

## Rigvedic town and ocean: Witzel vs Frawley.

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The controversy between Dr D Frawley and Prof M Witzel in *The Hindu* on the 18th, 25th June etc, 2002, has been very interesting and amusing. I would have written earlier but I was out of Athens and far from libraries for long periods – until recently. I shall deal as briefly as possible with three issues: a) whether the *RV* (=ṛgveda) is connected with an urban culture; b) whether the rigvedic world included knowledge of the ocean; c) the river Sarasvati.

First, let me clear the ground by saying that although for two decades I taught the AIT (=Aryan Invasion Theory) without examining its validity, I abandoned it some years ago because, after considerable research over several years, I found no evidence at all for it. I have written several articles supporting the view of the Indigenous Indoaryan Origin – in the *ABORI* 1999, vol 80, in the *JICPR* 2001 (special issue), in the *Journal of IE Studies* (2001 and forthcoming) etc. And this view I teach now. An integral part of this view is that the *RV* is pre-Harappan – but for negligible exceptions.

### a) *pur* and 'fort/town'

Frawley thinks that the *RV* is connected with "a semi-urban culture like the Harappan" (*The Hindu* July 16: 13). He states "the term *pur* for city (a term that obviously means city in Greek thought, ie Pura = Polis) is common throughout the text [of the *RV*]". Now the Greek *polis* 'city' and other cognates like Lithuanian *pilis* and Lettish *pils* which both mean 'fort, town', are much too distant from the *RV* and can furnish no acceptable evidence for rigvedic usage any more than the later use of *pur/pura/purī*; so all this must be disregarded. Frawley then gives several instances of *pur* in the *RV* as if they refer to towns/cities. Not one mention of *pur* in the *RV* means town/city. Witzel criticizes Frawley but then gives "small forts" – in the sense of material fortifications or temporary constructions. He too is wrong. In fact, in the early relevant texts the word *pur* without exception means a protective shield or energy field in a non-material dimension; it is a magical, occult, supernatural defence.

Let us examine some examples. The reference VI 48, 8 in the *RV* (which Frawley cites) is a prayer to god Agni to protect (*pāhi*) from anxiety *aṃhas* the-one-who-kindles-the-fire with *śatam purbhīḥ* 'a hundred purs', whatever *pur* might be. The text doesn't say, as Frawley (mis-)reads it, that there are "100 cities" but that a specific type of person (the fire-kindler) must be protected from anxiety with 100 purs: obviously, nobody gets protected (by god Agni) from inner psychological distress with "100 cities" (or forts)! So *pur* must mean something else – an inner, psychological protection. Frawley's reference to *RV* IV 27, 1 is just as unfortunate. The 100 purs here are *āyasī-*, ie of metal (copper/bronze) and such structures did not exist then. According to K Geldner (1951-7), these are *hundert eherne Burgen* '100 bronze Burgs' (Burg= fort/town) which guard/confine/conceal (*rakṣ-*) the celestial Eagle (or some such divine figure). Realizing that this makes little sense in the ordinary material world (how can 100 forts confine one eagle?!), Geldner connects them with demons (n 1c: *Dämonen*). I should add here that the text mentions *garbhe* 'in the womb' and this allows a different interpretation, as in *Aitareya Up* II 1, 5 (ie the spirit of ṛṣi Vāmadeva, seer of this hymn, being confined and breaking free). Either way, the 100 metallic purs have nothing to do

with citadels, forts or towns. The purs are confining forces and the adjective *āyasī* is used metaphorically to suggest hardness, impenetrability.

Leaving aside Frawley's other references, which are just as inapt, let us consider two more instances. Revealing is *RV* II 35, 6 with its *āmāsu pūrṣu parāḥ* wherein is protected the Waters' Offspring *Apām Nápāt*. W O' Flaherty translates this as "far away in fortresses of unbaked bricks" (1981: 105). Now, where did she find these "bricks"?... Neither here nor elsewhere in the *RV* are any bricks mentioned. I can only assume she follows Geldner who translates this phrase as *In den rohen Burgen* 'in raw towns/forts' (!). This means nothing, of course, so Geldner adds a note 6c *nicht wie die gewöhnlichen Burgen aus gebrannten Ziegelsteiner gemacht* 'not like the usual Burgs made from baked bricks' (!); but he doesn't tell us where else in the *RV* we might find **usual** "Burgs made from baked bricks" – and he doesn't because there are no such constructions. Then O' Flaherty in an explanatory note mentions Agni, "Who is safe... among enemies who do not control fire and so do not fire their bricks, or who (as the sun) is safe from his enemies... in his own 'natural' citadels not made of baked bricks, ie the clouds". The confusion here is almost unbelievable. Why and how exactly would Agni feel safe in such conditions and who are these "enemies"? Fire's biggest enemy is water; so fire dives and dwells in the waters protected within fortresses of unbaked bricks! Is this at all sensible? I don't think so. As for the sun, are not the clouds themselves his only traditional enemies? Neither brick-fortresses (in water?!) nor physical enemies are involved here. *Apām Nápāt* in his own non-artificial, ie natural divine condition with his own occult, defensive powers (*pūrṣu*) is protected against any malignity (*arāti*) and falsehood or unrighteousness (*anṛta*)... Even more revealing is *Śuṣṇa's carīṣṇu pur* in *RV* VIII 1, 28: Geldner translates this as *wandelnde Burg* 'mobile/mutable Burg' and adds in note 28a *die Zauberburg* 'the magical Burg', which seems to be right since the Vedic people had no 'mobile' citadels or cities, forts or walls, of any kind; a chariot would be offensive not defensive "fort".

In the post-rigvedic *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, I 23, the *asuras* 'demons' made the earth a copper/bronze *ayasmayī pur*, the midspace *antarikṣa* a silver *rajatā pur* and the sky a golden *harinī* one. Obviously these purs have nothing to do with any kind of human forts or citadels etc. The same *Brāhmaṇa*, a little further on, II 11, says that the gods, in order to protect their sacrifice from the *Asuras*, placed around the sacrificial post three purs *agnimayī* 'made of Agni'. Surely it would be absurd to suppose that Agni built three 'fortifications' of stone or metal or mud or wood round the post. In fact this same passage explains that the repulsing of the *Asuras* is done by taking the holy fire round the place thrice (*paryagni kurvanti .... tripuram paryasante*). Here surely we have a kind of ritual magic. And the same is found in *Taittiriya Saṃhitā* II 5, 3 where if a man comes under attack of witchcraft (*abhicaryamāṇa*), he should perform the ten-night-ritual and thereby surround himself with the protection of a *devapur* 'divine pur'. In the same *Saṃhitā* VI 2, 3 the *Asuras* had three purs, the lowest being of copper, the next of silver and the highest of gold: Rudra cleft them with an arrow made up of the powers of Agni, Soma and *Viṣṇu*.

I shall not tire the readers with more references; they can consult my *Rigvedic pur*, 2002a, for a full examination of the subject. Nor shall I consider the different writings which claim that

*pur* denotes 'city/fort' or any similar structures in the physical world like the *Vedic Index* (1912), W Rau (1976), Mayrhofer (KEWA, EWA), M Witzel (various): they stem from a view embedded in the gross material world and the AIT and are irrelevant to the rigvedic use of *pur*.

That the rigvedic people lived in communities is certain. Many of these communities were settled (though nomads should not be excluded) along the banks of the Seven Rivers and chiefly the Sarasvatī, as is shown by various references in the *RV* (III 23, 4; VI 61, 12; VIII 21, 17-18; etc). But citadels and/or cities are a different matter. I personally have found no evidence in the *RV* for any (semi-)urban structures. If one thinks that the rigvedic people lived in towns and had forts then one should look for and provide evidence other than *pur*. (However, the Indus-Sarasvatī or Harappan urban culture emerges well after 3100 BC and Frawley places the composition of the *RV* before 3500 in his 2001: 308, with which I agree.)

From the preceding discussion one can draw some useful lessons. The *RV* is a primary text. There is absolutely no other piece of Indic literature before it. Subsequent texts may be relevant but they may also be most misleading as is obvious by the later use of *pur-* in the sense of 'fort/town'. The same is true of cognates in other IndoEuropean languages like Gk *polis* 'fort/town': they have no real bearing on the rigvedic *pur*. A most erudite study by an eminent scholar like W Rau (1976) proves, in this instance, irrelevant to the *RV* (but relevant and illuminating perhaps for post-rigvedic texts). There is not one reference in the *RV* that humans destroyed a *pur*: this was done by Indra, and other deities. Nor is any *pur* said to have been built by humans. (Again, please see the exhaustive examination of *pur* in *RV* in Kazanas 2002a.)

I should add here that translations depend on interpretations which in turn depend on a basic viewpoint and this may or may not be right. Frawley's translations, which are wrong here, stem not from a close examination of the text itself but from the notion that the *RV* is connected with a semi-urban culture. On the other hand, the wrong translations of O'Flaherty, Geldner (and others) result also not from a thorough look at the usage of the word in the *RV* but from preconceptions inherent in and constituting the AIT (invading Aryans attacking native forts). Much more could be said, of course, about translating the *RV*, but I must leave this and turn to the second issue.

### **b) *samudra*: ocean or what?**

Here Frawley presents some good evidence (I 71, 7; V 55, 5; IX 84, 4 etc) and some dubious examples (I 130, 5; I 190, 7; VII 33, 8 etc: July 16, pp 4-6, 20-3). Witzel ignores totally all the sound evidence instead of facing it squarely and trying to disprove it and digresses on some weak points and all kinds of generalities and irrelevances, such as – "Varuṇa is not just a god of *samudra* but ... of Rta ..." (as if Frawley doesn't know this) and with pure pedantry cites A Meillet 1907(! Aug 13).

The important point here is whether the Rigvedic people knew the ocean/sea (in our modern sense of the words) or not. If they did, then obviously *samudra* can mean ocean/sea. If they did not know it, then *samudra* cannot mean ocean/sea. How do we find out?

To say that *samudra* means 'ocean' and that therefore the *RV* knows the ocean is circuitous and really begs the question. Similarly, to say that in one verse it means 'a terminal lake', in another 'heavenly waters', in a third 'confluence' etc, and that therefore the *RV* does not know the ocean is no better.

Since, as I said, the *RV* is an absolutely primary text, *philology can be of limited help to settle this issue*. When Witzel claims that philology is necessary (true of course in many ways) and dizzyingly refers to various sources (all distant from, and some later than, the *RV*), to recent scholarly authorities (often irrelevant), protolanguages (all conjectural and inadmissible in a court of law) and so on, and when Frawley falls into the trap and argues against all this, they both labour under a fallacy. The word *samudra* means literally 'all-together' *sam* and 'water' *udrá* (cf *anudrá* = waterless). That *udr-a* is connected to PIE (=Proto-Indo-European) *\*udn-*, Greek *hudor*, Latin *unda*, Gothic *watō* etc, etc, does not help us in the slightest any more than, as we saw, Greek *polis* and Baltic *pilis*, *pils* and later uses of *pur-* in India help with rigvedic *pur*. And this, because we don't and can't know if the original PIE word(s) had one meaning in all places, all tribes and all classes of the communities, and because the use of the cognates in many cases developed differently in the separate traditions according to different conditions of place and time. (Eg: Vedic *arna-/va* 'surging, wave, flood' is connected to Hittite *aruna* 'sea' and Greek *ernos* 'branch, shoot' and Norwegian *run(n)e* 'branch': thus, if the cognates are correct – and who can be certain? – we have two distinct lines of semantic development. Cf also  $\sqrt{nu}$  *navate/nauti* 'sound/praise' and 'go' but Greek *nevō* 'nod/wink' and Latin *ad-nuo* 'make a sign'; then  $\sqrt{man}$  *manyate* 'think' but Gk *maino-mai* 'be furious', OE *mānan* 'signify' (also *mūnan* 'remember') and Goth *munan* 'think'; also *manas* 'mind' but Gk *menos* 'force/spirit'; again, *sar-ít* 'stream' or *sár-as* 'lake, pond' and Greek *hals-* 'salt, sea' or *helos* 'swamp', Latin *sal-/inus* 'salt-/y', Gothic *sal-sus* 'salt'. In all these examples the semantic development diverges considerably.) To say then that in *RV* VII 95, 2 *á samudráṭ* the word means 'a terminal lake' in which the river Sarasvatī ends (Witzel 2001: 76) is not philology at all: it is a mere and arbitrary interpretation with the use of some reasoning or logical process which, however, here is defective because it is conditioned heavily by the AIT. That it is based on erudite studies of the past (eg K Klaus, H Lüders, et al) is not at all helpful since they too are interpretations heavily conditioned by the AIT: they have no more information about *samudra* than I have or Geldner or the *Vedic Index* since the *RV* is an absolutely primary text. Philology here may obfuscate not clarify.

So how do we find out? Any mass of water more than one drop could be *sam-udra*: water in a jar, a small pool, a large lake or the sea. When we say it is a confluence or a river, we have introduced the element of movement – moving, not stationary water. Now, such is also water-from-a-spring, a catarract or heavy torrential rain. Perhaps *sam-udra* denotes these moving water-masses also?

Let us try a different approach – a common sense one.

For the sake of the argument, I assume that the AIT is correct. So at about 1500 BC the Aryans come from Afghanistan, they do manage to climb up the north-western mountains with their carts (*anas-*, *vāhana-*) and their *rathavāhana-* upon which rest the war-chariots (*ratha-*),

then roll down into the valleys of Saptasindhu and with peaceful and/or violent means eventually take control of the natives. I also assume that the Sarasvati does not flow into the Indian/Arabian ocean; only the Indus does so. Meanwhile the Harappan culture is collapsing and many natives move to the east and south followed by the newcomers. The Aryans come from a landlocked place and know nothing of the ocean – only lakes, rivers and confluences. Then they begin to compose their religious hymns and a few hundred years later they arrange and produce, say c 1200-1000, the *RV* collection – in which there is no knowledge of the ocean.

With regard to the knowledge of the ocean, this scenario contains a fatal flaw. At their arrival the Aryans may in this scenario have known no ocean, but is it at all likely that they continued to be ignorant of it in the next 300 or even 3 years? Of course not. *They would have learnt about it from the natives, at least.*

To begin with, it is well established that the Harappans had maritime trade with Mesopotamia since the late third millennium if not earlier (Saggs 1989: 130; Crawford 1994: 148; Lal 1997: 182-8). They had large ports like Lothal and perhaps Dholavira (on an island) and Dvaraka (later) and obviously large ocean-faring ships and smaller craft sailing up and down the Indus, the “terminal lakes” and the other rivers. Surely it is not likely in all those decades and centuries that the Aryans never heard from the natives about the expanse of the ocean in the south and the former trade. Then, the Aryans themselves were intrepid adventurers who had trekked 100s of miles over rough and dangerous regions and had conquered the Saptasindhu. Surely it is not likely that nobody thought of travelling by chariot to the south, or by boat down the Indus (see example 6, below) and so gain first-hand knowledge of the ocean. And if a few did this, then more would follow and, in any case, knowledge of the ocean would spread among the Indoaryans, including some of the composers of the hymns.

Thus common sense compels us to accept that the Indoaryans had knowledge of the ocean/sea even in the AIT scenario. With its customary caution the *Vedic Index* states “knowledge of the ocean... was almost inevitable to people who knew the Indus” (vol 2, 432). Why modern scholars abandon common sense in favour of a mis-applied, “philology” is a mystery.

Consequently we must accept that there may well be references to the ocean in the *RV*. Common sense again dictates that out of the many words that denote ‘water-mass/flood’ a very likely one is the frequent *samudra* because this is so used commonly and consistently in post-rigvedic literature.

Are there such instances in the *RV*? Yes, many.

We should first note that the recent claims about *samudra* denoting various water-masses other than the ocean are not new nor more “scientific”. The *Vedic Index* (1912) mentions (ibid) some scholars who rejected totally the meaning ‘ocean’, others who accepted it in few and others in many cases. It cites Zimmer who thought *samudra* “denotes the river Indus when it receives all its Panjab tributaries” and gives numerous references. But it adds “even Zimmer who is inclined to restrict [the Vedic Indians’] knowledge of the sea as far as possible admits

it in one passage of the Rigveda and of course later" (ibid). Zimmer's one exception is VII 95, 2, Sarasvatī flowing *girībhya ā samudrāt* 'from the mountains to the ocean'! K Klaus also in his more modern study agrees with Zimmer and accepts that in this passage *samudra* may denote *Meer* 'sea' (1989: 365). On the other hand, in some instances *samudra* can denote 'confluence' (RV III 33, 2) and in others primeval celestial 'ocean' (X 190, 1-2), while in yet others earthly 'ocean/sea'. Let us now pass to some examples in the RV. And I start with one of Frawley's examples.

**1) V 55, 5** *úd irayathā marutaḥ samudrató yūyám vṛṣṭim varṣayathā* 'O Maruts, you raise up rain from the samudra [and] cause-to-rain'. Here there is plainly an upward (*ud*) movement of water/moisture/vapour and then rain caused by the Stormgods. The upward movement excludes an atmospheric or heavenly water-mass since the waters would not go even higher before they fall as rain; so it must be a water-mass on earth. The *samudra* here is singular. So it cannot be one river or confluence since there are many of these; moreover, these are in motion and even the rigvedic people would know that vapour would rise more easily from stationary waters. Nor can it be one "terminal lake" since there are other small and large lakes. Consequently *samudra* must here denote either the sum-total of waters, stationary and moving, or a single very large watermass which is the ocean/sea. Again, the rigvedic people must have known that evaporation occurs more in hot conditions rather than in cold; so they would not refer to *all* waters. They must also have known that it is hotter further south of Saptasindhu. Now, even in the AIT scenario, as we saw, they must have known that, further south where it is hotter, there is a very large, almost limitless watermass and that most evaporation would take place there. So here *samudra* must refer to the ocean/sea. Klaus (ibid 370) takes this as a possible reference to the Indus, but this ignores the facts given here.

The next example mentions an upper but also a lower *samudra*. I trust I shall be excused hereafter if I don't indulge in such ludicrously detailed analyses to demonstrate the obvious.

**2) VII 6, 7:** Agni Vaiśvānara received treasures in the rising of the sun *ā samudrād āvarād ā parasmād... divā ā pṛthiviāḥ* 'from the *samudra* lower and upper, from sky/heaven and earth'. Here we have a lower and an upper ocean and sky and earth: so we take the lower ocean to be earthly and the upper one atmospheric or heavenly. Or we may also have a chiasmus figure (ad-bc: *avara-samudra* with *pṛthivī* and *para-samudra* with *dyu-*) which amounts to the same. But here the lower water-mass cannot be the heavenly one as well, nor a terminal lake nor a confluence of two rivers.

We find another differentiation and contrast in a hymn to the Maruts who knew the ocean.

**3) VIII 20, 25:** Whatever medicinal balm is in the Indus and Asiknī rivers... *samudréṣu... pārvateṣu* 'in the oceans... on the mountains'. Here now we have (two) rivers and their drinkable waters, then oceans/seas with salt-water and mountains – a totally earthly area. Thus we can exclude the heavenly ocean, lakes (with sweet water) and confluences (also sweet water).

Whatever philologists and other experts may say about these passages, I have not the slightest doubt that they reveal knowledge of ocean/sea.

I do agree with the *Vedic Index* and Zimmer that in some verses *samudra* may denote the confluence of certain rivers/streams with the Indus. Eg, III 36, 7 ...*samudréṇa síndhavo*

*yādamanāḥ* '... streams uniting with the river' (not surely uniting with 'confluence'); VI 36, 3, ...*samudrām ná sindhavaḥ* 'like streams/ivers to their confluence; etc: here, yes, *samudra* could be a river or confluence. But other passages indicate flow to the ocean.

**4) I 71, 7:** All offerings go to Agni *samudrām ná sravātaḥ saptá yahvīḥ* 'like the seven swift-ones flowing to the ocean'. Here, since the Indus itself is one of the 7 rivers and flows down to the ocean, *samudra* must denote 'ocean', terrestrial and nothing else. It can be argued here that *yahvī* means 'daughter' or 'she-young-one' (which is one of the two meanings given in MSD and Mayrhofer) and that the 7 rivers are "young" (ie smaller) tributaries flowing into the "elder" (ie larger) Indus. However, first, we don't know if the Indus was larger than the tributaries before it received them. Second, and more important, only a very confused mind would speak of tributaries as "young daughters". No daughters in any sense at all flow into an elder person (their mother?) the way tributaries stream into another river. Nor can it be said that several youngsters together grow into a single elder being. When Agni is described as *sāhaso yahúḥ* (IX 60, 13; or *sāhasaḥ putrá-* in V 11, 6) 'son of might', might is conceived as the pre-existing parent from whom emerges the offspring, and no poet would suggest that the tributaries emerge from the river they feed. Consequently, such thinking is as worthless as Mayrhofer says is the attempted connection of *yahu* with *Jehovah*. Thus the 7 restless rivers flow with the Indus to the ocean.

From this now we can see that the Vedic people had the wider (and not difficult, surely) concept of all streams/ivers eventually flowing into the ocean/sea in the south – and this is their only "terminal lake". So in the two previous quotes *samudra* could well be 'ocean'.

Then there is the tale of Bhujyu who is rescued by the Aśvins from the middle of the *samudra* in numerous hymns. This is all we know and post-rigvedic literature says nothing at all about this incident.

**5) I 116, 4:** For three nights and three days (*tisráḥ kṣápas trír áha-*), o Aśvins, you carried Bhujyu... *samudrásya dhánvan ādrásya pāré* 'to the distant dry-shore of the watery ocean'. Here the key is the 3 nights and days. Obviously, no lake or river is so wide that the Aśvins would need so long to ferry Bhujyu across. Only an ocean will do here. Klaus refers only to the aspect of moisture (*feucht*) ignoring all else (ibid 366, n 12).

That the tale may be pure myth does not invalidate the duration of the Aśvins' flight to the dry *dhanva-* 'sandbank' (Mayrhofer) and the expanse of the *samudra*. Consequently, in the many other references to the rescue of Bhujyu by the Aśvins *samudra* denotes ocean: eg I 118, 6; VI 62, 6; VII 69, 7; VIII 5, 22; etc. Perhaps it is not out of place here to note that this motif of the Aśvins as rescuers may be PIE since it appears in Greece where the two Dioskouroi 'the bright Skygod's sons' deliver men and ships from tempestuous seas (long *Hymn to Dioskouroi* 6-8, in White 1935) and in the Baltic countries where the Dievo Sunelai 'the [sky-]god's lads' save the Sunmaiden from the sea (Ward 1968).

With these examples in mind we can look at many more passages and find they indicate knowledge of the ocean – perhaps even maritime trade in the next one.

**6) I 56, 2:** To [Indra] go praises... *samudrám ná samcaraṇe saniṣyávaḥ* 'as to the samudra [go] in company those desiring gain'. *samcaraṇa* and the plural *saniṣyavaḥ* imply more than two going together. Yes, it could be to a lake or a large river, the only one according to the AIT being the Indus (for fish, shells, commerce?). But if they have a large enough boat to take 3 persons and merchandise, surely it could reach the ocean in the south. However, to me (and to the *Vedic Index* I, 461-2, **nau**) this suggests the ocean/sea.

**7) I 32, 1-2:** Indra killed the dragon, opened outlets for the waters splitting the breasts of mountains (1cd) then ... *syándamānā áñjaḥ samudrám áva jagmur ápaḥ* (2cd) 'flowing directly to the ocean down rushed the waters'. Here the "mountains" may be a metaphor for clouds but even so the rainwaters would not end up in one terminal lake, one river or one confluence (*samudra* is singular), but in the ocean. Only strong prejudice under the AIT would insist otherwise. Geldner who is obviously aware of the earlier dispute about *samudra* here translates: *eilend liefen die Gewässer stracks zum Meere*, the only difference from mine being *Meer* 'the sea'. I'll settle for "the sea" quite happily.

In fact Geldner uses in his translation *Meer* and *Ozean* 'ocean' very frequently – and even in places where I would hesitate. Here are some examples.

**8) V 78, 8:** *yáthā váto yáthā vánaṃ yáthā samudrá éjati*. Geldner renders: *Wie die Wind, wie der Wald, wie das Meer bewegt* 'as the wind, as the wood, as the **sea** stirs'. Here *samudra* could well be a lake, but Geldner is unhesitant.

**9) II 35, 3:** *sám anyá yanty úpa yanty anyāḥ, samānám ūrvám nadíah pṛṇanti*: literally 'while some flow together, others flow towards; the rivers fill the common receptacle'. In Mayrhofer *ūrva* = *dungeon*, but also *Meer* 'sea'. 'Flow together' probably means flow one into the other. Geldner gives much the same but also makes an insertion in the first part: *...müнден andere (ins Meer)* 'others flow (into the sea)'. And the last part he renders freely as *den gemeinsamen Ozean* 'the common ocean'. Need I say more? No, but I'll give two more examples.

**10) III 33, 2:** Impelled by Indra ... you-two [rivers] *samudrám rathýeva yáthaḥ* 'like chariot-horses go to the sea'. Geldner gives the same – *geht ihr zum Meere*. Here we could perhaps have 'you go to your confluence' since the two rivers are thought to join together; yet, even here, the simile of the chariot-horses (or, loosely 'chariots') would seem most inapt since a confluence for them would be a disastrous collision. Nor can it be said that here is meant the confluence with the Indus because this would come later, after the two rivers have joined. So we have an unclear situation.

Now Geldner not only is aware of the disputes regarding ambiguous words, phrases or passages, but also has translated all *RV* and so should know the text better than most. His numerous references to parallel passages in the *RV* hymns and other *Vedic texts* shows that he knows the entire spectrum of the Vedic literature. This does not mean that he is free of errors, but these are due mostly to the limitations of the AIT which he also held but with far better reasons in his time than modern vedicists.

Allow me here to open a parenthesis on (mis-)translations and misconceptions under the



influence of this wretched AIT. In this very hymn III 33, Viśvāmitra asks the rivers Vipāś and Śutudrī to stop flowing so that he and the Bharatas can cross; the rivers comply. Now in stanza 11 we find *gavyān grāmaḥ* and in 12 *bharatā[ḥ] gavyāvaḥ*. In both cases Geldner translates the words *gav-* with *Rinder(beute) ausziehend-* 'extracting/removing (ie stealing?) cattle'. C Watkins translates (2001: 86-88) with the compound 'cattle-raiding' ('host' in 11 and 'Bharatas' in 12). It is possible that cattle-raids did occur in rigvedic times, as we find similar practices later in Greek and Irish texts also. But in this hymn there is no mention of any raid or cattle-stealing. The adjective *gavyu* means 'desirous-of-cattle' according to the MSD (also 'delighting-in-cattle') and Mayrhofer (*Rinder begehrend* 'desiring cattle'). The MSD gives the same meaning for *gavyat*. These meanings are not quite the same as cattle-rustling, which comes from AIT notions. *gavya(n)t-* is found in several hymn-prayers to Indra together with *aśvaya(n)t-* 'desirous-of/delighting-in horses': eg in IV 17, 6; VII 32, 23; etc. *gavyu* again is used also for Soma (eg VIII 46, 10; IX 97, 15) where the desire is presumably for the cows' milk. Surely a group of people on the move guided by a great seer need not be cattle-rustlers just because they are described as 'desirous-of/delighting-in cattle'. I would like to know if there is any clear reference to cattle-raiding in the RV. S A Dange examined in detail many passages about the alleged "battle for the gain of cows" (*gaviṣṭi/go-iṣṭhi*) but found no evidence at all for cattle-raids and the like (1967: 78-108); it is a pity this study has not become (better) known. End of parenthesis. Now the final example.

11) X 66 11 *samudrāḥ śindhū rājo antāriḥṣam ajā ékapāt tanayitnúr arṇavāḥ*: 'the *samudra*, the river Indus, the region/space, the midair/sky, the deity Aja Ekapād (=the one-footed Unborn or Goat), the thunder, the flood (should listen)'. In this sequence the midair/sky, Aja Ekapād and the thunder are definitely non-earthly but atmospheric or celestial phenomena; so "the flood" is most probably the atmospheric non-earthly ocean. Consequently *samudra* cannot refer to this domain but must be a terrestrial watermass, as is the river Indus; and *rajas* is the general earthly vicinity or space. This seems to follow naturally from the preceding stanza 10c which says that waters and plants should speed the songs forward. There is absolutely nothing before or after to suggest 'confluence' for *samudra* and a pond/lake would be much too specific for this context since there are more than one of them. It cannot be 'a terminal lake' since the Indus flowed to the ocean nor a river or Indus obviously. So *samudra* must be the normal earthly ocean. The sequence moves from the ocean/sea to the river Indus, then upward to the atmosphere/sky and its phenomena.

Now, if one examines carefully K Klaus's paper on *samudra* (1989), one will agree with some of his findings (as in the *Vedic Index*) but will also notice three methodological faults: a) he jumbles together RV and post-RV passages as if they are all of the same value; b) he refers to numerous RV passages and theorizes in generalities but analyses in detail very few; c) he omits several passages like those I use, eg examples 2 (VII 6, 7 yet cites VII 33, 8 etc), 3 (VIII 20, 5 yet he cites many others from Bk VIII), 6 (I 56, 2 yet cites I 52 and 55), 9 (II 35, 3 yet cites others) and 11 (X 66, 11 yet cites others). However, these latter examples show most clearly that *samudra* denotes 'ocean/sea'. As for Klaus's objection that the saltiness *Salzigkeit* of sea-water is not mentioned, it is not serious, because there are

contrasts between sweet-water streams and the ocean; no context demands anything else, nor is it anywhere stated that the river-water is drinkable. And instead of castigating this very partial approach, Witzel accepts and projects it forth promoting a misrepresentation. T Y Elizarenkova contributed to this when she wrote (1996: 21) "it is a problem whether the Rigvedic Aryans really knew of the sea or the ocean"; in her article, which was about words denoting 'water', she did not examine any contexts for *samudra*, opted (blindly) for the meanings 'confluence, pond, spring, etc' (but not 'ocean/sea') and ignored Mayrhofer's lemma in EWA (or the KEWA Supplements) which does give 'sea' (but cited EWA for other cases). Surely, neither Geldner nor Mayrhofer are authorities to be ignored on this matter.

I think the evidence given above with 4 or 5 passages should be quite adequate. Mayrhofer in his Dictionary (1996) admits now the meaning 'a large river formed by the confluence/combination (*Vereinigung*) of two or more rivers'; but he also gives (and for the RV) *Flut* 'flood' and *Meer* 'sea' (no "terminal lake"), as he had done earlier in his KEWA (vol 3, 1980). I' ll settle for "sea" happily. So the Indoaryans knew quite well the earthly ocean/sea. By extension they had ocean-going ships *nāvāḥ samudrīyaḥ*: I 25, 7. (This deserves a note. Varuṇa, the god of *ṛta* and of the moral code, knows the paths of birds and winds, the changes of the moon, the dwellers on high, all marvels, the past and future – in stanzas 7-11; he knows also samudra-going ships. Now is it likely that the seer of the hymn puts in this detail referring only to canoes floating on nearby, well-known streams, lakes and confluences(?) ? Is it not more likely that he has in mind ships travelling far and well out of the ordinary ken of the people? I think the latter and this means very distant sojourns.) Evidently the seers of the hymns were more concerned with devotion and esoteric journeys than travel abroad so they give no details about the latter. If invasionist scholars do not wish to remove their AIT blinkers and will continue to prevaricate and quibble thus parading prejudices and useless habits of pedantry – good luck to them. I now turn to the third issue.

### **c) The river Sarasvatī and Conclusion**

I feel amazement every time I deal with this subject, because to me the evidence is so clear and so decisive that I cannot understand why there is so much controversy, confusion and acrimony. I shall be brief.

There is no doubt that this river flowed down to the ocean before 1900 BC and certainly before 3000.

RV VII 95, 2 states that this river flows "pure in her course from the mountains to the ocean" *śúcir yatí giríbhya á samudrát*. To say, as obdurate invasionists do, that here is meant some "terminal lake" is to ignore not only all the evidence presented above but also all human rationality; because in this instance the rigvedic seer would have used different words specifically denoting a terminal lake. Vedic has *saras* 'lake' (and *hrada*); so the poet would have said *ā sarobhyaḥ* 'to the terminal lakes' maintaining the metrical cadence – ~ – – (and indicating Witzel's hypothetical etymological connexion with the name *Saras-vatī* 'having terminal lakes'; but he wrote *ā samudrāt* 'to the ocean'. Besides, how could this *nadītamā*, *ambitamā*, *devitamā* 'best-river, best-mother, best-goddess' (II 41, 16) end in a terminal lake

and so be inferior to the Indus which does flow to the ocean? It simply couldn't.

It is not only early hymns that laud Sarasvatī. Late hymns VIII 21, X 64 and 177 also describe **in the present tense** the river's greatness, say that many kings live along its banks and pray for sustenance and good fortune. Neither in these hymns nor anywhere else in the *RV* is there the slightest hint that the river has shrunk, ( as indeed, we find in later texts like *Manusmṛti* II 21 and scholiasts thereon). If it had shrunk, indeed, then the poets would have spoken of past glories, lamented the loss and prayed for the reappearance of the ample water; this evidently did not happen during the composition of the *RV* hymns.

The river dried up c 1900 BC (Rao 1991: 77-9; Allchins 1997: 117). Consequently the (bulk of the) *RV* must be assigned to a date before 1900. (Here I simplify for brevity.) The hymns evince no knowledge of large buildings, of brick-constructions, of fixed hearths/altars, of cotton and so many other elements of the Indus-Saraswati (or Harappan) Civilization, in contrast to post-rigvedic texts that do so. Consequently they must be assigned to a period before 3000. This is in harmony with the native tradition which says that the *RV* arrangement was made on the eve of the great Bharata war just before the onset of the Kali Yuga at 3102 BC.

Is this important? Does it matter whether the *RV* was composed in the 4th millennium or c 1000BC? whether the Indoaryans are indigenous or came to India c 1500BC? After all, life goes on irrespective of such notions.

Yes, it matters very much. First, the aim of scholarship is to establish and promote true knowledge in all spheres so that life may be regulated by this – not prejudices, partisan views (even patriotic but false) or pet theories. Second, Indian prehistory must be restored and revalued in a correct time-frame, as is done with all other countries and all areas of history. It is sad, indeed, as Frawley wrote (*The Hindu* June 18), "to note how intellectuals in India are quick to denigrate the extent and antiquity of their history". Third, the *RV* contains, apart from any historical data, ideas that are of great value to mankind and reveal, as do many other recent discoveries in prehistoric cultures (Rudgley 1998 passim), that many so-called "primitive" peoples had much and important knowledge that held them at a fairly high level of civilization enabling them to live in harmony with the natural processes of their environment. The *RV* preserves for us the idea of a Primal Unity that is the First Cause of the universe: not only in the *Puruṣa* or the *Nāsadīya* sūkta (X 90 and 129) but also in I 164, 6; III 55; VI 75,19; VIII 58; X 114, 5; and less obviously in others. This doctrine of the indescribable One, which exists before all things and concepts and is the cause of all manifestations of divine and mundane phenomena, is absent from all other IndoEuropean traditions (Hittite, Greek, Roman etc); it may well have been an essential constituent of the PIE culture, lost by the other IE branches. Thus the ancient Indoaryans would seem to belong among the most highly cultured people on earth with a culture that consisted not so much of material artifacts but of inner knowledge and spiritual strength.

I think it a great pity that native Indian scholars today, and particularly saskritists, do not throw into the dustbin the useless and noxious AIT.

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