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Author(s): Albert J. Carnoy

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THE MORAL DEITIES OF IRAN AND INDIA AND THEIR ORIGINS

ALBERT J. CARNOY
Universities of Louvain and Pennsylvania

For the purpose of forming an idea of the language spoken by the Indo-Europeans before their dispersion, the various languages belonging to the Indo-European family have been compared. The religion of the Aryan tribe cannot be known except by a comparison of the data that we possess concerning the beliefs of those Indo-European peoples who seem to have best preserved the mentality and the customs of their ancestors. Consequently, scholars have investigated the beliefs of the Romans prior to Greek or Etruscan influence, the religious customs of the Pelasgian Greeks, the heathen survivals among Kelts, Teutons, and Slavs, and still more the religion of the Lithuanians before their conversion at the end of the Middle Ages, or the Indian poetry of the Vedas.

The inquiry has resulted in bringing forward some peculiarities that are common to all those religions, such as the essential features of the worship of the dead, a certain number of rites, of sacrificial customs, of myths, etc. As for the gods, the tempting identifications of the philologists of fifty years ago have generally proved to be unsatisfactory, and much disappointment awaits him who endeavors to discover the names of the primitive gods. The reason for that difficulty seems to be that the Indo-European gods in all probability had no real names but were simply designated by their functions. That is why Herodotus, for instance, says that the Pelasgians had given no names to their gods. This was very much the case with the Prussians before they were Christianized and Teutonized. A mediaeval author writes about them:

As the Prussians have little intelligence, they have not been able to know of God and therefore they are worshiping every creature instead of Him: like sun, moon, stars, thunder, birds, animals, even toads. They have special gods

for the fishing, the sowing, the reaping of crops, the breeding of cattle, and for every necessity of life in particular.¹

This statement is very interesting, for it closely agrees with what we know of the ancient beliefs of the Romans. The *indigitamenta* or collections of formulae used in praying to the deities on all occasions of life reveal to us the fact that Romans worshiped, outside of their main gods, gods of the house, of the family, of the fields, and many others taking care of human life, each one for his part. Such were Saturnus for the sowing, Pomona for the fruit, Robigus against smut-brand, Ops for the crops, Janus for doors, the deva Fessonia against fatigue, etc.

Similar beliefs are more or less clearly observable in the case of other Indo-European communities, so much so that it is no rash conclusion to assume that in Aryan times the divine power to a large extent was apportioned among a great number of occasional gods or special gods (*Sondergötter*), in which the people were worshipping the mysterious power of the divine as manifesting itself in all the phenomena of sky and earth. To be sure, not all the gods had the same importance among them. The gods of the sky, the "Heavenly Ones," enjoyed a decided prominence: thunder, dawn, morning and evening star, wind, sun and moon, fire and earth, and above all the god of heaven: Dyêus. The extraordinary importance of the latter is proved by the fact that his name, in contrast with those of the other deities, is found in practically all Indo-European religions: Dyâus Pitar in India, Ζεύς πατήρ in Greece, Jupiter in Italy, Ziu among the Teutons, where he is a war-god. Those heavenly ones (*devas, dei, δῖοι*) were spoken of and worshiped as powerful beings capable of bestowing prosperity on man or of destroying all his works or possessions. On that account they received sacrifices. Moreover, since they were thought to be the forces ruling the cosmic elements (elemental deities), they were doomed to play an important and often rather unedifying part in mythical stories meant to account for the phenomena of nature. Schrader² and Feist³ thus go so far as to deny to the heavenly ones

¹ Quoted by Schrader, "Aryan Religion," *Encycl. Relig. Ethics*, II, 31.

² *Op. cit.*, 49.

³ "Ausbreitung und Herkunft der Indogermanen," *Kultur*, p. 355.

any moral character whatever. Sin (Sanskrit *āgas*, Greek *ἄγος*) was supposed to be punished by the souls of the ancestors and the gods, guardians of the tribe (*θεοὶ πατρῶοι*), just as in Greece the Furies and Erinyes were held to be the avengers of the social crimes such as parricide, regicide, high treason, failure to bury one's relatives, etc. This is probably somewhat exaggerated, since in Homer, for instance, Zeus often appears as the protector of truth, hospitality, and other virtues. But it is, however, certain that the moral aspect of the gods was completely in the background among the attributes of the heavenly ones who were characterized by some function or activity in connection with natural phenomena. Now, as for the Indo-Iranians with whom we are more especially concerned in this article, Herodotus in his well-known passage, i. 131-40, says of the Persians that—

they count it unlawful to set up images and shrines and altars and actually charge them that do so with folly because they have not conceived the gods to be of like nature with men, as the Greeks conceived them. But their custom is to ascend to the highest peaks of the mountains and offer sacrifices to Zeus calling the whole vault of the sky Zeus; and they sacrifice also to Sun, Moon, Earth, Fire, Water, and Wind.

It would be difficult to imagine anything agreeing more closely with what is supposed to have been the Indo-European religion. The Persians at that time were thus worshiping the Heavenly Ones, the gods of the elements, and at their head Zeus, the god of the sky-vault; and those gods were impersonal.

But, of course, Herodotus is not the only witness whom we have to interrogate on the subject of Old Persian religion. The Great Kings, the Achaemenians themselves, have left us, on the rocks of Behistan or in Persepolis, long official inscriptions in cuneiform letters, in which they give a record of their own deeds. Now, when Darius makes a profession of faith he does not make himself a worshiper of Dyêus, as Herodotus would lead us to assume. He says: "Through the will of Auramazda, I am a king. Auramazda has given me a kingdom" (Bh. i. 5). Similarly Xerxes says: "Darius, my father, has built this house by the will of Auramazda. May Auramazda and the other gods protect me. . . . May Auramazda preserve all that has been founded by me or by my

father Darius" (Pers. C. 3). As they are the kings of kings (*xshâyatiya xshâyatiyânâm*), Auramazda is the greatest of gods (*mathishta bagânâm*). He is all-powerful by his will (*vashna*) and it is he who makes the nations into slaves or tributaries of Darius (Bh. i. 7) and gives victory in battle. He is the god who knows everything and provides for everything (N.R.A. 5). He is the great god who created this earth, who created the sky, who created man, who created man's happiness.¹ What is more important still, Auramazda is the ethical god *par excellence*. "O man!" says Darius, "despise not the decrees of Auramazda. Turn not away from the right path. Sin not!" (Dar. N.R.A. 6). Above all, he protects the truth. "O thou who shalt be king after me, keep thou from lying! Should a man be found to be a liar, deal thou with him severely, if thou desirest to keep thy kingdom whole" (Dar. Bh. Col. 4. 37, 40). "May Auramazda protect this land from the hostile inroads, from bad harvests and from lying" (Dar. Pers. 3). The usurpers of the crown, for instance the magian Gaumata (Smerdis), is "one that lies" (*adurujiya*), whereas Darius has received the help of Auramazda, "because," says he, "I have neither been a liar nor a tyrant" (Dar. Bh. Col. 4. 63, 64).

Thus in sharp contrast with all that we have previously seen of the Indo-European, including the Persian, religion, the ethical character of the god is now decidedly prominent and of a very high standard. Moreover, Auramazda stands so much above the other divine beings that we may almost think of monotheism. Besides Auramazda we hear in those inscriptions only of other very subordinate gods, the *aniya bagâha*. "May Auramazda with the other gods protect me," says Xerxes (Xerx. Pers. D. 3), and Darius calls those minor gods "gods of the clans" (Dar. Pers. D. 3). They are thus local deities. Among the gods subordinate to Auramazda, two deities, however, occupy a special position—Mithra and Anâhita, a god and a goddess once more, who had no place in the Indo-European pantheon of nature-gods.

With its strong moral character, its triad of personal deities, among whom Auramazda has a decided prominence, the religion of the Great Kings is distinctly superior to the Indo-European

¹ Dar. Alv. 1.

religion of the "Heavenly Ones," which, according to Herodotus' testimony, was current among the people of Persia. We may thus presume that the Great Kings were the supporters of another worship, the worship of Auramazda, which probably was practiced by a religious school in Iran, the teachings of which have been adopted by Darius and his nobility. Auramazda's religion is certainly no innovation of the Great Kings. The name of their high god has been found recently in an Assyrian inscription dating back to Assur-Banipal. It assumes there the form Assara Mazaash, which is nearer to the oldest form of the name Ashura Mazdâs. Asura is an old Indo-Iranian name denoting a divine being or a spirit endowed with a mysterious power (*maya*). As for the name Mazdâs, it means wisdom or science. We might therefore translate Asura Mazdâs by "the Wise Spirit."

Now, the worship of that great god has been preached in Iran with quite a special insistence by the renowned prophet Zoroaster or *Zarathushtra*. He probably did not create the figure of the Wise God which dates back to several centuries before the period when that sage is likely to have lived; but he endeavored to purify the worship of Asura Mazdâs or Ahura Mazdâh, as he says, from all that is not consistent with the high ideal of morality and the exalted conception of divinity embodied in Mazdeism. He also expelled the figure of Mithra from his creed. He ignores Anâhita and he makes Ahura Mazdâh the only god of the good creation and of the righteous, in opposition to the "Evil Spirit" who rules over evil creatures and the wicked. Mazdâh is the god of justice (Asha = Arta) who wants men to follow his path practicing good works, good thoughts, good deeds, rejecting the service of the "Lying Spirit," so that they can obtain the blessings that are the reward of the righteous in life here and hereafter.

In the beautiful hymns or rather versified preachings, the *gâthas*, which have been preserved for us as an invaluable deposit by the Parsees, Zarathushtra speaks of Ahura Mazdâh in still more exalted terms than do the Great Kings. He is the great creator of all kings, even of the divine. The prophet says:

This I ask thee, tell me in truth, O Lord: Who was the first originator and the father of the great law of order and justice [*asha*]? Who gave to the sun

and the stars their path? Who made the moon to wax and to wane? All that, O Wise God, I wish to know and other things besides. This I ask thee, tell me in truth, O Lord! Who gave a foundation to the earth and to the clouds so that they would not fall? Who created water and plants? Who gave swiftness to clouds and wind? Who is the creator of the good spirit? O Lord, this I ask thee, tell me in truth, Who is the benefactor who made light and darkness, who is the benefactor who made sleep and watch? Who made morning, midday, and night, that reminds the wise of their duties? [Ys. 44. 3-5.]

Thus one sees why Ahura Mazdâh is called the god of marvelous science and mysterious power. He is the most-knowing one, and the most-seeing one. No one can deceive him. He watches with radiant eyes everything that is done in open or in secret. No misdeed can escape him and he best remembers them all.

That omniscient protector of morality and creator with marvelous power, although he has a strong personality, has no anthropomorphic features. He is, however, spoken of as living in the heavenly realm, being brighter than the brightest—expressions that had, however, no material meaning for the prophet, although they might be borrowed from a somewhat more materialistic conception of his god in the *milieu* where he lived.

While Dyêus as the god of the sky is surrounded by gods who embody the forces of nature—moon, stars, wind, fire, earth, etc.—Ahura Mazdâh in the Zoroastrian system is at the head of a certain number of moral entities, representing divine attributes. Their personality is very fluid in the *gâthas*, where it is in many cases very difficult to discern whether we have to do with an abstraction or with the personification of an abstraction. Such are Asha, the Persian Arta, that appears so frequently in the names of the Persian noblemen; Arta—Khshayârshan (Artaxerxes, “who rules according to Justice”), Artahvarenah (Artaphernes, “who has the splendor of Justice”), etc. It is “justice” in the broadest meaning of that word: it is the moral law that rules over the world of the honest and religious people (the *ashavan* or *artavan*, “those who do not lie”), it is the law that moves all beings of the good creation according to some fixed rules.

Next to Asha there is Vohu-Manah, “the Right Mind,” or the religious mentality that brings men to the worship of God and to

the practice of virtue, and, as a consequence of it, to the possession of Mazdâh's blessings in this world and after. The reign or the rule of Vohu-Manah, procuring these blessings, is also personified under the name of Khshathra Vairya, the good rule to be chosen (by the righteous).

No less important is *Ârmaiti*, "Devotion," submission to the religious law of wise conduct. Next to her are Haurvatât, "Prosperity," and Ameretatât, "Immortality." There is a decided tendency in Mazdeism to assemble those beings, called Amesha-Spentas, "the Holy Immortal Ones," in a group of seven, but there is much discrepancy as regards the seventh one. Sometimes it is Ahura Mazdâh himself, sometimes Sraosha, "Discipline," sometimes one of the other more or less personified abstractions that are found in the *gâthas*, such as Ashay, "Reward," Tushnâmatay, "Silent Submission," and others. In this way Ahura Mazdâh is surrounded by a court of seven ministers in the same way as the Great Kings had seven great councilors.

The Amesha-Spentas are the bestowers of Mazdâh's graces and blessings. They are in the system of Zoroaster purely ethical entities. In later Mazdeism, however, we find that the guardianship of the world has been apportioned among them. Asha is guardian of fire, Vohu-Manah protects domestic animals, Khshathra Vairya is the genius of metals, Armaiti presides over earth, Haurvatât and Ameretatât are the genii of waters and plants. Moreover, their number is clearly placed at seven, including Mazdâh. Besides that heptad, the Persian creed knows of a triad that we have found in Darius' inscription: Auramazda, Mithra, and Anâhita (Am. 4. Am. 1). The two co-associates of Mazdâh have, it is true, completely disappeared from Zoroaster's doctrine, but they reappear in later times. Mithra, above all, is an important deity of the Iranians and, as is well known, his domain has been extended at one time into the whole Roman Empire as a god of soldiers. He is the god who watches the world from on high, who sees everything and knows the truth. He is the god of good faith and of contracts. The Persians used to swear by Mithra. He chastises the liars, those who break the treaties, and smites them in battle. The sun is his eye by which he sees all things. We know that in the Asiatic and

in the European cult of Mithra he appears as a sun-god. In the Avesta he is, above all, the god who protects truth and morality, and as such he is closely connected with Ahura Mazdâh in the post-gâthic religion. Anâhita, "the Spotless One," also called Ardivi Sûra, is the goddess of the beneficent and fructifying waters.

As is well known, the people of Iran are closely related to the Indo-Europeans of India. Before their separation they lived many years together, and not only are their languages very near to one another, but they have many religious ideas in common, although Zoroastrianism is a specifically Iranian creation.

There is no point, however, in which the similitude of ideas between the two peoples is more striking than in the beliefs concerning the gods protecting morality and the group of conceptions connected with them. Here also we have a triad. Instead of Mazdâh, Mithra, Anâhita, however, we find Varuṇa, Mitra, Aryaman. Aryaman is a very unsubstantial personality. He is not worshiped alone, but always in company with Mitra and Varuṇa. His name means "the Friend." He is a kind, beneficent deity, *helpful* to man. He also exists in the Avesta, under the name of Airyaman, and there also he is the helper, the benefactor of man, inasmuch as he is a healing god. His abode, like that of Varuṇa and Mitra, is "the bright mansion of the light." He is invoked for rain in Veda, RV. i. 141. 9: "By thee, O Agni, Varuṇa who protects law, Mitra and Aryaman, the gods who pour water in abundance are the winners."

Mitra is quite the same god as the Iranian Mithra. He is above all the god of contracts. The guest, when he is presented the welcome cake, says: "I look at thee with Mitra's eye." One remembers that Mitra's eye is the sun. With his eye he is watching over the human tribe (RV. iii. 59. 6) and sees whether or not men are faithful to their pledges and to their oaths. The verb used for his activity is *yat*, which is used also for the paying of debts. He and Varuṇa, so it is said in RV. ii. 27, are the gods who make men pay their debts.

But generally Mitra is invoked with Varuṇa. He makes a pair with that powerful god, the most exalted deity of the Indian pantheon in ancient times. They are the kings of heaven, the

sukshatra, "kings of a good rule." We read of their large, lofty, powerful kingdom, which reminds us of Ahura Mazdâh's good rule (Khshathra Vairya).

Their main task is to preside over the *rita*. Like Ahura Mazdâh and Mithra, they are the gods of *arta*, *asha* ("justice," "law"). The *rita* is also a law, a moral law. But, still more than the Persian *arta*, it is the law of the universe, the principle of order, the law of nature which causes the sun to rise and to set, the seasons to come back, rain to fall, the rivers to run, the fire to come out of the sticks rubbed against one another, so much so that Agni, "the Fire," is called "the son of Rita," "Ritajan," which shows a tendency toward personifying *rita*, in the same way as *arta* (= *asha*) is personified in Iran as the god of *rita*. Varuṇa holds the sun and saves it from falling, gives a way to the stars, exactly like Mazdâh, in the hymn quoted above. Thus Rita is a conception not very dissimilar from the Moira, which in Homer is the law that rules the world and is not only fate but also what is meet and right. The *rita*, being quite especially under the control of Varuṇa, is often identified with Varuṇa's will or command (*vrata*, *dhāman*). The commands of Varuṇa are constantly referred to. He is the god of commands, the *dhrita vrata* "whose commands are firm and immutable." Everything happens through his will. His commands are indefectible. This reminds us of the fact that it is by the will of Ahura Mazdâh that the kings of Persia conquer and that their enemies are destroyed. The commands of Varuṇa like those of Mazdâh have often a moral character. He and Mitra load the sinners with chains of guiltiness and sufferings. The guilty man has to pray to be released from his chains.

Aditi, "the Boundless One" or "the Freedom from Chains," is even conceived as the mother of Mitra, Varuṇa, Aryaman, who are therefore called the Âdityas, a name which eminently emphasizes their moral character. The hymns of the Rig-Veda addressed to Varuṇa and Mitra are full of allusions to those moral conceptions.

Çunaḥcepa, bound to three pillars invokes thee, O Âditya, O Varuṇa, O King, release him. . . . O Varuṇa, may our prayers and our sacrifice release us from thy wrath, of thee who art the King, wise Asura, release us from the chains of the sins that we have committed. May Varuṇa make loose

my chain above, my chain below, my chain in the middle, may we then, O Âditya, follow thy path and go to Aditi (the Freedom)" [RV. i. 24].

Observe how in that prayer Varuṇa is called "Wise Asura," which is the exact equivalent of "Ahura [i.e., Asura] the Wise [Mazdâh]."

The identity of the great moral god of India, Varuṇa, and of the god of Zoroastrians is thus undeniable, as his association with Mitra in both countries made it very probable.

If Varuṇa is the equal of Ahura Mazdâh in his moral character, he is curiously enough like him, surrounded by a group of spirits, and those spirits are abstractions like the Amesha-Spentas. Moreover, the group of the Âdityas, in its more ancient form, appears to have been constituted by seven gods. Varuṇa, Mitra, Aryaman are the first three, of course, but the four others are abstract entities of the same kind as Aditi. Among them we have Bhaga, "the Good Lot," or "the Distributor of Wealth," Aṁsa, "the Share," "the Portion," or "the Apportioner," *Daksha*, "Cleverness" or "the Clever," personification of the ability of the wise man that generates in him freedom from sin, so much so that Aditi is sometimes represented as being the daughter of Daksha, although she is generally supposed to be his mother. Such inconsequences point to the very unsubstantial personal character of those entities and show that the terms father and mother in such cases were originally allegorical. The abstract beings that occasionally are included among the Âdityas are more numerous and vary much like those in the group of the Amesha-Spentas. The number seven appears thus to be conventional. This accounts also for the facts that whereas the group of the Âdityas corresponds so closely with the group of the Amesha-Spentas, the members are not the same in India and in Iran. This is a mere chance, because the moral conceptions personified into Amesha-Spentas in Iran exist also in India and might as well have been introduced into the group. Not only does Rita correspond to Asha-Arta, but Aramati, "Devotion," "Piety" is Armaiti and Sarvatâtî, "the Integrity" is Haurvatât. Khshatra, "the Kingdom of Varuṇa," is Khshatra Vairya, etc.

The Vedic religious system is put in close connection with the natural phenomena, in conformity with all that has been said about

the Indo-European religion. The efforts of the scholars have thus been directed toward the discovery of the part played by Varuṇa, Mitra, and the Âdityas in the cosmologic mythology in which the imagination of the Indians dwelt with complacency. They have proved vain to a great extent. The physical attributes of those deities are decidedly in the background. They are, however, not completely absent. It is evident indeed that, even more clearly than Mazdâh and Mitra in the Avesta, the Âdityas move in a bright atmosphere. They are surrounded by light and their connection with the sun is obvious. Have we not seen that the sun is the eye of Mitra with which he watches the world? Âditya has even become another name for the sun in the later Indian literature. The association of the Persian Mithra with the sun being clearer still, one may safely assume that, in his physical rule, Mitra is connected with the sun, or with daylight. As to Varuṇa, when his part in the natural drama is alluded to, he often appears with Mitra as a god of light, but he is occasionally brought in opposition to him, as being the god who presides over night. The Atharvaveda, which puts us in touch with the lower and more material beliefs of the old Indians, says that god at night becomes Varuṇa, at dawn he rises up in the form of Mitra. All that Varuṇa has concealed during the night Mitra at dawn will disclose.¹

On account of passages of that kind and because of the numerous statements of commentators saying that Mitra is for day and Varuṇa for night, Oldenberg assumes, not without probability, that since both are gods of light, and Mitra is obviously the sun or the sunlight, Varuṇa must in some way or another have been thought of in connection with the moon or the night sky. Only that connection is very much forgotten in the presence of the high moral character of Varuṇa in the school of priests, who made the hymns of the Rig-Veda. There had survived, however, a certain remembrance of it, above all in the more or less magical teaching concerning the gods, such as we find it in the Atharvaveda. The later development has emphasized with more complacency that material side of the divinity, just as it did in Iran for the material attainments of the Amesha-Spentas, which we have seen to be quite

¹ Oldenberg, *Die Religion des Veda*, p. 191.

secondary. In Iran, on the whole, the material aspect of *Mazdâh*, of course, does not appear, but some passages of the *Yasht*, however, as *Yt.* 13. 3, seem to perpetuate some epithets referring to *Mazdâh* as a night-god: "When Ahura *Mazdâh* has put on his cloth made by the spirits and adorned with stars. . . ."

We find thus in *Varuṇa* = *Mazdâh*, *Mitra* = *Mithra*, deities in which the moral aspect is decidedly prevalent and makes up the personality and typical character of the gods: god of commands, god of justice. The material aspect, god of the sun and daylight, god of the moon and the night sky, are not completely absent but have no religious importance.

The situation of those moral gods with a somewhat faded connection with sun and moon is the more surprising, since the Indo-Europeans had already gods of sun and moon, as of other phenomena. The Indians, like all their racial brethren, had *Sūryâ*, "the Sun," and *Mâh*, "the Moon," in their pantheon, gods with no moral character at all (cf. Greek *Ἥλιος* and *Μήνη* or *Σελήνη*).

As supreme gods *Mazdâh* in Iran and *Varuṇa* in India are also in direct competition with the sky-god (*Dyēus*) who, Herodotus says, is among the people of Persia the supreme deity, but whose name does not appear in Mazdeism, whereas in the *Veda*, as *Dyâus*, "the Sky," he is a rather neglected deity.

The priests and the ruling classes both in Iran and in India have given up his cult for the worship of the great *Asura*, who is the god of science (*Mazdâh*), the god of supreme commands (*Varuṇa*), and for his companions *Mitra* and *Aryaman*, introducing an apparently ready-made moral religion to be fitted with the old Indo-European beliefs in which the worship of the gods ruling the natural phenomena was decidedly prominent. Even in the *Veda* the prayers to *Varuṇa* make a contrast with those addressed to other deities, in which one only alludes to the power, the strength of the gods, whereas the Indian's exuberant imagination emphasizes the part played by their gods in the phenomena of storm, lightning, rain, sunset, sunrise, etc.

Especially readymade are the groups of three and seven deities into which, as we have seen, the moral entities have been made to fit.

No wonder, thus, that Oldenberg¹ has come to the conclusion that the Âdityas are borrowed deities. He thinks that Mitra-Varuna being the sun and moon, the five other satellite deities are the five planets, and that we, then, have to do with a borrowing from the astral mythology of the Babylonians. He even more particularly thinks of a Sumerian influence, because in the religion of these people the moon-god had complete prominence.

The hypothesis of Oldenberg does not seem to have convinced the majority of Indianists, although Schrader has adopted it.² The reason for that skepticism is most likely that Oldenberg has contented himself with a general indication that the Âditya system recalls Babylonian or Sumerian conceptions, without endeavoring to find a more detailed and more complete correspondence between the beliefs in Chaldea and those in Iran and India.

Recent discoveries make it interesting to reconsider that very important hypothesis, and this is my purpose in this article.

In Boghaz-koi, a small Turkish village on the ruins of the capital of the king of the Hittites, an inscription has been found in which one easily recognizes the names of the gods Mitra-Varuna-Indra-Nâsatya.

They appear there in company with the Hittite gods: Shamash ("Sun"), Sin ("Moon"), Teshab ("Storm"). The association of Varuna with the moon-god and of Mitra with the sun-god is the more striking, since Indra, who seems to be put in parallelism with the storm-god, is known to be the Indian storm-god. As to Nâsatya, it is in India a name of the Açvins, or gods of the morning and evening stars, but it is also in Iran the name of an Ahrimanic spirit who is in close company with the daêva Indra. The association of the Açvins with Indra in the Veda is also very close. They are fighting with him against Vritra and receive like him the epithet "Vritra-slayer."

That discovery is of decisive importance for the history of the Indo-Iranian religion. It shows, at least, that in the second millennium B.C. the gods known by the Veda were already the gods of the Aryans.

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 185, 194.

² *Enc. Rel. Eth.*, II, 13.

But this is not the only mention that we have of Indo-Iranian gods in the land of Babylonian culture.

Professor W. Max Müller¹ has deciphered on a stele of Palestinian origin the words "Mitra-shama" with the determinant of the ear. Ahura Mazdâh himself, as we have said, has been found to date back to about the same period, thanks to an inscription published by Scheil,² giving a long list of Assyrian gods.

Among them we find Assara mazaash (= Asura Mazdâs, the old form of Ahura Mazdâh) and, curiously enough, his name is immediately followed by the mention of the seven spirits of Heaven (Igigi="the Strong Ones") and the seven spirits of earth (Anunaki).

It is very interesting to observe that in Babylonia, in contrast with Iran and Indra, the number seven has a meaning. It is the accepted expression of the great number. We must, moreover, observe that the Igigi and Anunaki are supposed to concentrate all the spirits that exercise a power on the world,³ just as the Amesha-Spentas in their material aspects have been apportioned the leading of the various domains of creation.

The Babylonians had three groups of spirits. Beyond the Igigi ("Spirits of Heaven"), the Anunaki ("Spirits of the Earth"), there was a group of evil demons embodying all sufferings. The Iranian system has only two groups, the good ones and the evil ones, but this is due to its dualistic tendency. Not only is it true that the group of the seven spirits can be accounted for by the influence of the Babylonians, but the Chaldeans possessed the exact equivalents of the two triads that we have met with on Aryan ground. Of the two triads discoverable in the Babylonian religion, the first is Sin-Shamash-Ishtar, which corresponds to the Old Persian triad: Mazdâh (= Varuna)-Mitra-Anâhita. And, indeed, Ishtar, the Babylonian Venus, goddess of fertility, was, according to Herodotus, invoked as the heavenly Venus (*Οὐρανία*) by the Persians of his time. The Greek historians report also that Artaxerxes Memnon built a temple to 'Αποδίτη 'Ανάιτις, i.e., Anâhita, the Venus of Persia.

¹ *Orient. Litt.*, L (1912), 252.

² *Rec. Trav.*, XIV, 100.

³ Jastrow, *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, p. 185.

One remembers that Anâhita is the goddess of the fructifying water of heaven.

The second triad which is mentioned in Sargon's palace is Sin-Shamash-Ramman (or Adâd). This Ramman is an Assyrian deity. He is originally a god of lightning and storm, so much so that we may identify the Assyrian triad Sin-Shamash-Ramman with the Hittite triad mentioned above, Sin-Shamash-Teshab, Teshab being the Hittite storm-god. Now, Ramman is looked upon as the helper of mankind *par excellence*. One finds as a king's name Ramman nirari, "Ramman is my helper." He is specially associated with Shamash in his quality of god of justice, and, whereas Shamash gives victory like Mitra, he gives superabundance.¹ All this strikingly recalls to us the famous Aryaman, the third member of the Indian triad Varuṇa-Mitra-Aryaman.

The name Aryaman means "the Friend," and he is an eminently helping deity in Iran as well as in India, who, as we have seen, bestows abundance by pouring water. The phonetic similarity between Ramman and Aryaman renders it even possible that a popular etymology has functioned here, but we must not forget that Adâd was the most common name of that deity.

Thus we observe concerning Aryaman that not the material side—Aryaman indeed was nothing more than a storm-god with the Aryans—but the moral one has been borrowed by the Indo-Iranians. This is a very important conclusion that applies also to Varuṇa and Mitra.

The characteristic feature of Mitra's activity, as it is embodied in his name, is his part as a protector of right and law among men, a guardian of good faith and oath, a strict overseer of the actions of men, and a pitiless punisher of crime, but at the same time the friend of the good and their guide into the abode of the blest. Now Shamash, who is mainly a sun-god in Chaldea, in accordance with the marked actual tendency of the Chaldeans and Sumerians in their religion, is in Assyria above all an ethical deity.² He is for Ashurbanapal and Salmanasar the judge of the world who guides mankind aright, the lord of the law who judges according to unchangeable principles (cf. the Rita of the Aryans). He sees the

¹ Jastrow, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

² *Ibid.*, p. 210.

wickedness of the enemies of the country and he helps to destroy them (exactly like Mithra). He is the king, like Varuṇa and Mitra, his power produces order and stability. He loosens the bonds of the imprisoned, as Varuṇa and Mitra release the sinner in the Vedic hymns, which we have quoted above. There is an extract of a beautiful hymn to Shamash quoted by Professor Morris Jastrow:

The law of mankind dost thou direct,
 Eternally just in the Heavens art thou,
 Of faithful judgment toward all the world art thou.
 Thou knowest what is right, thou knowest what is wrong.

 O Shamash! Supreme judge of heaven and earth art thou.
 O Shamash! on this day purify and cleanse the king,
 Release him from the ban.¹

Still more, Shamash is so emphatically the god of right and justice that he is represented as the father of Kettu, "Justice," and Mesharu, "Rectitude."² Now, this is very striking. Mithra is indeed accompanied in Iran by two satellites of the very same nature: Rashnu, a personification of justice, and Sraosha, the personification of obedience, rectitude, discipline (Yt. 16. 17; Yt. 13. 3, etc.). In the hymns (Yt. 10. 41) addressed to Mithra in the Avesta we read indeed: "Mithra strikes fear into them; Rashnu strikes a counter-fear into them; the holy Sraosha blows them away from every side towards the two Yazatas, the maintainers of the world."

This can hardly be a coincidence. Moreover, the very existence of those personified moral abstractions in Assyrian religion around Shamash and Sin is so much in the spirit of the Avesta that it seems very probable that the tendency toward personifying such entities as satellites of the god of justice originated in that *milieu*.

Now, the comparison between Sin, "Moon-God," and Varuṇa is no less instructive. The moon-god has attained a high position in the Babylonian pantheon. The moon appears indeed as the guide of the stars and the planets, the overseer of the world at night. From that conception a god of high moral character soon developed. Not only are the planets his children, but the spirits

¹ Jastrow, *op. cit.*, p. 300.

² Zimmern, *Encycl. Relig. Ethics*, II, 311.

are subservient to his will. (This reminds us of the will of Varuṇa and of his position at the head of the Áditya spirits.) He is an extremely beneficent deity, he is a king, he is the ruler of men, he produces order and stability, like Shamash and like Varuṇa and Mitra, but, besides that, he is also a judge, he loosens the bonds of the imprisoned, like Varuṇa. His light, like that of Varuṇa, is the symbol of righteousness, and, like him, he is connected intimately with the heavenly and earthly spirits.¹ Like Varuṇa and Mazdâh, he is a god of wisdom.² Moreover, his material side has very much faded off, and he is, like Mazdâh, supreme, like him also, he is the decider of fates and—what is completely decisive—in the hymns addressed to him, that have very much the same loftiness as the hymns to Varuṇa, he is celebrated as the god proclaiming decisions, the god of strong commands whose commands are never put aside, etc.:

O lord, chief of all gods, who on earth and in heaven alone is exalted,
 Father illuminator, lord of increase, chief of the gods
 heavenly lord, moon-god, whose sovereignty is
 brought to perfection.

.....
 Merciful one, begetter of everything, who among
 living things occupies a lofty seat.
 Father merciful one, and restorer, whose weapon
 maintains the life of the whole world

.....
 calling to sovereignty, giving the sceptre [like Auramazda in ancient Persia]
 Who directest destinies for distant days,
 Strong chief, who from the foundation of heaven till the zenith
 Passes along in brilliancy, opening the door of heaven
 Preparing the fate of humanity.
 Lord, *proclaiming the decisions of Heaven and Earth*
Whose command is not set aside,
 and granting water [like Varuṇa] for all that has life
 On earth who is exalted? Thou alone art exalted.
 Thy strong command is proclaimed in Heaven and
 The Igigi [=spirits—compare the Amesha-Spentas] prostrate themselves.
 Thy strong command is proclaimed on earth, and

¹ Jastrow, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 78, 219: Sin, god of wisdom. This ideograph shows him in his capacity as the war-god; he is regarded as the "Lord of decision."

The Anunaki [other spirits] kiss the ground.
 Thy strong command on high, like a storm in
 the darkness, passes along and nourishment streams forth.
 When thy strong command is established on the earth, vegetation sprouts
 forth.
 Thy strong command produces right and proclaims justice to mankind.
 Thy strong command, through the distant Heavens
 And the wide earth, extends to whatever there is.
 Thy strong command, who can grasp it,
 Who can reveal it?
 Lord, in heaven is thy sovereignty, on earth is
 Thy sovereignty. Among the gods, thy brothers,
 There is none like thee.
 O King of Kings, who has no judge superior
 To him, whose divinity is not surpassed by any other!¹

Is it not ideally clear, and is it an exaggeration to say that the character of a god of commands so very typical of Varuṇa is no less typical of his supposed prototype? Observe also that the more one considers the hymns themselves, that are after all the most original documents, the more striking is the similitude between Shamash = Mitra and Sin = Varuṇa, Mazdâh. If those similitudes have not yet struck the historians of religion, it is on account of their having paid attention almost exclusively to the material side of the deities, in the belief that the moral one is necessarily secondary and fugacious. Now, the contrary is very often nearer to the truth. The gods of paganism are more fugacious than the ideas they embody for a while. The very typical conception of the god of command, the god of justice, the helper-god, were much more likely to impress the Indo-Iranian than the astral pantheon of the Babylonians. Elemental deities they had in plenty. But they needed a more accentuated moral deity than their Dyâus, who was decidedly too much implicated in mythology. The need for a god, supreme lord, guardian of morality, is specifically human, and when it is incompletely satisfied it is to be expected that the best elements of the community will in some way supply it. The Indo-Iranian priests came in contact with the gild of priests of the Babylonian countries who were better organized and had a much higher teaching than the elementary Indo-European beliefs. They had

¹ Jastrow, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

developed a theological and even gnostic teaching around several of their gods, e.g., Bel and Ea. The existence of those theological schools is admitted by Professor Jastrow,¹ who says that one finds among those Babylonian priests a strange mixture of popular notions and fancies with advanced theological speculation and scientific mysticism.

In our present state of knowledge it would be decidedly premature to try to determine with any precision the time and the place where the religion of the Indo-Iranians received this very important afflux of Babylonian conceptions. All that we can say is that the possibility of a close contact between Aryans and Chaldeans at an early period is no longer disputable, now that we know of the relations between the Hittite kingdom of the Mittani² and an Aryan state, the people of which are called *harru* (cf. *harya* = *arya* on the Persian cuneiform inscriptions), while their king had the very typical name of Artatama, "the Most Righteous," and their noblemen were the *marya*, "men" (cf. Armenian *mar*, "man"; Sanskrit *maryaso divas*, "the men of heaven," = the Maruts).³ Both those people and the Hittites were under the influence of Babylonian civilization.

The history of Persian or, more exactly, Median art points to an influence from the northern part of Asia Minor and Assyria.⁴ We have seen that, in many cases, it was the northwestern aspect of Babylonian deities, such as we find it in Assyria and Cappadocia, that is most in agreement with the Aryan gods whom we own to to be their equivalents.

It is therefore not unreasonable to believe in the possibility of an interchange of ideas in that mountainous region, the history of which is still surrounded with mysteries but which appears more and more to have been of a decisive importance in the history of ideas in ancient Asia. This, however, must remain undecided. As for the kind of influence exerted by Chaldean beliefs on Aryan religion, whether we have to do with wholesale borrowings or with

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 133 ff.

² Winckler, *Oriental. Litt. Z.*, 1910, p. 298.

³ Darmesteter, *Ormazd et Ahriman*, p. 163.

⁴ Perroz and Chipiez, Vol. V, 515.

syncretisms, some light may be derived from von Schröder's recent book on *Arische Religion*. The theory of that renowned scholar, it is true, is at complete variance with mine. He owns that Varuṇa, Mazdâh, Mitra, Aryaman, etc., are simply epithets of the one sky-god (Dyêus). The same would apply to the Âdityas and Amesha-Spentas. Those epithets corresponding to various aspects of the great Aryan god would have materialized gradually in as many different deities. One may object to that theory, among other considerations, that the names of the Amesha-Spentas are not adjectives but abstract nouns, that not the slightest doubt may be entertained about the original abstract nature of *Rita-Asha*, *Ârmatay*, Vohu-Manah, Khshathra, Haurvatât, Ameretatât, etc. Von Schröder attacks Oldenberg's theory of the astral origin of the Âdityas, but completely ignores the numerous coincidences between the moral aspects of the gods and the corresponding side of the Chaldean deities. Though we, therefore, cannot accept his theory, we think that the existence, which he advocates, of various aspects of Dyâus, would exactly provide us with the connecting link between Chaldean theology and Aryan beliefs. The materialization of mere epithets of Dyâus in deities of such a precise character as Varuṇa, Mitra, etc., and their grouping in pairs, triads, etc., is hardly conceivable as long as one supposes that this evolution has taken place exclusively in Aryan minds; and this applies in a higher degree to the development of the exalted moral activity of those gods. But if one assumes that various Chaldean deities whose moral activity was prominent have been identified, syncretized, with various aspects of Dyâus, it immediately becomes easily intelligible why mere epithets have suddenly been raised to the dignity of lofty gods, why they have such a precise and complete activity of their own, and why they remain in groups with a prevalent ethical character.

Dyâus in the daytime, the bright sky, has been identified with Shamash, "Sun," as a god of justice, keeping watch over the faithfulness to the pledged word (Avestan *mithra*), while Dyâus at night, being syncretized with Sin, "Moon," suddenly becomes the great god of morality ruling both the material and the moral world by his commands. That the name Varuna means "will, command," as

Professor Meillet thinks,¹ or is akin to Greek *Οὐρανός*, "sky," Avestan *varena*, "abode of the daêvas," as has been suggested for a long time, is thus of little importance for our conclusions.

If these considerations are accepted, I hope they will contribute to broaden the field of research in the domain of Aryan religion, mythology, and civilization. Many efforts have been made to bring unity into the Aryan and the Semitic families of languages. They have proved vain up to now and may very well remain so, but if linguistics has thus failed to break down the wall which separates Indo-European from Semitic philology, it does not exclude the possibility of a reconciliation in the domain of ideas.

The influence of more civilized neighboring people on the ideas of the eastern Aryans does not prevent us in the least from holding in highest esteem the rishis of India and the sages of Iran, who have perpetuated and developed into a fine religious system conceptions in which the productiveness of Aryan imagination and sensibility was allied with the more mature and more exalted religious thought of Asia. The part of Zoroaster, who has created the admirable religion of Ahura Mazdâh, is not diminished by the fact that he has inherited ideas of various origins. He has isolated the personality of the Wise God, guardian of morality, etc., from the other gods, even from those who belonged to the same group, as Mithra and Aryaman, and has elaborated a curious system to account for the existence of evil.

For this he deserves to be looked upon as one of the greatest figures in the history of religious and philosophical ideas. In the same way as Socrates and Plato would not have been possible without the Ionian philosophers, Pythagoras, the Sophists, etc., the personality of Zoroaster was hardly conceivable as long as one did not know of the evolution of ideas in Iran and India prior to his coming. But his genius, like that of Socrates, does not seem less admirable on account of the existence of his predecessors.

¹ *Journal Asiatique*, Vol. X, 10, p. 143.