

## THE AUTHENTIC MEANINGS OF THE VEDIC GODS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

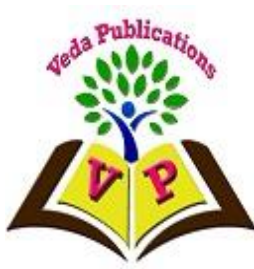
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### Abstract



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Almost three centuries have passed on since the study of Sanskrit has been introduced by the renowned philologist William Jones into western universities. Western scholars have been trying determinably to decipher the ancient Vedic texts ever since but with no satisfactory results. Apparently all their previous attempts in decoding Vedic texts have been made with western minds biased by their own theories full of prejudices, and heavily influenced by traditional views of their own religions. There arise therefore, the necessity of presenting the authentic views of the grand Vedic seers on their own concepts of Vedic gods and religion.

**Keywords:** *Peace, Standstill, Quietude, Knot, Cloth, Bond*

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## Introduction

The western scholars seem to read into the Vedic texts their own wishes and expectations (mostly irreconcilable with one another) of what the Vedic religion should mean to them and not that what it authentically meant to the ancient Vedic seers and the devotees of the Vedic gods during Vedic Age when Vedism was a living force among the Aryan society. They somehow use to entertain themselves with the conviction that they possess better knowledge about Vedic gods and religion than the grand Vedic seers who composed the Vedic scriptures almost five millennia ago. There are two great Vedic gods in particular, the concepts of which have been misunderstood in the west. This treatise is dedicated to the proper decipherment of those two great Vedic gods, viz. Mitra and Varuna.

## The Chronology of Interpretations

There are two diametrically opposed schools featuring two irreconcilable approaches to the interpretation of the Vedic texts in the West: A) proponents of the naturalistic school of interpretation view gods as divinization of natural phenomena; B) proponents of the conceptual school of interpretation view gods as the embodiments or personifications of abstract (viz. ethical) concepts.

In 1907 the French scholar Antoine Meillet<sup>[20]</sup> proposed to explain the Indo-Iranian god Mitra/Mithra as “god Contract” and Varuna as “god Law/Order”. Hermann Güntert<sup>[10]</sup> (following Meillet) attempted to see different aspects of Gods of Law in Mitra, Varuna and Aryaman”. Alfred Hillebrandt<sup>[12]</sup> refuted both views on the account that they were not well founded since no one used to swear by Mitra in particular, nor make treaties in his presence. Hillebrandt maintained that Mitra, Varuna, Indra are no longer appellatives but proper names and was inclined to see a sun-god in Mitra and a moon-god in Varuna, while regarded Mitra and Indra as mythological synonyms.

Meillet’s view was taken up by Heinrich Lüders<sup>[16]</sup> who posited Varuna as “god Oath”. Although Georges Dumézil also adopted Meillet’s view on Mitra as “god Contract” he allowed an additional meaning for Mitra viz. “friend”, in accord with Abel Bergaigne’s<sup>[3]</sup> earlier explanations, and for Varuna whom he equated with the Greek Ouranos the Sky the meaning “Binder”. As for Varuna F.B.J.Kuiper<sup>[15]</sup> agreed with Hillebrandt that “Varuna was a proper name (already in the Hittite-Mitanni treaty of ca. 1380 BCE)”, and adopted Bergaigne’s and Dumézil’s interpretation of Varuna as the “Binder”. But Kuiper<sup>[14]</sup> considered Varuna as originally the god of the waters and of the netherworld, which became by means of shift (from the lower divine realm of the Asuras or demons, to the upper divine realm of the Devas or gods) occurring at night the sky in its nocturnal aspect. Michael Witze<sup>[26]</sup> in his contribution to this naturalistic approach of Kuiper, adds that “Varuna’s home in or at the Milky Way moves from a rising point in the east, counter-clockwise around the North Pole and sets in the west. The heavenly river of the night (the northern “ocean” *samudra* of the Atvarva Veda XI 2.25) flows into the western one of the two oceans surrounding the earth and becomes the netherworld river in day time.”

Paul Thieme<sup>[25]</sup> accepted Meillet's interpretation of Mitra as "god Contract", but proposed a more general appellative meaning for Varuna, viz. "god True Speech, Spoken Truth, Verity", and added his own interpretation of Aryaman as "god Hospitality". More recently Joel Peter Brereton<sup>[4]</sup> had modified slightly Thieme's renderings by proposing quite similar substitutes for them, viz. "gods of Alliance, Commandment, and Civility (or Customs)".

After the period of enthusiastic attempts to interpret Vedic gods as abstract concepts, the trend recently somewhat changed again in favor of *naturalistic* approach to Vedic religion. Thus Georg von Simson<sup>[23]</sup> has advanced the theory of Mitra and Varuna as the morning star and the evening star. More recently, Catalin Anghelina<sup>[1][2]</sup> re-discovered in fact an old view of the main Vedic gods as the constellations of the zodiac along the ecliptic. Thus she has been actually only guessing that Mitra, Varuna Aryaman, Indra and his opponent Vṛtra represented the constellations and stars, viz. Aquarius, Aldebaran star (in the constellation Taurus), Regulus star (in the constellation Leo), the constellation Taurus, and its opposite Scorpio, respectively. However, one year later Anghelina proposed a new guess-order of constellations for the same deities, viz. Varuna=Aquarius, Mitra=Pisces, and Aryaman=Aries.

### **Gods are Desireful of Cryptography**

Every explorer of the Veda must always bear in mind that *paró'kṣakāmā hí devāḥ* "Gods are desireful of cryptography" (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa VI 1.1.2 and 11) or *paró'kṣapriyā iva hí devāḥ* viz. "(Vedic) gods are fond of cryptography, viz. of cryptic language, viz. of the meanings hidden from the eyes [= *parah akṣa*, literally "beyond the eyesight"] of the common people" (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa XIV 6.11.2; Aitareya Brāhmaṇa III 33.6 and VII 30.4; Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa I 5.9.2; Aitareya Upaniṣad I 3.14). Thus the Veda seems to be indeed a very hard walnut to break it up and open to the eyesight of those uninstructed into the authentic terminology of the Veda.

### **The Non-Existence of Intellectual Property Law**

In the Vedic Era there was no intellectual property law which had to protect the inventions of the Brahmans. Therefore, the priesthood had to secure their business, viz. the means of production (that is their intellectual achievements, or in plain words their "sacred" terminology) by keeping their utilization enigmatic and cryptic, viz. unintelligible to the outsiders and to non-members of their own guild.

And indeed, their achievements are still deserving the highest esteem even today, for the modern especially western scholars and "experts" of various scientific disciplines in spite of having at their disposal all the knowledge of the world coupled with ultraspeed supercomputers are not yet capable of deciphering successfully the sacred Vedic texts composed and encoded cryptically in such a far remoted antiquity of more than five thousand years by the ancient Vedans, who did not even write it down on paper or tablets, but preserved it solely and exclusively by memory instead. This proves the thesis that modern times and advanced technology can add actually nothing to the intellectual capability of the

human species. Even more, it testifies indisputably of intellectual inferiority of modern western scholars in comparison to the grand Vedic seers.

### **A Razor-Sharp Precision of the Vedic Definitions**

Every observation of the ancient Vedic seers and consequently every definition of religious and philosophical concept had been done by razor-sharp precision. In fact, the ancient Vedic seers used to supplicate God Pūṣan: *sam nah śiśīhi bhurijor iva* “sharpen us (sc. mentally, intellectually) like a razor in the skilled hands (sc. of a barber)” (Rig-Veda VIII 4.16). Thus modern exegetes should not strive to “invent” their own new meanings and significance of the Vedic divine characters but only to follow the authentic terminology and words of the Veda as they were conceived by the incomparable grand Vedic seers. It is particularly harmful to any objective analysis of the Veda when one resorts to reloading of the authentic content of the texts themselves. Therefore, the scientific task of the modern explorers should be to detect authentic unaltered meanings of the Veda unbiased by prejudices filled with other concurrent religious conceptions and seemingly more correct views and theories of modern science.

### **Ancient Brahmanic University Curriculum**

Modern western scholars entertain themselves with a weird nonsensical idea that only the hymns of the Rig Veda represent the authentic Vedic religion, whereas other Vedic texts are just later misconceptions, contaminations, and exaggerations added by the new generations of seers which no longer had the proper insights into the original Vedic doctrines. To make a comparison, arguing that only the hymns of the Rig Veda are authentic remnants of Vedic religion, would be the same with saying that only the Book of Psalms from the Old Testament represents authentic Jewish religion, which is a totally absurd view. In point of fact, there is a strict gradation within the corpus of the Vedic texts into four levels of learning:

1. *Samhitās* the collections of hymns and eulogies in verse and in prose
2. *Brāhmaṇas* the instruction manuals for proper performance of the rituals
3. *Āranyakas* the forest texts dedicated to recluse individuals who seek to find the correlations between religious rituals and philosophy
4. *Upaniṣads* or *Gūhyas* the secret doctrines dedicated to those who have completely abandoned the performance of religious rituals for the sake of purely philosophical attitude toward the world and phenomena.

These four levels of learning correspond to and stand in strict correlations with the four stages of development or *āśramas* of a human individual during one's lifetime:

1. *Brahma-ācārya* a young celibate Student of the Veda who follows Brahman the religious teacher in learning (how to pronounce properly, recite publicly and compose) the sacred hymns
2. *Gṛha-pati* Householder or Lord of the House a married man who is instructed how to perform the sacred rites in his own house

3. *Vana-prastha* the Forest Dweller a recluse who has abandoned society for the life in nature to devote himself to religious meditation and the attainment of philosophical insights  
 4. *Samnyāsin* a Renunciate, an ascetic who has renounced all the worldly affairs and devoted himself completely to meditation on and realization of the supreme principle.

Thus, the collections of sacred hymns for celebrating various divine names are on the level of elementary education curriculum, the other three corresponding to High School, University and Post-Graduate Scientific Degree of learning, respectively. Consequently, it cannot provide a proper insight into the authentic concepts of Vedic religion, how much less into the secret doctrines of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> degree of learning.

Subsequently, there follows the only valid conclusion: any explorer who is inclined to engage oneself properly in Vedic exegesis should first learn the Whole Veda thoroughly and not just the hymns, viz. Psalms devoted to celebrating the godhead.

The attempts at proper decrypting of the authentic concepts of the Vedic gods, and especially that of Varuna, has been defined as “a forbidding task” (Brereton 1981). Sooth to say, neither Brereton nor any other explorer in the west has not yet fulfilled the task successfully and satisfactorily.

### **The Authentic Vedic Views on the Vedic Gods**

The real character of the Vedic god Varuna has been for almost three centuries the most controversial subject of Sanskrit and Vedic studies in the west. Though it seems to be an unsolvable enigma, it can be deciphered properly and successfully under the condition that one follows exactly the instructions and explanations given by the Vedic scriptures and does not intrude one’s own “inventions” into the process of exegesis. The present treatise follows precisely the authentic words and explanations of the Vedic texts unbiased by the author’s intrusion or contamination of any kind into their original content.

### **The Knot**

The Vedic god Varuṇa is symbolically represented by the *granthi* viz. “Knot” (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa I 3.1.16), and is said that *kṛṣṇam vāso* viz. “a Black Cloth” is the fee to be given to the officiating priest for the oblation offered to Varuṇa; since *tad(d)hi vāruṇam yat kṛṣṇam* “what is Black belongs indeed to Varuṇa”; or any kind of Cloth will do if the Black one is not available, because *vāsah syād granthibhir hi vāso vāruṇam varuṇyo hi granthih* viz. “by reason of its Knots indeed that the Cloth belongs to Varuṇa, for the Knot is sacred to Varuṇa indeed” (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa V 2.5.17).

The term *granthi* “Knot” is derived from the verb *grath* variant *granth* “to tie, bind, fasten, string together”. In fact, the fundamental function of Varuṇa is indicated by a verb fully synonymous with *granth*, viz. the verb *bandh* “to bind”. (cf. also Kuiper 1979, p.73), in addition to the verb *grah* (variant *grabh*) “to seize, grasp, lay hold of, catch, imprison, capture” (analogous to binding), hence the sinners and sick persons alike, are said to be *Varuṇa-grhīta* “seized by Varuṇa”. In accordance with his fundamental function, various

aquatic creatures called *grāha* “seizers” (viz. crocodiles, sharks, serpents, alligators, etc.) and *makara* “crocodile-like monster”, along with the *nāgās* “dragons” and *sarpas* “serpents” are assigned to Varuṇa whose abode is the *samudra* “ocean/ sea”. Of the aquatic animals only those called *nakra* “crocodile” are sacrificed to Varuṇa (Hillebrandt<sup>[12]</sup>). In Hindu mythology *makara* (and sometimes *nakra*) is considered to be the vehicle on which Varuṇa rides holding *pāśa* the “noose” in his hands.

Thus, from the verb *granth* being synonymous with *bandh* “to bind”, it comes quite logically that the term *granthi* “Knot” must be synonymous with *bandha* the “Bond”, and fully applicable to all Varuṇa’s aspects or functions. This should not be considered a passing fancy of the Vedic ritualists as western scholars use to think, but it is the real and true nature of Varuṇa, as the following examples indisputably testify.

In the famous hymn “Wedding of the Daughter of the Sun” Rig-Veda X 85.24 Varuṇa is used exactly in this sense: *pra tvā muncāmi varuṇasya pāsād* viz. “I release thee (viz. the bride) from the noose of the Bond (sc. of “betrothing” or “affiance”) by which the bride is bonded before marriage. There are quite analogous usages of the same term in Anglo-Saxon, e.g. the term “knot” denotes “a unifying Bond, especially a Marriage Bond”. Besides, there is an idiom “My word is my Bond” used to say that one always keeps one’s promises. And Betrothing or Affiance is founded on one’s promise in engaging oneself to marry (viz. to plight one’s troth, to bind oneself to someone in marriage).

In the Atharva-Veda IV 16. 2 Varuṇa again is used in this sense of Bond; *dvau samniṣadya yan mantrayete rājā tad veda varuṇas trītyah* viz. “When two sitting together speak (talk, whisper, counsel in secret) King Varuṇa knows that as the Third”; the verse clearly presents the concept of Varuṇa as the “Bond”, viz. the Bond of Confidentiality (=secrecy, discretion, privacy), even the Bond of Conspiracy (from *con* + *spire* = to breath together secretly), or at least the Bond of Unanimity (from *un* + *animous* = of one soul, spirit, mind). Moreover, from there it becomes perfectly clear how the related Avestan term *uruuan* (a noun of the nasal-ending class, in the Nominative *uruuā*) has developed in Iran a secondary meaning “soul, spirit”. The soul functions exactly as the “Bond” in the body for it keeps one’s corporeal integrity as long as it presides within; since after the soul leaves the body, viz. when one’s soul passes away, the body is inevitably subject to decay. What is significant, in the Hittite-Mitanni treaty of ca.1400 BCE (cf. Fournert<sup>[81]</sup>) the name of the Aryan god is recorded in the form *U-ru-ua-na* (viz. dual of the Avestan-Iranian form *uruuan*) instead of the Indo-Aryan *Varuṇa*.

**NB.** The difference between *-a* stem (Varuṇa) vs. *-n* stem (Uruuan) is nothing unusual in ancient language usage for there is quite identical case in the Rig Veda whereby the name of the God *Pūṣan* is attested in both variants, e.g. *Pūṣan* as well as *Pūṣana* (e.g. Rig Veda X 5.5 *Pūṣaṇasya*; Rig Veda X 93.4 *Pūṣaṇo bhagaḥ*).

### The Four Types of Bonds

Atharva-Veda IV 16.8 even makes the distinction between four types of Varuna as legal terms (which Lüders<sup>[16]</sup> explained as an admonition to speak the truth given by the judge to the one who is about to take an oath in order to bear witness; an analogy is found in the Law of Manu *Manusmṛti* VIII 80), but also between two opposite forms divine and human as well: *yáḥ samāmyòṣ váruṇo yó vyāmyòṣ yáḥ samdeśyòṣ váruṇo yó videśyòṣ yó daivó váruṇo yás ca mānuṣaḥ*. As for the above legal terms, *samāma* vs. *vyāma* derived from the root *AM* are apparently related to Greek ὄμνυμι “swear”, whereas *samdeśa* vs. *videśa* derived from *DIŚ* are related to Latin *dic-o, dic-ere* “speak”. Thus, these four types of Varuna and its two opposite forms may convey the following meanings: “The Bond (=Varuṇa) of mutual oaths, the Bond of abjuration, the Bond of assignment, the Bond of repudiation, the Bond that is of the divine (viz. of the gods, = natural), the Bond that is of the human (viz. of the men, = social).”

**NB.** There are two erroneous readings in the Sanskrit version of this verse of the Atharva Veda retrieved at TITUS (<http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcs/ind/aind/ved/av/avs/avs.htm>), viz. it reads erroneously *samābhyòṣ* instead of the correct *samāmyòṣ*, and erroneously *vyābhyòṣ* instead of the correct *vyāmyòṣ*.

Thus, evidently, Varuna was undoubtedly conceived as social or ethical “Bonds”. This is corroborated by the very next verse of the same hymn, Atharva Veda IV 16.9: *taís tvā sárvaír abhí śyāmi páśair asāv āmuṣyāyaṇāmuṣyāḥ putra ... viz.* “With all those fetters I bound thee, O so-and-so, of such-and-such a family, son of such-and-such a mother...”

### God as a Drop

However, the same appellative term is applied not only to the social aspects of the concept of “Bond” but equally to its natural aspects as well, as is demonstrated by a previous line 3 of the same hymn. Thus in the Atharva-Veda IV 16.3 Varuna the “Bond” is depicted naturalistically devoid of his social aspects: *utéyám bhúmír váruṇasya rájña utāsaú dyaúr bṛhatī dūré antā utó samudraú váruṇasya kuṣṭī utāsmínn álpa udaké nílīnaḥ viz.* “Both this earth is King Varuna's and yonder high heaven with remote ends is his; the two oceans are Varuna's loins; in this small (amount of) water is he hidden.”

Naturally, the phrase *alpa udaka* “small water” is synonymous with *indu* viz. “a drop (of water)” and *bindu* “a drop, globule, dot, spot, detached particle”, but also with *drapsa* viz. “a drop” an epithet assigned to gods Soma (Rig Veda IX 78.4, etc.) and Varuna (Rig Veda VII 87.6) alike. Both (*b*)*indu* and *drapsa* visually represent a small spherical mass or globe of liquid or something, hence being evocative and imitative of “knot” or “bond” (as above of water) which represents Varuna. Both the terms likewise designate Soma the Moon who is “a few times mystically identified with Varuna” (Macdonell<sup>[18]</sup>). Besides, it is specified that *mitró 'har ájanayad váruṇo rátrim* “Mitra produces the day, Varuna produces the night” (Taittirīya Samhitā VI 4.8.3) and that *maitráṃ vá áhaḥ vāruṇí rátriḥ viz.* “the day belongs to

Mitra, the Night to Varuna” (Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa I 7.10.1). And this is related to the next chapter since “the Moon is the Lord of Winter” (Hillebrandt Vol.II, p.124).

### The Bond of Winter

The ritual texts emphasize another specifically natural aspect of Varuna, for they identify him positively with Winter: *hemantó hí váruṇas viz.* “Winter indeed is Varuṇa” (Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā I 10.12 and Kāthaka Saṃhitā 36.6). What is more, Varuna in his true and awe-inspiring form is depicted as “a whitish, baldheaded man with oversized protruding teeth (viz. bucktoothed), and yellow eyes”, cf. *váruṇo vai jumbakáḥ sākṣādeva váruṇamāvayajate śuklāsya khalatérviklidhasya piṅgākṣāsya mūrdhāni juhotyetaadvai váruṇasya rūpām rūpēṇaiva váruṇamāvayajate* (Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa III 9.3.15 and Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa XIII 3.6.5), the description which is perfectly congruent with Winter season.

There are so many vivid descriptions of winter particularly from Germanic literature which actually circumscribe the very nature of Winter Season as the “Bond”. Note especially the utilization of the verb *bind* (with various prefixes) and the appellative *bond(s)* in this context, e.g.:

- a) Beowulf 11.1133-34: *winter yde beleac is ge-binde* “winter locked the waves in its icy *bond*”;
- b) Beowulf 1.1608 ff.: *ise gelicost thonne ferstes bend onloeted* “loosens the *bonds* of frost”;
- c) Andreas 1258: *snāw eordan band winter gewopum* “the snow *bound* the earth with the snow-drifts of winter”;
- d) Denksprüche II 76: *ân sceal in-bindan forstes fetre* “may un-*bind* the fetters of frost”;
- e) Seefahrer 32: *hrim hrúsan band* “the hoar frost *bound* the earth”;
- f) Grimm, Deutsche Mythologie, p.634: *die Heide liegt in Banden des Winters* “the hearth lies in the *bonds* of winter”;
- g) Grimm, Nachträge III 231: *der Winter bannt die Heide* “the winter *binds* the hearth”;
- h) Andreas Aabel: *Nys brod den vintrens bând* “not long ago it broke through the *bonds* of winter”

All the examples were collected by Hillebrandt<sup>[12]</sup> in order to support his theory on Vedic character Vṛtra as the demon of Winter, and not in relation to Varuna himself.

Contrary to Hillebrandt’s view, the preceding examples make it perfectly clear why is it Varuna the “Bond” identified with Winter and its very attributes “the fetters (sc. of ice and frost)”, for it keeps the nature “bonded” (viz. in “bondage”) during winter season. But Hillebrandt denied the validity of the above equation maintaining: “If Varuna were Winter, Mitra ought to be Summer to assume which there is no ground”. This contradicts his own statement that “Mitra and Indra are mythological synonyms”. Moreover, Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa III 2.4.18 adds categorically: *syādetadvā avaruṇyaṃ yān maitraṃ* “that which is of Mitra is not of Varuna”. Since Varuna is Winter, Mitra naturally cannot but designate Summer.



Mitra is indisputably related to Summer, since the Avestan *Mithra* is positioned in Iranian calendar as divinity of the midsummer viz. seventh month of the year, since “Mitra was connected with the middle of the year already in Indo-Iranian” (Schmidt<sup>[22]</sup>) in Avestan called *Miθrahe* but *Mehr Mah* and *Mehr Rouz* in modern Persian (Nabarz<sup>[21]</sup>). Thus Avestan *Mithra* undoubtedly shares the same characteristics with Vedic *Indra*. As Hillebrandt already noticed: “The summer signifies the height of the sun god's reign and the Brāhmanas often assign the summer to Indra” This is confirmed by *Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā* II 7.20. “Hence also the occasional remark *grīṣme vā indro vṛtrāṃ ahan* viz. “Indra verily killed Vṛtra in summer” (Hillebrandt<sup>[12]</sup>), attested again by *Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā* I 6.9. In the Avestan Yasht No. 10 (verses 95-96, cf. Gershevitch<sup>[9]</sup>) *Mithra* is depicted as holding the *vazra* viz. “thunderbolt“ in his hands (related to Vedic *vajra* “ibid.“) the weapon otherwise exclusively attributed to the Vedic thunder-god *Indra*. What is more, Avestan *Mithra* in the same hymn (verses 70-71) is associated with *Vərəθraγna* the Avestan counterpart of the Vedic *Vṛtrahan* “Vṛtra-killer” the epithet of *Indra*.

Hillebrandt treated *Varuna*'s identification with winter as “an occasional fancy of the Yājñikas (viz. “Ritualists”), since it does not occur anywhere else. Elsewhere the seasons are distributed differently. For instance, Autumn is assigned to *Mitra-Varuṇa*”. However, the assignment of Autumn to both *Mitra-Varuṇa* in dual number actually confirms their individual identification with Summer and Winter, respectively. But neither interpretations of *Mitra* as “contract” by Meillet's (1907) nor *Mitra* as “alliance” by Brereton (1981) cannot explain *Mitra*'s association with Summer season.

Modern Sanskritists and linguists agree that there is a genetic relationship between Vedic appellative *mitrá* and Slavic *mirъ* “peace” (Mayrhofer<sup>[19]</sup>; Ježić<sup>[13]</sup>). What is significant, the Slavic term *mirъ* besides “peace” has several other very important nuances in meaning, viz. “tranquility, quietude, silence, stillness, motionlessness, standstill”, which most appropriately designate natural aspects of *mitrá* as the designation of “the Sun standstill” viz. “Summer Solstice”. Thus after the Summer Solstice Vedic god *Mitra* due to the course of time gradually withdraws from summer season stepping slowly into Autumn the period of Quietude (peace, tranquility) when the days begin to shorten and nights get prolonged, while he gets closer to his partner *Varuṇa* (of the Vedic dyad of complementary opposites) to meet him in late Autumn, introducing colder and colder days and nights until the “Bond of Winter” finally takes the full grasp on the whole nature (in the Dead of Winter).

Nonetheless, Hillebrandt seemed to have had a second thought while he admitted: “But an argument in its favor is the employment of *yava* (=barley) which is used otherwise in sacrifices for *Varuṇa*. Thus *yava* is cereal that ripens in Winter. It is probable that the *Varunapraghāsa*, performed for the release from the fetters of *Varuṇa*, served at first the same purpose as the concluding rites of *Agniṣṭoma*, namely, the release of *Varuṇa*'s fetters at the end of Winter. We have seen earlier that Black animals are dedicated to *Varuṇa* and White ones to *Mitra*. And whatever is well-offered in sacrifice belongs to *Mitra* and whatever is ill-offered to *Varuṇa*. Now one cannot fail to see that also the fetters of *Varuṇa* from which one

is released, are conceived as the opposite of *jyotiḥ*, of light and immortality and that the release from the fetters is akin to the liberation from *tamas* (=darkness, death). When we recall that the annual Agnistoma can be regarded as the spring sacrifice, then it would appear that the antithesis in which Varuna's fetters are contrasted here with *suvar* (=suar "sun[shine]") and *jyotiḥ* ("light, brightness") rest on a natural cause".

Hillebrandt also keenly observed: That "Varuṇa's fetter" is thrown into water proves nothing in favor of the rainy season. This recalls the rites performed in spring for driving the Death away, when a figure or a doll which represents the Death is thrown usually into water."

Another Hillebrandt's remark is worthy to mention in this context: "Mitra-Varuna are often associated with cattle...This is to do with the sacrifice of a barren cow...This custom of concluding the spring sacrifice with the offering of a barren cow for Mitra-Varuna or this custom is appended to the spring festival that celebrates the end of winter is a reminiscence of the just-concluded winter. In a tropical climate a barren cow is not quite appropriate for the spring sacrifice; it would be a symbol rather of Winter of the barren period, and would well accord with the antithesis between *tamas* (=darkness) and *jyotiḥ* or *suvar* (=light), an antithesis that is expressed so clearly at the conclusion of the Agnistoma".

### The Color Black

As for color Black, the fundamental designation of Varuna, it represents naturally the "Bond" of all colors, for it actually comes as the result of bondage (viz. absorption) of all visible spectrum light-waves by a surface of an object incapable of reflecting (viz. mirroring) the light into its environment. Thus, again, Varuna the "Bond" is the most natural, most objective and most appropriate designation of a divine entity associated with Darkness, Night, Destruction, Winter the barren period, Death, Realm of the Invisible (viz. Netherworld, the Realm of the Dead), of which color Black is symbolic.

Moreover, Varuna is explicitly identified with Death *mṛtyur vai varuṇas* "Death indeed is Varuna", and is even equated to *pāpman* "evil" (Kāthaka Samhitā XIII. 2), just like Vedic demon *Vṛtra* (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa XI 1.5.7). This semblance of Varuna and *Vṛtra* has led some scholars (e.g. Bergaigne<sup>[3]</sup>, Coomaraswamy<sup>[5]</sup>, Eliade<sup>[7]</sup>, Sutherland<sup>[24]</sup>) to identify the sovereign god Varuṇa with the serpentine demon *Vṛtra* himself. Based on the references assembled by Coomaraswamy, Eliade took virtually the same standpoint: "It is to be noted that his [viz. Varuṇa's] mode of being – terrible sovereign, magician and master of bonds – admits of a surprising closeness to the dragon *Vṛtra*...What is more, Varuṇa is assimilated to the serpent Ahi and to *Vṛtra*". Sutherland too: "[Varuṇa's] punishing, judgmental side is thought to be responsible both for the constriction or "binding" of humans in the bonds (*pāśa*) of sin and for withholding or "binding" of the waters. In this sense, he has been assimilated to the primordial Vedic asura *Vṛtra*, the supreme serpentine power imprisoning the waters".

But Kuiper objected to Bergaigne's view: "Bergaigne, who rightly stated that there was a mythological relationship between Varuṇa and *Vṛtra*, was wrong in identifying them

directly". Kuiper<sup>[15]</sup> correctly observed, that "the demon Vṛtra is killed, but Varuna is incorporated in the group of Devas". Naturally, as the guardian of *ṛta* viz. (natural and social) world order. Kuiper<sup>[14]</sup> also maintained that "To Varuṇa, the ancient god of the waters of Chaos, a new function is now assigned as the guardian of the cosmic law (*ṛtá*)...As a result of this process of differentiation, the undifferentiated Chaos now constitutes itself as a nether world in opposition to the upper world". Nonetheless, there is an argument to speak in favor of the equation Varuna = Vṛtra, since Soma the Moon is mystically identified with Varuna, as mentioned above. And the ritual texts expressly identify Vṛtra with Soma *vṛtro vai sóma* "Vṛtra verily is Soma" (Śatapatha Brāhmana I 6.4.18; IV 1.4.8; IV 2.5.15; IV 4.3.4), *sómo vai vṛtráh* "Soma verily is Vṛtra" (Maitrāyanī Samhitā III 7.8), and Soma with the Moon *sómo vai candrāmās* "Soma verily is the Moon" (Maitrāyanī Samhitā II 1.5).

The common attributes of Soma and Varuna had seemed convincing enough for Hillebrandt to conclude: "Neither a god of night nor a god of winter can account for all the qualities that found expression in Varuna. Varuna as the Moon god alone can do justice to all the attributes". On this point Hillebrandt expressed his standpoint more clearly: "I do not assert that Varuna was familiar to the Indians as the Moon god; I maintain simply that all his later characters can be readily explained from his prehistoric character of his (viz. the moon)".

### Nocturnal Aspects of the Bond

But actually, not only the Full Moon, but also the Sun visually resemble a "Knot" or "Bond". Thus the terms "Bond" is applicable to the Sun as well as to the Full Moon. For the Full moon is in fact just a mirror image of the Sun. Therefore, the diurnal Sun and the nocturnal Sun (=the Full Moon) are considered "twins" and are known under the name *Aśvinā* literally "(dual) Two Horse-Owners". The *Aśvin* twins are even likened precisely to *Mitrā-Varunā* and to god *Pūṣan* cf. Rig-Veda X 106.5 *pūṣaryā ... mitréva ...* The heteroclitic form (dual) *Pūṣaryā* "Two Pūṣans", being cryptically encoded on the model of the word *Sūrya* viz. "the Sun" (derived from *Pūṣan + ya*) suggests the meaning of "two Pūṣan-like Suns" denoting actually the Sun and the Full Moon, viz. diurnal and nocturnal Suns. The term *mitréva*, in the pada text originally *Mitrá iva*, viz. "like Two Mitras", is an old elliptical dual standing for both members of the pair *Mitrá-Varuṇā*, which confirms indisputably the *Aśvin* twins to be the semblance of Mitra and Varuna.

Varuna indeed has not been traditionally viewed as the Moon but rather as nocturnal aspect of the Sun, e.g. Kauṣītaki Brāhmana XVIII 9: *yó ásau tápati ... ástam yanta... sá vā eṣo apáh praviśya váruṇo bhávati* viz. "He who gives heat [viz. the Sun]...at the setting [sc. in the evening]...having entered the waters becomes Varuna". Varuna too appears as one of 108 holy names of the Sun in the Mahābhārata III 3.24. And more, the Vedic dyad Mitra-Varuna are equated to two different aspects of the Sun by Atharva-Veda XIII 3.13 the Glorification of *Rohita* viz. the "Red One" (viz. the Sun) which specifies explicitly: *sá váruṇaḥ sāyám agnir bhavati sá mitró bhavati prātár udyán* viz. "At evening he (=Rohita) becomes Varuna (invisible, nocturnal Sun), viz. Agni (the Holy Sacrificial Fire, for the sacrificial fires do not

shine at night, but are fanned first in the morn), ascending in the morning he becomes Mitra (visible, diurnal Sun).” And the Rig Veda itself declares categorically: *índram mitráṃ váruṇam agním āhur átho divyáh sá suparṇó garútmān ékaṃ sád víprā bahudhā vadanty agním yamám mātariśvānam āhuḥ viz.* “they call him Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, and also Heavenly Fair-Winged *Garutmat* (viz. Devourer Bird = Heavenly Fire the Sun), that which is One and only Existent ecstatic poets call by many names, they call it Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan.” (Rig Veda I 164.46).

The Maitrī (or Maitrayaṇīya) Upaniṣad VI 14 explicitly states that the Bright half of the Year (when the Sun moves northward) is *Āgneya* “of Agni/the Fire”, whereas the Dark half of the Year is *Vārunam* “of Varuṇa” (the period of the year when the Sun moves southward, viewing to the right of an spectator facing east, hence called *dakṣināyana* < *dakṣina* “right > south”, which is the path of the deceased ancestors or *pitṛyāna* associated with the yearly period of darkness (viz. prolonged nights). Moreover, the next sentence of the Upaniṣad specifies that “in its southward course (viz. Dark Half of the Year) from asterism *Sarpa* (the Serpent) to half of *Śravistha* (the Drum) is called *Saumyam* “of Soma, viz. of the Moon”. **NB.** [Note again here Varuṇa’s proverbial connection with Serpents]. Thus, *Varuṇa* paradoxically is identified with *Soma* the Moon as the ruler of the Dark half of the Year, though traditionally he is rather viewed as a specific aspect of the Sun (as above Rig-Veda I 164.46, Atharva Veda XIII 3.13).

### The Honey of the Gods

Consequently, Bergaigne seems to be perfectly right when he observed: “Nevertheless the identification of Soma with the Moon does not exclude his identification with the Sun” in spite of Hillebrandt’s refutation of this possibility when he remarks: “I cannot abstain from pointing out the improbability of Bergaigne’s thesis that a single name of a god has so many meanings (viz. Moon, Sun, lightning)”. This is confirmed by the Philosophical texts of the Upaniṣads, for the Chandogya Upaniṣad III 2.1 declares explicitly: *asau vā āditya deva-madhu viz.* “Yonder Sun, verily is the Honey of the gods”. Thus though is Soma invariably identified with the Moon by the ritual Brāhmaṇa texts, in fact it is not the dead planet-object moon which serves as the drink and food of the gods (it is only a chalice in which is nectar collected), but the ambrosia (viz. nectar of immortality) in the moon is actually the light he receives and accumulates from the Sun (for he has no light of his own). This is the work of *māyā* originally the power of “change” in nature ascribed especially to Varuṇa, which later acquired the meaning of “magic power” and even “illusion”. Because what common people see as such it is not in reality.

Accordingly speaks Aitareya Brāhmaṇa III 44. 6-9: *sa vā eṣa na kadā canāstam eti nodeti (=na udeti) taṃ yad astam eṭīti manyante, 'hna eva tad antam itvāthātmānaṃ viparyasyate, atha yad enam prātar udetīti manyante, rātrer eva tad antam itvāthātmānaṃ viparyasyate, 'har evāvastāt kurute rātrīm parastāt sa vā eṣa na kadā cana nimrocati na ha vai kadā cana nimrocaty, etasya ha sāyujyaṃ sarūpatām salokatām aśnute ya evaṃ veda ya evaṃ veda viz.*

“The Sun does never set nor rise. When people think the sun is setting (it is not so in reality). For, after having arrived at the end of the day, it makes itself produce two opposite effects, making night to what is below and day to what is on the other side. When they believe it rises in the morning (this supposed rising is thus to be accounted for). Having reached the end of the night, it makes itself produce two opposite effects, making day to what is below and night to what is on the other side. In fact, the Sun never sets. One who knows thus becomes united with the Sun, assumes its form, and enters its place.“

In fact, both Varuna and Mitra are identified with the Moon, viz. with the waxing and waning Moon, respectively. Moreover, every 16<sup>th</sup> day of the month (beginning of the waning half of the moon) is dedicated to Iranian *Mithra* too. There is an obvious congruence between those Iranian and Vedic concepts of *Mitra*, for the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa II 4.4.18-19 states it categorically: *athaitāvevārdhamāsaū mitrāvāruṇau yā evāpūryāte sa vāruṇau yò 'pakṣīyāte sá mitrastāvetām rātrimubhaú samāgachatastád ... tadvā etām rātrim mitro vāruṇe rétaḥ siñcati tād eténa rétasā prājāyate* viz. “Mitra and Varuṇa are the two halves of the moon: that half which is filling in (viz. the waxing one) is Varuṇa, and that half which is decreasing (viz. the waning one) is Mitra; they both meet during the night (sc. of New Moon) again... In that same night *Mitra* implants seed in *Varuṇa*, and when it (sc. the Moon) wanes, then it (viz. the New Moon) is produced from that seed”.

**NB.** Varuna has been actually conceived as handing over his own light, viz. he knits, binds, ties his own Light (viz. of the Sun) onto the Moon till he becomes Full again. Then the light thus “bonded”, Mitra (who is the Sun too, since the function of the Sun is as Germans would say to *be-freien*, viz. *be-freeing* the light) releases it during the waning phase of the Moon. And *mitra* in the sense of “peace” is closely associated to amiableness (cf. Slavic *milь* “amiable, dear, beloved, meek, tender” of the same root \**mei-* like *mirь* “peace” but with a different formant) and freedom, being analogous to English “friendship, freedom, peace”, cf. Old English *freod* “friendship, love, peace”, *freo* “beloved, hence free [not in bondage]; a she-free, viz. wife”, *friðu* “peace”; German *Friede* “peace;” Old Norse *friðr* “peace, safety, freedom, love, friendship”; (in Germanic tongues “peace, friendship, freedom” are derived from the same root *fri* related to Sankrit *pri* > *priya* “dear, beloved, amiable” synonymous with *mitra* “friend”).

There Varuna is seemingly presented as the female principle (which seems naturally applicable to the Moon, since the moon was considered female among ancient Greeks and Romans, but also by modern Anglo-Saxons – though in Vedic Sanskrit the moon is male!) in opposition to the male principle, impersonated once by Mitra (as above) and another time by god Indra: *yónir evā vāruṇaḥ réta índraḥ* viz. “the womb indeed is *Varuna*, the seed is *Indra*” (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa XII 9.1.17). From there Dumézil concluded quite erroneously that “Varuna (equated by him with Greek *Ouranos*) the Sky, and sky viz. Vedic *Dyauḥ* being as he argued “after all, constructed grammatically in many Vedic texts as if it were feminine - is that it is Varuna who is endowed with feminine values”. This is however, a completely erroneous assumption (showing actually his ignorance of the Vedic texts) for the Vedans

made themselves perfectly clear on this matter. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa X 6.2.2-3 states explicitly: *sa vai yaḥ sò'ttāgnireva sáḥ tásminyatkiṃ cābhyādādhatyāhitaya evāsya tā āhitayo ha vai tā āhutaya ityācakṣate paró'kṣam paró'kṣakāmā hí deváh* “That eater is the same as this Agni [the Fire viz. Fire-altar]; and whatever they placed in him is his deposit; and these deposits [āhiti] are cryptically called oblations [āhuti], for the gods love the cryptography [viz. cryptic language].” *ādityo vá ásya candrāmā evāhitayaścandrāmasaḥ hy ādityā ādādhatītya dhidevatām* “now the eater, undoubtedly, is Āditya the Sun, and his deposits [viz. offerings] are the Moon, for the Moon is placed into the Sun.” Thus undoubtedly Varuna is the Sun and not the Moon or the Sky.

But the ancient Vedans were very well aware that the Moon (viz. *Soma*) has no Light of his own, and that he actually receives it from the Sun (cf. Rig-Veda IX 71.9, IX 76.4, IX 86.32). Accordingly, *bhāmeva candramasa ā-datta* “the splendor of the Moon is taken back by the Sun”, hence the Sun is styled *ā-ditya* < *ā-datta* “the one which takes it [viz. the light] back” (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa XI 8.3.11). From the above it is clear that Varuṇa was conceived as “one who confines (ties, knits, binds)” the light gradually in a way as if knitting or weaving *vāsas* “a cloth (fabric, garment)” from *tantum* “thread” (as is actually said of Soma in IX 86.32, and above). For the same reason, Varuṇa’s *jāmi* (“sister, kinswoman” Rig Veda I 123.5) *Usas* the Dawn is said to make the *vayunāni* “webs, woven fabric” (Rig Veda I 92.2), just like Varuṇa to whom belong the Cloth because *vāsah syād granthibhir hi vāso vāruṇam varuṇyo hi granthih* viz. “by reason of its Knots indeed that the Cloth belongs to Varuṇa, for the Knot (equal = Bond) is sacred to Varuṇa indeed” (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa V 2.5.17). *Uṣas* the Dawn too reveals herself gradually from Darkness to full Light as if weaving cloths of Light and puts her embroidered garment on (cf. Rig-Veda I 92.4) like her brother and kinsman Varuṇa.

## Conclusion

As is demonstrated during the exposition of this treatise the authentic meanings of the great Vedic gods cannot be justified by the prevailing interpretations in the west, viz. *Mitra* as “contract” or “alliance” and *Varuṇa* as “oath, true speech, spoken truth, etc.” As for the appellation *Mitra*, it conveys (depending on context) slightly different nuances in meaning, viz. “peace, standstill, quietude” and is associated with “amiableness, friendship and freedom”. On the other hand, *Varuṇa* regardless of context, always denotes the same (divine) principle of “Bond(ing)” underlying various natural phenomena as well as human socio-ethical acts. It is against Vedic worldview of man and the universe, and is equally erroneous from a Vedic perspective, to advocate that *Mitra* as well as *Varuṇa* represent exclusively abstract concepts or solely natural phenomena for there are strict correlations between natural-concrete vs. social-abstract in the authentic view of the Vedic seers.

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