions, as e. g., at 5. 79. 8 : uta no go-matīr iṣaḥ | ā vaha.....|... sākaṃ sūryāya raśmibhiḥ|*

257. *asmākebhīḥ satvabhiḥ sūra sūraiḥ | vīryā kṛdhi yāni te kartvāni 2.30. 10 ab.*

( 3 )

Let us inquire briefly into some of the qualities of the *sūri*, the prince that the RV idealizes. We may see these qualities mentioned in the verses which speak of the ideal prince as a gift of the gods. Such an instance is Rv 5.6.2-3 :

As excellent who is praised - that is Agni -  
around him the cows gather,  
around him the swift - running steeds,  
around him the *sūri*-s, nobly born.....  
A victor Agni grants the tribe .....  
dextrous for winning wealth.....  
For choice treasure he gladly runs.....<sup>258</sup>

“The nobles gather round Agni” : so though the prince is above all a warrior, eager for any opportunity to capture booty, that is but one of his many desirable qualities.

Says 6.14.4 : “Agni grants a hero, lord of the *sadas*, one who wins waters, who withstands attack triumphantly and in whose sight foes tremble with fear for his might<sup>259</sup>” : A military hero, violent in his very looks, and also a *satpati* ( : ‘lord of the *sadas*’)<sup>259</sup>

This last description calls for some comments.

*satpati* occurs many times, as for instance at 5.25.6: “Agni grants a ‘lord of the *sadas*, who by war gains triumph through his men ; Agni a swift running horse, a winner unconquered”.<sup>260</sup>

“Lord of the session”, like many epithets applied to the hero, is pre-eminently expressive of a function or position ascribed to Indra the god of war. Of 45 uses of this term cited by Grassmann, 26 are clearly applied to him (2 being to Indra and Agni together).<sup>261</sup>

258. *so agnir yo vasur gr̥ṇe / sam yam āyanti dhenavah/arvato raghudruvah/ sam sujātāsah sūrayah/... agnir hi vājinam viśe dadāti..... rāye svābhuvam / sa pr̥to yāti vāryam/ ... 5.6. 2-3.*

259. *agnir apsām ṛtīśaham / vīram dadāti satpatim / yasya trasanti śavasah / samcakṣi śatravo bhīyā // 6.14.4.*

260. *agnir dadāti satpatim / sasāha yo yudhā nṛbhīh / agnir atyam raghuśyadam / jetāram aparājitam// 5.25.6*

261. The breakdown is as follows : Indra : 24 times ; Indra and Agni : 2 ; Agni : 4 ; Mitra / Varuṇa, Soma, Ādityas, Rudra, Savitar : once each (i.e. 5 times) ; unspecified persons : 6 ; Kings named (i.e. Trasadasyu, Tryaruṇa, Asamāti) : 3 ; Sūtambhara (Indra ?)  
1. See Grassmann, Wtb s.v. *satpati*

Roots meaning 'to sit' are used repeatedly in the RV to indicate a variety of cult occasions. Thus the nobles are described as sitting round the ritual fire <sup>262</sup> and in an atmosphere associated with war they are depicted as sitting at the ritual for the purpose of winning over the gods. <sup>263</sup> Indra is to sit on the sacred grass at the Soma sacrifice "like a prince" . <sup>264</sup> The nobles light the sacred fire at "the ritual session of great men" (i.e. princes and priests).<sup>265</sup> Indra arrives at the sacrifice, "the ritual session of (great) men" "of heaven and earth."<sup>266</sup> "By means of sacrificial session and ritual song" the Uśij priests have won treasures and cows under Indra.<sup>267</sup>

It thus seems that in calling the hero a "lord of the session", the R̥gvedic poet ascribes to him a characteristic (which is also otherwise projected of him) <sup>267B</sup> that indicates his unswerving loyalty to cult practices, to patronage of the Vedic priests. No priest can be a successful officiant unless he has his counterpart and supporter in a 'sun winning' prince - which is what is explicitly said when describing Agni (the prince-like cum priest-like god par excellence) at 1.18.6. Here we are told that the *ṛṣi* "has come to the marvellous 'lord of the session', the dear friend of Indra, but for whom the ritual succeeds not, not even of a master well-versed in conjuration". <sup>268</sup> Here Agni has indeed an Indra-like quality - and Agni himself in any case is a 'lordly' god, being a *viśpati* and a *gṛhapati*.

Indra's own characteristic of being a "lord of the session" makes him distinctly comparable with the prince. A notable depiction of this is found at 1.130.1: "Come to us from the far distance.....as a 'lord of the session' to the *vidatha*-s, as a king comes to the *vidatha*-s, a king who is a lord of the session' ". <sup>269</sup> The *vidatha* was decidedly an occasion with ritual associations and also an occasion where a king or a prince had a characteristic part to play.<sup>270</sup>

262. 7.1.4 : See 498 below.

263. 6.47.19 : See n.38 above.

264. *rājeva dasma ni śadho'dhi barhiṣi* - 10.43.2

265. *nṛṣadane... arhantaś cid yam indhate* - 5.7.2

266. *...yajñe divo, nṛṣadane pṛthivyāḥ* - 7.97.1

267. *abhiṣvarā niśadā gāḥ indre...draviṇāny āsata* - 2.21.5

267B The *sūri*'s alternate designation, *yajamāna*, is itself the most striking testimony to this fact.

268. *sadasaspatim adbhutam/ priyam indrasya kāmīyam/ ...ayāsiṣam/ yasmād ṛte na sidhyati/ yajño vipaścitaś cana// ...1.18.6-7.* See Coomaraswamy p. 5f.

269. *ā yāhy upa nah parāvato/ vidathāniva satpatiḥ/ ...rājeva satpatiḥ/ 1.130.1*

270. Cf the following: (a) *vidatha* closely associated with hero/leader/king: 1.130.1 ; see n. 269 above ; 3.1.18: *rājā sasāda vidāthāni sādhan* ; 3.55.7/3,56.5 : *vidathesu samrāt* ; 3.38.5 : *vidathasya dhībhiḥ / kṣatram rājānā ... pradivo dadhāthe/* ; 4.21.2: *yasya kratuḥ vidathyo na samrāt abhyasti kṛtīḥ* ; 7.36.8 : *vidathyaṃ na vīram* (b) *vidatha* an occasion when eulogies are sung : 1.159.1 : *stuse vidathesu* ; 1.162.1: *devajātasya...pra vakṣyāmo vidathesu vīryāni* ; 1.166.7 : *vidathesu suṣtutaḥ...* ; 2.27.12: *vasudāvā vidathesu praśastah* ; 6.24.2 : *vājī stuto vidathe dāti vājam*. (c) *vidatha* = a sacrificial occasion : 2.4.8: *ṛtīye vidathe* ; 2.39.1 : *brahmānā iva vidathe ukthasāsā*. A notable contribution to the understanding of the word *vidatha* is in Thieme's Untersuchungen ... pp. 35-49.

We thus see that the prince, like Indra, is emphatically portrayed as a patron of the cult, of ritual occasions. That is clearly what the epithet *satpati* indicates.

The *sūri* above all is a man conscious of his duty and obligation, that is to say, his *vrata*. And wherein lies his *vrata*, and in relation to whom ?

“Let the *sūri* satisfy, and hasten like the wind. He takes the booty to give away, like one truthful to (his) *vrata*”<sup>271</sup> says 1.180.6. So the prince’s generosity was not something that depended on his whims and fancies. It was his ‘bond’, his obligation, duty. Hence one of the most conspicuous characteristics of the *sūri* devoted to his *vrata* is that he is a lavish giver. Thus according to 1.125.7 “the *sūris*...who freely give” are “devoted to the *vrata*”<sup>272</sup>; contrastively, 5.42.9 speaks of “them that do not give,..... that are without the *vrata*”.<sup>273</sup> How characteristic it was thought to be for the prince loyal to the *vrata* to patronize the Vedic ritual is forcefully brought out by another verse :“ You have entered into the (ritual) songs, like a king well devoted to the *vrata*” ( 9.20.5)<sup>274</sup>

So it is the *vrata* to be lavish to priests and to observe the practices of the cult. The portrayal of Indra serves to emphasize, and to render mandatory, the relationship between *sūri* and priest which this implies.

Thus, it was Indra “ who first found cows for the *brahman*” ( 1.101.5)<sup>275</sup>; he “opened the cow-pen to aid the *Āngiras* ( priests )” (1.51.3)<sup>276</sup>. (In the Soma rites ), “at each exhilaration” he, “bestows herds of cattle on us”. ( 1.81.7)<sup>277</sup> He gains triumphs and then distributes rewards ( 7.21.7 )<sup>278</sup>. He sets the priests’ gift in motion; he is “the most active among donors” (6.37.4 )<sup>279</sup>. “He has shattered the slanderers” (i.e., the detractors of the *ṛṣis*) “setting munificence in action” (5.30.7)<sup>280</sup>. He is “the victor, the unique distributor of rewards ” ( 7.26.4 )<sup>281</sup>. It was through his acts of generosity that he earned the name *maghavan* and became the slayer of adversaries (10.23.2)<sup>282</sup>. Indeed, as Dandekar observes, “Indra almost monopolized the proud epithet *maghavan* in the RV”<sup>283</sup>. This was his most *sūri*-like quality and this was to be the *sūris*’ most Indra-like quality, namely that they win with priestly aid and in turn follow the duty of rewarding the priests in ample measure.

271. *preṣad veṣad vāto na sūrir/ ā mahe dade svrato na vājam* - 1.180.6

272. *prñantaḥ... sūrayaḥ... svratāsaḥ* - /1.125.7

273. *apñantaḥ... apavratān* - 5.42.9

274. *tvaṃ rājeva svrato/ girāḥ somā viveṣitha* / 9.20.5

275. *yo brahmane prathamō gā avindat* / 1.101.5b

276. *gotram āngirobhyo vṛnor apa* / 1.51.3

277. *made made hi no dadir/ yūthā gavām...* 1.81.7

278. 7.21.7c : See n. 236 above.

279. *dakṣiṇām iyarti... maghonām tuvikūrmitamaḥ* - 6.37.4ab

280. *vi sū mṛdho... dānam invan* - 5.30.7. See Geldner’s translation of this stanza.

281. *eko vibhaktā taraṇir maghānām* - 7.26.4

282. *indro maghair maghavā vṛtrahā bhuvat* - 10.23.2

283. “vṛtrahā Indra”, ABORI, XXXI (1950), p.24.

(5)

The myths of Vṛtra and Vala are narratives that highlight a specific aspect of Indra's activities as the celestial war-lord. As we saw he first found cows for *brahman* (1.101.5) in this legendary exploit, and opened the cowpen for the benefit of the Angiras, the priests of the ancient sacred times. (1. 51. 3, 1.132.4).

This operation is depicted true to style : a Soma sacrifice with hero and followers partaking; the actual onslaught; return to ritual point of commencement with (the trophies of ?) the victory won; a ritual draught and an eulogy for the victor (in honour of his munificence).

“When I have returned to you with winnings, in the (ritual) house ..... at the Soma session, and (am) (ritually) quickened, I have done the partaking (of the ritual draught) in the vessel (set before me) ; then as the foremost *sūri* this eulogy I receive.” (10.167.4)<sup>284</sup>

This in our opinion is the model the *ṛṣi*-s set before their beloved patrons the *sūri*-s to follow in all their contests. It spells out for them the nature of the prince's *vrata*. And their praise of the *sūri*-s gift (: *dānastuti*, *praśasti* etc. ) was a regular desideratum for the prince's glory: this is but a repetition of what the first priests did for the first *sūri*.

“That deed of yours, O Indra, have the *āyu*-s extolled - they who fain would burst the stall of cows open, who fain would milk the lofty one..... (the cow )of a thousand streams” (10.74.4)<sup>285</sup>

(6)

It is as *āyu*-s that RV 10.74.4 refers to the priests.

Many are the names and epithets by which the princes and priests are introduced in the RV.

*sūri*-s, *maghavan*-s (: generous ones), heroes, heroic men, devotees of gods, Soma sacrificers - these are some of the commonest words used to designate or characterize the princes. And the priests are commonly referred to as *ṛṣi*-s, *vipra*-s, *vipaścit*-s, *brahman*-s, *stotṛ*-s, (: eulogists), *kāru*-s (bards), *āyu*-s etc.

284. *prasūto bhakṣam akaram carāv api| stomam cemaṃ prathamah sūrir unmrje| sute sātena yady āgamam vām| prati...dame || 10.167.4*

285. *ā tat ta indrāyavaḥ pananta|' bhi ya ūrvam gomantaṃ titṛtsānt|...sahasradhārām bhavīm dudukṣan|| 10.74.4abd.*

Some confusion can be caused by *āyu*, because *Āyu* is also in early Indian mythology the name of a famous ancestor of the Aryans. Geldner notes this fact in a comment on RV 1.31.5: “*Āyu* is a preeminent Aryan stock as well as its ancestor, and the word appears used so as to be almost synonymous with “the Aryans” ”.<sup>286</sup>

And yet, the word is also very frequently used to denote the Vedic priests— which Geldner too has noted under 5.43.14. In fact it is emphatically in this usage that the word is generally found in the RV *Samhitā*. This fact deserves special attention as one of the key contexts for the elucidation of the significance of the word *ari* refers to Vedic priests as “the *Āyu*-s”. The reference is found at 6.14.3 which depicts the *Ayu*-s as “competing for the *ari*’s wealth”.<sup>287</sup>

(7)

The *sūri*-s, the priests and the *ari* are referred to conjointly in a number of highly interesting allusions in the *Samhitā*. The references to the priests in these may be explicit, but often it is only implicit.

Compare, for example, statements such as the following:

“Coming from the *ari* to (these) chants (of ours), may the Dawns rejoice in us both (: *sūri*-s and priests). (1.122.14 cd).<sup>288</sup>

“Today (and also) the next day, we would invoke you two, as Dawn illumines - I as *hotar* with eulogies, wherever you be, O *Nāsatya*-s, sons of heaven, for the benefit of him who is a greater giver than the *ari*”(1.184.1).<sup>289</sup>

“With these generous men devoted to you, O Indra, *maghavan*, (do I invoke) you in every contest. Becoming pre-eminent with the *ari*’s splendours, we shall like heaven revel through many a night and many an autumn” (4.16.19).<sup>290</sup>

286. Geldner, note to 1.31.5

287. *spardhante rāyo aryah... āyavaḥ* -6.14.3. In translating this sentence, we take *rāyah* as standing for *rāyé*. It seems to us that the nom. plur. form has been substituted here by “attraction” of the plur. verb *spardhante*. It was clearly the *ari*’s wealth for which many a contest was held. Cf. e.g. 1.73.5 : *sanema vājaṃ samithesv aryah*; 1.81.9: *aryo vedah ... nah ā bhara*; 1.121.15: *ā no bhaja ... goṣv aryah*; 6.20.1 ...*aryah ... rayiḥ taṃ nah ... daddhi*; 6.47.9: *mā nas tarit... rāyo aryah* (see n.37 above), and above all 7.34.18: *pra rāye yanti sardhanto aryah*. (Grassmann, übers, has translated *rāyah* of 6.14.3 as “nach Schätzen”). On *āyu*, see appendix at end of Part II of this work

288. *aryo girah sadya ā jagmuṣīrosrān cākantūbhayeṣv asme* -1.112.14

289. *tā vām adya tāv aparaṃ huvema! ucchantyām uṣasi vahnir ukthaiḥ/ nāsatyā kuha cit santāv aryo/ divo napātā sudāstarāya//* 1.184.1

290. *ebhir nṛbhīr indra tvāyubhiḥ tvā/ maghavadbhir maghvan viśva ājau/ dyāvo na dyumnair abhi santo aryah/ kṣapo madema śaradaś ca pūrvīḥ//* 4.16.19. See also n.327.



Crushing the *ari*'s obstructors,  
with *sūris* would we fain be;  
with heroes subduing foes by war  
—(*sūris*) who to *Vāyu* (offerings make ?)  
and who to Indra are a joy,  
the lavish ones, devout to gods! (7.92.4)<sup>291</sup>

Such statements quite often emphasize the *sūri*-s' role as givers of *dakṣiṇā* or as respecters of the institution of priestly *purohiti*, as we may see vividly in numerous examples.

“May the generous donors partake of nourishing wealth, the *sūri*-s who for ever give (us gifts). In contests may we win the prize from the *ari*, offering before the gods their share for sake of fame!” 1.73.5<sup>292</sup>

“Let all, at the *ari*'s, (hear) this (word) of ours : the bards ever praise *Ṛṣu*, the noblest giver of thousands, the *sūri* who is the noblest winner of thousands.” 6.45.33<sup>293</sup>

“Then when your peoples would start moving, O Indra, be the helper and protector (of these) *sūri*-s of ours, who are more heroic than the *ari*, who have put us at (their) fore-front”. (6.25.7)<sup>294</sup>.

On the face of it, it would appear that all these allusions refer to some kind of military engagements and the word *ari* indicates the foe against whom the *sūri*-s fight. The priests would then figure in these allusions as the men who invoke divine blessings on the princes they support. In some cases it may well be that there is nothing beyond this in these references. But the triangular reference to prince, priest and *ari* cannot always be easily explained away.

Let us consider, for example, the following:

“Gaining precedence, with agreeable mind do I laud Agni, your dear guest (O gods), with eulogies, - so that Varuṇa may remain in great glory among us and the *sūri*, praised by the *ari*, may grant (us) vivifying riches! (1,186.3)<sup>295</sup>

291. *ye vāyava indramādanāsa| ādevāso nitośanāso aryah| ghnanto vṛtrāni sūribhiḥ syāma| sāśahvāmo yudhā nṛbhir amitrān||* 7.92.4

292. *vi pṛkṣo agne maghavāno aśyur| vi sūrayo dadhato viśvam āyuh| sanema vājaṃ samitheṣv aryah| bhāgaṃ deveṣu śravase dadhānāh||* 1.73.5

293. *tat su no viśve arya ā| sadā gṛṇanti kāravaḥ| ṛṣuṃ sahasradātamaṃ| sūriṃ sahasrasātamaṃ||* 6.45.33

294. *adha smā te carṣanayo yad ejān| indra trātota bhavā varūtā| asmākāso ye nṛtamāsa arya | indra sūrayo dadhire puro naḥ||* 6.25.7

295. *preṣṭhaṃ vo atithiṃ gṛṇīse| agniṃ śastibhiḥ turvaniḥ sajoṣāḥ| asad yathā no varuṇaḥ sukīrtir| iśas ca parṣad arigūrtaḥ sūriḥ||* 1.186.3

Or the following:

“Glorified by all, praised by the *ari* (as well), to the Soma-presser (i.e. the *sūri*) he gives gifts, and to the eulogist.” (8.1.22)<sup>296</sup>

Surely the *ari* here cannot mean an adversary or a foe?

It surprises us very much that the clear and unvarying distinction between *ari* and *sūri* in the RV has not gained due recognition. It seems to us that an adequate appreciation of this distinction is vitally necessary for the proper interpretation of the *ari* references. And in every case where this distinction is made explicit, it is the *sūri* that the priests support.

But we must hasten to add a much needed word of caution. The distinction drawn between *ari* and *sūri* is not the only factor to be taken into account. The *ari* tangle does not indeed admit of any such easy solution.

Another significant fact is, as even the above quotations would have revealed, it is not in every instance that the *ari* is portrayed as an implacable opponent. In the last two references, for example, we can see him praising the *sūri* and also praising Indra. In other words, whereas in some allusions the *ari* is distinct from the *sūri* and appears as an adversary, in others he appears to be distinct from the *sūri* by virtue of a special role that he seems to have played, perhaps as the owner or protector of wealth. In the pages to follow, it is our hope to explore the evidence bearing on these two kinds of distinction which we visualize as

- (a) cultural, religious and political and
- (b) functional.

But straightway let us draw attention to a basic fact: in either of the above two cases, the *ari* almost always appears to be portrayed as “some one for the *sūri* to contend with” aided by the Vedic priests as elite counsellors or *purohita*-s and as practitioners of a pervasive cult.

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296. *sa sunvate ca stuvate ca rāsate / viśvagūrto ariṣṭutaḥ* | 8.1.22

VI : Ari and Sūri - The Cultural Distinction

(1)

“They have lapsed from the pressing (of Soma), they have not revered Indra as a god - there where..... Vṛṣākapi found enjoyment in the *ari*'s nourishing riches”, says 10.86.1<sup>297</sup>. To put the idea expressed in this verse in another way, Vṛṣākapi, in the process of seeking refuge in the *ari*, has become a person who is “averse to Soma” and “averse to Indra” - a condition that elsewhere in the RV is indicated by the pejorative adjectives *asunvant* and *anindra*.

It seems to us that this is in line with the accusations often brought against the man called the *ari* in the RV.

Take for example RV 4.24 which we discussed in Ch. III. In the opening verses of the hymn, i.e. verses 1 - 7, Indra is depicted as the god to be invoked in martial contests<sup>298</sup>. And yet it is made obvious here that he is not treated alike by every one. There is on the one hand the man who zealously offers Soma and also cooked and roasted foods<sup>299</sup>. On the other there is the “non-presser” and the offerer of *puroḷāśa* (rice cake)<sup>300</sup>.

These opening verses provide a prologue which is an organic part of RV 4.24, essential to the proper understanding of the second part of the hymn. In this second part we are told how the *ari*'s wife, when she sees that the contest has become long and severe, invokes the manly Indra, who by this time has been ‘sharpened’ by copious draughts of Soma by those who offer that libation to him (i.e. by the opponents of the *ari*)<sup>301</sup>. Then Indra is pictured as speaking or thinking to himself about the conduct of the two parties, the *ari*'s and the Soma offerer's :

- (a) He has indulged in low trading for a thing of (high) value.
- (b) It is not a little thing that he has exchanged for a thing of high value.<sup>302</sup>

To us this appears as a direct continuation of the ideas earlier expressed: that calling for Indra's aid in the thick of battle only and not offering him Soma and *pakti* (‘the cooked offering’) do not pay. It is by the Soma libation and the right kind of cooked offerings that the *sūri*-s gain Indra's alliance which is obviously the thing of high value the verses refer to. In other words the

297. *vi hi sotor asṛkṣata / nendram devam amaṁsata / yatrāmadad vṛṣākapir / aryah puṣṭeṣu (matsakhā) // 10. 86.1*

298. *sa vṛtrahatye havyah - 4.24.2*

299. *paktih* and *somah* of 4.24.5-bc

300. *puroḷāśam* and *asuṣvīn* of 4.24.5b/e

301. 4.24.8 : See n. 121

302. 4.24.9ac : See n.121

*ṛṣi* here pictures Indra as saying: They have not succeeded in winning me over because they offered the wrong offerings and at the wrong time. The offerer of Soma it is that has gained my alliance - a result already forecast in the first part of the hymn.

Thus 4.24 can, it seems to us, be regarded as supplying a very important clue - a clue which was less directly supplied by 10.86 - namely, that in the particular sense in which the words are used in the RV, the *ari*'s party could be described as *anindra* and *asunvant*.

Yet another context that supports this conclusion is RV 10.42. The same sequence of ideas as in 4.24 obtains here, though less colourfully expressed. The prime target is made explicit right at the start: "Subdue with song the *ari*'s song, O *vipras*!" Thus the contest is with the *ari* who also seeks the aid of the powers above. But only he who sacrifices rightly can aspire to triumph: "Men call on you diversely for aid...(but) it is the giver of *haviṣ* who gains the (divine) ally. Not with the *asunvant* does the valiant one wish to ally himself" (stz. 4). The grounds on which the *ṛṣi*'s party (of *sūris*, called *rājans* in stz. 10 of the hymn) hopes to gain triumph are that they sacrifice the right way, in their contest with the *ari*: the opponent is *asunvant*, ipso facto *anindra*, and cannot win. Thus here too the epithet *asunvant* (and automatically the epithet *anindra*) is applicable to, or at least associable with, the *ari*.<sup>303</sup>

Another important hymn of the RV that helps us understand the depiction of *ari* is 2.23. This hymn denounces without any mincing of words the "hater of *brahman*" (stz.4)<sup>304</sup>, the "reviler of gods" (8)<sup>305</sup>, the "evil reciter" (10),<sup>306</sup> etc., etc. These preliminary references prepare our minds to receive the *ṛṣi*'s final verbal onslaught in which he alludes to the *ari*'s wrath and his wealth and power (which he does not deserve):

"Who with ungodly mind seeks to inflict harm and seeks to slay, regarding himself as mighty among overlords - let not his deadly blow reach us, O *Bṛhaspati*! May we nullify the wrath of the ill-intentioned presumptuous man .....Like (battle-) cars has *Bṛhaspati* torn asunder all the deceitful wiles of the *ari*."<sup>307</sup> (2.23.12-13)

303. The relevant portions of 10.42 are as follows : *vācā viprās tarata vācam aryah* (1c) o *tvām janā mamasatyeshv indra/sam tashānā vi hwayante samīke* || *atrā jayam kṛṇute yo haviṣmān* | *nāsunvatā sakhyam vaṣṭi sūrah* || (4) ; *vayam rājahhiḥ prathamā dhanāny* | *asmākenā vṛjanenā jayema* | (10cd).

304. *brahmadviṣ* (2.23.4e);

305. *devanidaḥ* - 2.23.8c

306. *duḥśams* - 2.23.10c.

307. *adevena mansā yo riṣanyati* | *śāsām ugro manyamāno jighāmsati*-|*br̥haspate mā praṇak tasya no vadho* | *nī karma manyuṃ durevasya śardhataḥ* | ..... *viśvā id aryo abhidipsvo mṛdho* | *br̥haspatir vi vavarhā rathām iva* || 2.23.12-13

“Burn up the *rakṣas* with fiercely flaming brand - they who have scorned (even) you whose power is patent..... Set at nought the speakers of evil. That wealth which shines with might among the tribes and which (our *sūri*-shall deserve more than the *ari*... .. give us that effulgent wealth!)” (2.23.14-15).<sup>308</sup>

So here again the *ari* is associated, without ambiguity, with the taint of being “averse to gods”, “averse to the cult and its practitioners”.

(2)

In a few instances in the RV Saṃhitā we come across unequivocal references, in the body of the same verse, to the distinction between the *ari* and the *sūri* in matters of allegiance to the cult (or, that form of it that seems to have been favoured by the *ṛṣi*-s).

Let us take RV 1.81 for example. This hymn contains two references to the *ari*. The first part of the hymn describes Indra’s character as god of war. He is the sacrificer’s helper in battles. Stanza 6 goes on: “May Indra help us - Indra who takes away the *ari*’s man-sustaining food for (his) devotee’s sake. Distribute, for much wealth is yours! I would gladly partake of your gift.”<sup>309</sup>

Stanza 9 refers again to the *ari* as contrasted with the men who are devoted to Indra. The latter cause all that is desirable to thrive. Having said this the verse goes on : “You have closely seen the *ari*’s possessions and (those) of the irreverent men (: the *ari*’s men). Bring their wealth for us!”<sup>310</sup>

In these two verses we see the positive qualification applied to the sacrificers and the negative to the *ari*’s party. Both serve the same purpose: they give a strong reason for Indra’s intervention in the capture of the *ari*’s wealth.

Comparable, though not exactly of the same type, is the statement at RV 2.8.2, where too the *ari* stands contrasted with the devotee. Here the poet describes Agni thus: “unageing, he brings decay to the *ari*, to the devotee gives an excellent lead.”<sup>311</sup> (Incidentally, a reference to the inadequacy of the leadership of the *ari*, who apparently was usually well past his youth?)

308. *tejīṣṭhayā tapānī rakṣasas tapa | ye tvā nide dadhire dīṣṭavīryam | ... .. vi parirāpo ardaya || ... .. ati yad aryo arhād | dyumad vibhāti kratumaj janeṣu | tad asmāsu draviṇam dhehi citram | 2.23.14-15*

309. *yo aryo martabhojanam | parā dadāti dāśuṣe | indro asmabhyam śikṣatu | vi bhajā bhūri te vasu | bhakṣīya tava rādhasaḥ || 1.81.6*

310. *antar hi khyo janānām | aryo vedo adāśuṣām | teṣām no veda ā bhara || 1.181.9cde*

311. *yaḥ sunītho dadāśuṣe | ajuryo jarayann arim || 2.8.2ab*

While here the *ari* stands contrasted with the devout followers of the gods (which we take as really a partisan way of depicting the *ari*'s position religiously), at 9.23.3 a similar effect is achieved by characterizing the *ari* as himself lacking in devoutness: "Bring us, O Soma, the possessions of the irreverent *ari*" is about roughly what this stanza says.<sup>312</sup>

At 8.24.22 too this contrast seems to be brought out quite clearly : Indra bestows the *ari*'s property to the devotee of his cult.<sup>313</sup>

Viewed against the background of this depiction of the *ari* as somehow lacking in devoutness, as being less worthy than Indra's devotees (i.e. the *sūri*s), it is easy to understand the reference at 8.21.16 which calls on Indra to "grasp and fetch even the firmly enclosed (treasures) of the *ari*, for Indra's (gifts are not to be set at nought".<sup>314</sup> The implication seems to be that the singer's party may win the *ari*'s wealth - i.e. be the recipient of Indra's aid - but yet the *ari* can be expected to attempt to negate this god-given luck.

The usefulness of RV 8.21 to the elucidation of the meaning of *ari* does not end here.

The reference to the *ari* in 8.21.16 is preceded by the interesting statement in stanza 14 which is as follows: "No wealthy man will you find fit to be your friend. They scorn you, quickened by *surā*. But when you raise the cry of war) and bring (contenders into) confrontation, then are you invoked like a father".<sup>315</sup>

We have discussed some aspects of the significance of this statement in another context: only 'true adherence' entitles one to Indra's aid (Ch.III).

The immediacy of this statement to the emphatic denunciation of the *ari* in stanza 16 makes us think that here too the *ari*'s party is depicted not only as prosperous but also as *anindra* and *asunvant* (i.e. averse to Indra and the offering of Soma in the sense understood by the *ṛṣi*-s). That the *ari* in contrast to the *sūri* is constantly viewed with disfavour for his insufficient commitment to cult seems in view of these statements to be the actual position in the RV Saṃhitā. One may then ask, was he less prone to rush to attack the Aryans' foes and so was lukewarm in his ardour for the god of Aryan triumph?

312. *ā pavamāna no bhara | 'ryo adāśuṣo gayam || 9.23.3ab*

313. *aryo gayam maṃhamānaṃ vi dāśuṣe || 8.24.22c.*

314. *dṛḥā cid ayaḥ pra mṛśā' bhy ā bhara | na te dāmāna ādabhe || 8:21.16*

315. *na ki revanataṃ sakhyāya vindase | pīyanti te surāśvaḥ | yadā kṛṇoṣi nadvnum samū.  
hasy | ād it piteva hūyase || 8.21.14*

(3)

A fact of considerable significance is that several foes or obstructors (*vr̥tra-s*) that Indra is said to have defeated are not Dasyu-s but Aryans. We are familiar with the call to Indra to vanquish the enemies of Sudās - among whom were many Aryans. RV 7.83.1 mentions all these foes together as “Dāsa *vr̥tra-s* and Ārya *vr̥tra-s*”.<sup>316</sup> But this is not the only place where this kind of statement is found. The same turn of phrase occurs at 6.22.10, 6.33.3, 6.60.6 and 10.69.6.<sup>317</sup>

And even this is not all.

10.83.1 wishes that ‘Wrath’ would extend its assistance to the sacrificers so that they may subjugate the Dāsa as well as the Aryan.<sup>318</sup> 10.102.3 wishes that Indra would hold aloof the Dāsa’s weapon, and also the Aryan’s.<sup>319</sup> In these cases, however, the powerful epithet of cultural rejection, *vr̥tra*, has not been employed.

That theme, viz. the idea that the Aryans whom the singers condemn are culturally despicable, appear with undisguised emphasis at 10.38.3 and 8.51.9.

Says the former : “Whatever *godless* man intends to fight us, O Indra, ...whether he is a Dāsa or an Aryan - may (all) such foes be easily subdued by you through us. With you let us suppress them in the contest!” So an Aryan could not only be bracketed with the Dāsa-s, he could also be labelled as *adeva*: godless or “averse to the *deva-s*”.<sup>320</sup>

And in just that kind of light is the *ari* seen in 8.51.9, bracketed with the Dāsa and shown as culturally unacceptable for breaking an important *vr̥ta* of the Vedic system of notions, the duty of being lavishly generous to the priests. We would render this important reference to the *ari* as follows:

“This everyone of his (is) Aryan; (but) a Dāsa (is) the wealth-guarding *ari*”.<sup>321</sup>

316. *dāsā ca vr̥trā hatam āryāṇi ca* / 7.83.1c. (That the reference is to events of the *dāsa-rājña* period is indicated by line *d* : *sudāsam indrāvaruṇāv avasā’ vatam*).

317. *dāsāny āryāṇi vr̥trā* - 6.22.10c ; *ubhayāṃ amitrān = dāsā vr̥trāny āryā ca* 6.33.3ab ; *vr̥trāny āryā..... dāsāni* - 6.60.6ab ; *dāsā vr̥trāny āryā* 10.69.6b

318. *sāhyāma dāsam āryam tvayā yujā* - 10.83.1c

319. *dāsasya vā maghavann āryasya vā* / .....*yavayā vadham* - 10. 102.3cd.

320. *yo no dāsa āryo vā.....* / *adeva indra yuyudhe ciketati* / *asmābhiḥ te suṣahāḥ santu śatravas* / *tvayā vayam tām vanuyāma saṃgame* // 10.38.3

321. *yasyāyam viśva āryo* / *dāsaḥ sevadhīpā ariḥ* / ... 8.51.9ab.

It is not necessary to contort so simple a statement, as almost every translator has done upto now. When we understand the true significance of the *anindra* association with which the *ari* often appears tainted, we immediately see what is meant: It is the Indra-like person that is truly Aryan, not the one who has departed from Indra-like ways and 'hoards' cattle and grain. The latter has adopted a Dāsa-like conduct. There is here no implication whereby *ari* has to be taken as referring to the Dāsa ethnically, i.e. as meaning a foe in the ethnic sense. It is probably not even meant that every *ari* is to be condemned. Most of the *ari* chiefs, like the Dāsas, do not favour the Indra-style, the exuberant lavishness. But, as *maghavan* par excellence, it is of the earthly *maghavans* that Indra is a friend, not of niggardly chiefs; the hoarding of wealth is not the style to be favoured by him.

We take it then that 8.51.9 reflects the view that in conserving wealth, the *ari* has adopted a Dāsa-like quality, a view which seems to us also to be evident in the references to "foes related and unrelated". There are several references of this kind, but two of them interest us particularly because they are embedded in contexts which reflect the attitude of cultural hostility which we discussed above. These two allusions are in the hymns 6.44 and 4.4 of the RV Samhitā.

"Hero, slay our foemen" says 6.44.17 to Indra and goes on to specify these men: "the unfriendly, be they related or unrelated"<sup>322</sup>... The objectionable elements of the conduct of 'the unfriendly' were more specifically spelled out earlier in the hymn where the singer requests Indra to "destroy the non-givers, root out those averse to Soma"<sup>323</sup> (Interesting to note is the fact that the original for 'the unfriendly' in this context is the same as that by which the Nirukta defines *ari*).<sup>324</sup>

6.44 thus is also an instance where the *r̥ṣi* stresses the un-*vrata*-like conduct of "the unfriendly" (relations), namely niggardliness and aversion to a traditional form of worship. And also, in their entirety 6.44.17 and 11 are very similar to 7.83.1 and 7: "Dāsa foes and Aryan.....kings who do not observe sacrificial rites".

Basically similar, yet even more interesting, are the references to unfriendly relatives in RV 4.4.5-6. Here again, the early stanzas (3 and 4) reveal the singer's strong animus when he speaks of the "evil speaker" and the "unfriendly men"<sup>325</sup> (using the same word as in 6.44.17). Then he urges

322. *jahi śūra śatrūñ / jānim ajānim.....amitrān / 6.44.17*

323. 6.44.11 : See n. 227 above

324. *ari* = *īvara* / *amitra*. See n. 2 above

325. *aghaśams, amitra-, ajānim* : 4.4 3-4



Agni to rise and display his celestial power and “slacken the taut (weapons) of them that are spurred by *yātu* (i.e. magical practices outside the sacrificial system); shatter the foemen be they related or unrelated!”<sup>326</sup>

This most interesting reference to ‘relatives’ who are said to have depended on *yātu* rather than *yajña* (sacrifice) captures our attention all the more when the singer follows it up with strikingly contrastive allusions to the *sūri* in relation to an *ari*:

“He knows your favourable disposition (O Agni), who has set the way for a ritual-song such as this. To him may you illumine the bright days, the treasures and the splendours of the *ari*”. (4.4.6)<sup>327</sup> - this, of course, is the singer’s way of imploring that the *ari*’s wealth be made available to the *sūri* who utilizes the singer’s priestly services. Whereas the *ari* (: the unfriendly relation) was spurred on by *yātu* magic, the *sūri* “set the way” for a sacred song.

Almost identical is the situation that 10.116 depicts. Here stanza 5 urges Indra to “make their sharp pikes blunt” and “slacken the taut (weapons) of the men that are spurred on by *yātu*”.<sup>328</sup> And again, we are provided with a clue as to these men in the subsequent part of the hymn. It is the *ari* (and his men): “scatter the *ari*’s fame away (and) his might, like the firm onslaughts of (his) bow.” (10.116.6)<sup>329</sup>

The same kind of revealing contrasts is reflected in 7.21.5. Here the first two lines are emphatic in the assertion that “no *yātu* men have spurred us on”.<sup>330</sup> This seems to mean that the *yātu* magic which the Vedic priests despised (whatever it was), was not the spiritual aid on which the singer’s men would ever depend. A forceful word indeed is ‘spurred on’ in this context, (Here the source from which the ‘spurring on’ comes is said to be emphatically *not* the powers of *yātu*; elsewhere it is said to be Indra, Agni, *brahma*, *vipra* and and *damsu*-<sup>331</sup>). This emphatic denial is followed by the following contrastive reference to the *ari*: “May this one triumph over the *ari* of the adverse *jantu* (: people, folk or tribe). May no *śisna-deva*-s (:who follow unacceptable forms of worship) approach our sacred work!”<sup>332</sup>

326. *ava sthirā tanuhi yātujūnām | jāmim ajāmim pra mṛñhi śatrūn |* 4.4.5

327. *sa te jānāti sumatim yaviṣṭha | ya ivate brahmaṇe gātum airat | viśvāny asmai sudi nāni rāyo | dyumnāny aryo vi duro abhi dyaut ||* 4.4.6. *aryah* ..... *dymna*- above at 9.61.11, 4.16.19 (n.290)

328. *ni tigmāni bhrāsayan bhrāsyaṇi | ava sthirā tanuhi yātujūnām -* 10.116.5ab.

329. *vi aryo indra tanuhi śravāmsy | ojaḥ sthireva dhanvano ’bhimātiḥ |* 10.116.6ab.

330. *na yātava indra jūjuvur naḥ |* 7.21.5a.

331. Cf. *indrajūta* : 1.118.9, 3.33.11 ; *yam agne pṛtsu martyam junāḥ |* (= *agnijūtaḥ*) as *yantā śaśvatīr iṣaḥ |* : 1.27.7 ; *brahmajūta* : 3.34.1, 7.10.11 ; *damsujūta* : 1.122.10. *viprajūta* : 1.3.5.

332. *sa śardhad aryo viśunasya jantor | mā śisnadevā api gur ṛtaṃ naḥ |* 7.21.5cd.

What does the singer mean, packing as he does many loaded words into this verse?

It seems to us that first the singer disclaims connections with any kind of cult that could have been held in disregard by the high priests of the *deva* worship. In the sequel he requests Indra not to allow the *ari* and his people who are adverse (to the cult as spelled out by the *ṛṣi*-s) ever to prevail. In the end he desires that practitioners of despised cults be kept far away from his sacred rites.

The singer of course is the *sūri*'s man. But who are the *ari*'s men and who are the practitioners of low cults that should not be allowed to vitiate the singer's rites? And what does this last request in its entirety imply?

These queries take us deeper into the question of the cults and men that "spurred on" the *ari*, the "unfriendly relative" and so on.

That strong men there were who sought magical and spiritual support ("spurring on") from various quarters seems quite likely. We have seen the allusions to *yātu* cults above. And there are also allusions to men who looked even to the *Dasyu*-s for this kind of support. The best example of this kind of reference is RV 6.24.8, along with which we should also take into account 6.24.5.

Indra, says 6.24.8, does not bend (even) to the strong man who is "(magically) spurred on by the *Dasyu*".<sup>333</sup>

The word *Dasyu* in the RV essentially carries connotations of cult hostility, of being non-Vedic culturally and religiously (as opposed to *Dāsa* which carries connotations more ethnic and more 'political'). The word is often associated with other words denotative of differences of religious views and practices (e.g. *avrata*, *aśraddha*, *akratu*, *ayajyu*, *adevayu*, *akarma*, *amantu*, *anyavrata* etc.)<sup>334</sup>

To us the phrase "strong man who is spurred on by the *Dasyu*" does not seem to refer to one *Dasyu* supported by another. It appears more likely that the reference is to an Aryan chief. In this view we are fortified by the reference to an *ari* in stanza 5 of the hymn. This says that *Mitra*, *Varuṇa* and *Pūṣan* act as "a subjugator of the *ari*'s will"<sup>335</sup>.

333. *na viḷave namate na sthirāya | na śardhate dasyujūtāya..... | 6.24.8.*

334. See appendix 2 at the end of this work.

335. *mitro no atra varuṇaś ca pūṣā | aryo vaśasya paryetā asti | 6.24.5cd.*

Thus RV 7.83,6.44, 4.4, 7.21, 10.116 and 6.24 are basically alike. They refer to chiefs who had to some extent turned away from the spirit of the sacrificial cult (as understood by the elite priesthood who gained an authoritative position in the RV period), and moved towards a position of dialogue with other cults including that (or those) of the Dasyu-s. In five of these hymns an *ari* is specifically referred to. In each too there is some clue that suggests that the condemned chief must be an Aryan. Thus

- 7.83; Dāsa and Ārya foes...*ari*,...kings averse to sacrifice  
 6.44: Related and unrelated foes,...non-givers,...averse to Soma  
 4.4 :       "       "       "       ,,...spurred by *yātu*...*ari*  
 7.21 : *ari* and his adverse *jantus*...spurred by *yātu*  
 10.116 : *ari* ... spurred by *yātu*  
 6.24 : *ari* ... spurred by the Dasyu.

Thieme has referred to the association of the *ari* with an attitude which the RV denotes as *arāti*<sup>336</sup>. We can agree with him that *arāti* certainly is a term with a very positive sense. We would also add that the term is at the same time connotative of hostility to Vedism in that it implies departure from the *vrata*, in this case denial of what is due to Vedic priests.

Thus at 1.43.8 the *arāti*-natured men are the opponents of the Soma cult.<sup>337</sup> In the hymn 2.23, where incidentally all opponents are cult opponents, they are "double dealers".<sup>338</sup> At 8.11.3 they are described as "godless foes"<sup>339</sup> and at 1.47.4 the *arāti*-natured one is "the non-giver who harms us with duplicity."<sup>340</sup>

8.39.2 contains a request to strike down all forms of *arāti*, of the *ari* and of the *arāvan*.<sup>341</sup> It is interesting to note the way the untranslated word of this context, which appears here in association with *ari*, is defined in the Tāṇḍya Mahā Brāhmaṇa (6.10.7) : the *arāvans* are those who praise that which is not (or that which is opposed to) the *ṛta*.<sup>342</sup> The *ṛta* is of course the truth, the sacrifice as well as the cult in a broad sense. Thus the reference at 8.39.2 distinctly associates the *ari* with the religiously unacceptable. The abusive and *arāvan*-like speech of the *ari* of 7.31.5 must in view of all this be regarded as signifying ritual unfitness<sup>343</sup> (much as the *vidathe mṛdhravācam* reference to the Pūru in the Ten Kings' War signifies ritual unacceptability in RV 7.18.13).

336. F. pp. 43ff.

337. *mā naḥ somaparibādho mā' rātayo juhuranta* - 1.43.8

338. *na tam... arātayas titirur, na dvayāvinaḥ* - 2.23. 5 (*tam* = *bṛhaspatim*).

339. *sa tvam asmad apa dviṣo | yuyodhi jātavedaḥ | adevīr agne arātīḥ ||* 8.11.3.

340. *yo no agne ararivām aghāyur | arātivā marcayati dvayena |* 1.47.4.

341. *ny arātīr arāvṇām | viśvā aryo arātīr | ito yuchantu.....* 8.39.2.

342. *arāvṇo ye'ṛtam abhiśamsanti* - Tāṇḍya Mahā Br. 6.10.7. On *ṛta* cf. Śatapatha Br. 1.3.4.16., Tait. Br. 3.8.3.4.etc.

343. *mā no nide ca vaktave |'ryo randhīr arāvṇe |* 7.31.5ab.

At 4.50.11 (which is repeated at 7.97.9) and also at 7.83.5, the singer mentions the *arāti* of (the *ari* or) the *ari*'s men.<sup>344</sup> The *ari*'s own unambiguous *arāti* is mentioned at 6.16.27, 6.48.16, 6.59.8, 8.39.2 and 9.79.3.<sup>345</sup>

The last mentioned reference is especially worthy of attention:

“And (give us protection in the face) of our own *arāti*; that is the *ari*; and (also in the face) of the external *arāti* : that is the wolf.”<sup>346</sup>

To Thieme the significance of the mention of “one’s own” and “external” is that in their entirety they convey the significance of ‘all’.<sup>347</sup> But the more one thinks of the statement at 9.79.3, the more it becomes hard to believe that *ari* means ‘stranger’. On the contrary this seems to make it so much more likely that the *ari* is one whose blood relationship to the Aryan priest is beyond doubt.

The precise quality of the *arāti* that was feared of the *ari* is, according to this reference, comparable with the harm that came from the wolf: it threatened the priests’ possessions of cattle, more particularly the cows won as the priestly fee for services to the *sūri*-s which for some reason seem to have been endangered by the *ari*'s conduct and attitudes. If the *ari* was one’s own and yet this was the case, we could visualize the situation as one in which the *ari* was the original possessor of these cows. Though won, by the *sūri* and given to the priests, the *ari* seems to be entertaining the idea of denying them to their new possessors : obviously a cardinal sin from the point of view of the Vedic ethic.

It must have been galling to the *ṛṣi*-s that Aryan tribal chiefs should have behaved in such a way, for to tamper with the *dakṣiṇā*, or to deny it at all should be what a chief ought never to do. The (possibly later) coinages *kavāri* (: the mean *ari*) and *kadarya* (: miserliness - the quality of a mean *ari*) reflect this deep concern and indeed it is pithily expressed at 10.107.3: “A divine fulfillment is the *dakṣiṇā*, a thing that is (part) of the sacrifice to gods. It is not (to be hoped for) from the *kavāris*; they indeed do not give.....”<sup>348</sup>

And the divine giver Indra, is specifically the opposite of the *kavāri*. Says 3.47.5 (= 6.19.11): “No mean *ari* (is) the divine ordainer!”<sup>349</sup>.

344. *jajastam aryo vanuṣām arātayaḥ* / 4.50.11 / 7.97.9d 7.83.5: see n. 64 above.

345. *taranto aryo arātīr / vanvanto aryo arātīḥ* 6.16.27; *aghā aryo arātayaḥ* / 6.48.16., 6.59.8 8.39.2 (above n. 341) ; 9.79.3 (below, n. 346)

346. *uta svasyā arātyā / arir hi ṣa / utānyasyā arātyā / vṛko hi ṣaḥ* / 9.79.3

347. F. p. 45.

348. *daiṇī pūrtīr dakṣiṇā devayajyā / na kavāribhyo na hi te pṛṇanti* / 10.107.3

349. *akavāriṃ divyaṃ śāsam indram* / 3.47.5, 6.19.11b.