II. The Trimūrti

1. Brahmā-Creator and Creators

The first member of the Hindu Trinity Brahmā is generally known as the Creator god. It is, however, not known exactly from when he enjoyed the title Creator nor again how long he enjoyed this title alone. Prior to him, from the time of the Vedas, there were many minor and major creators. After him, from the time of the Epics and up to the Purāṇas, a number of divinities are credited with procreating the universe and the beings therein. Therefore, it seems that Brahmā might not have enjoyed full-glory as the Creator god for very long. Undoubtedly, however, he enjoyed great popularity as one of the highest gods for quite some time, at least in the period of Pāli literature and of the Epics.

Brahmā was obviously not referred to as a (creator) god in the Vedas. In the Pāli texts, Brahmā appeared indirectly and negatively as the Creator god from whose mouth the brāhmaṇas were born, and perhaps, he was believed, in this period, to be The Creator god among the inner circle of the brāhmaṇas and also among the common people. In the Epics, Brahmā was credited to be the Creator god who, due to this reason, was called the grandfather (pitāmaha) of all beings¹. He

¹ This appellation ‘pitāmaha’ has a very important role throughout the ages. It is dedicated to Brahmā only, though the other creators are called many similar names, such as, Prajāpati,
shared, and sometimes delegated the authority of creation to the many other Prajāpatis. In the Epic period Brahmā often shares his creatorship with the other two mighty members, i.e., Śiva and Viṣṇu as all the functions of the trimūrti have become mixed, blended and exchanged with each other.

The present chapter pursues the problems of creation and the creator(s) in Indian mythology mainly based on the RgVeda, Pāli literature and Mahābhārata, A comparison is also made with other mythologies, mainly with the Chinese. The chapter is divided into three separate and independent parts: (i) Creation and the Creators in the Vedas, (ii) Brahmā the Creator and the Brahmās the highest gods, in the Pāli texts, and (iii) Brahmā and the Lord of the Creations in the Epics.

(i) Creation and the Creators in the Vedas

Dandekar remarks that “one cannot speak of any single uniform cosmogonical theory of the RgVeda”1. Nevertheless one may still condense the Vedic concept of creation chiefly into two theories. One is that the world is created by the natural force, namely, the theory of chaos which is developed (or connected) into the theory that the world is created from the sexual meeting of two different natures;

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1 Dandekar, ‘Universe in Vedic thought, in India Mayor’, congratulatory Volume presented to Gonda, p. 92.
the other theory is that the world is created or chiseled or moulded by the will of the Creator(s).

The theory: ‘Creation of the universe started from chaos’ is generally known to be constructed at a comparatively later period than the general creation myth, but at the same time it is also quite common in most of the mythologies, in the East and the West. Romans believed that chaos is the primeval matter out of which the universe has been constructed. The word "chaos comes from the same root as 'xáökva' the 'yawning space'. According to Hesiod (Theog. 116) it was before all things and consisted of mist and darkness. The Orphic cosmology made Æther and Chaos the offspring of Chronos, or Time"¹. The Greek mythology also tells that from chaos the first being, the goddess earth Gaia (Gaea) was born. The Bible also tells that the world is created from chaos by the decision and will of the Almighty God. And the East too, represented by the RV. and the Chinese mythology, has a theory that the universe came into being from chaos by the natural force of the Great Nature; the RV. calls that force tapas (X. 129. 3), and the latter calls it Yin and Yang.

The idea of sexual congress of the two different natures, represented as a male and a female, is directly in connection (or extension) with the theory of chaos, and this is considered, in several mythologies, as the actual starting point of the creation of the universe. The mediators (or the creators) of creation are either god himself or the power of great nature. In most mythologies, a god (or other entities)

came out from chaos by the natural force and, produced a male and a female, and generated the other beings\textsuperscript{1}.

The RgVedic concept of creation of the world which started from the theory of chaos is extended to the theory of congress of a male and a female. This theory shows the different and diverse pairings of nature and great beings, such as, the relationship between Puruṣa and Virāj, Aditi and Dakṣa, Yama and Yami etc.

Now, it is known that in the RgVedic period the concept of the Creator had not been formed. In the Vedas the universe was not created by the God alone, but either by natural force, or by the skill of the various creator gods who may be said to be ‘the antecedents of the Creator’. Thus, the Vedic creation myths are broadly centered round three sets of creators. (1) The primeval divine giant who created the world out of self-immolation. (2) The fabricators, and the creator(s): Viśvakarman, Tvaṣṭr, and Prajāpati. (3) The deities who are not creators specifically but their greatness gives them that position. They randomly indulge in the work of creation. These are: Agni, Indra, Varuṇa and the others.

(1) **The primeval divine giant who created the world out of self-immolation**

The primeval beings who generally were inestimably huge giants, such as, Rgvedic Puruṣa and Chinese Pangu, are believed to have created the universe out

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\textsuperscript{1} In the Bible, however, the God had been existing, perhaps even before chaos, and that God made directly a male and a female out of chaos, and let them be the originators of the other beings.
of chaos by their divine and holy sacrifice. However, their creations were mostly limited to the cosmic entities, the sun, the moon, the winds, the mountains..., and the giants were not said to be the direct ancestors of human beings, perhaps, due to their cosmic and divine nature, which might have been spoiled by the physical pairing with woman. Instead these giants were supposed to be androgynous. They engendered their counterparts from their own body, and they were born again from their respective counterparts who were initially brought forth by them. The pairing of Puruṣa and Virāj is representative of an ancient idea that the giant created the world by self-immolation, and this idea may be compared with the Chinese mythology of Pangu (and also Fushi) and the goddess Nüwa.

The Chinese mythology regarding the creation of the world is very interesting from the point of view of the Indian mythology. The book called Huái-nán-zi (淮南子)\(^1\) tells of the beginning of the world as:

> At the beginning the world was merely chaos and nothing was found. Slowly the two Great Gods called Yin and Yang appeared out of chaos and were separated as the eight directions were fixed. They started making the world. Then the God Yang ruled the heaven and the God Yin controlled the earth.

Another story is told, in the form of the yùyán (寓言), viz., the story of maxim in the form of myths, in the book Zhuāngzi (莊子). The story runs:

\(^1\) The Chinese cosmogonic myth first appears in proper form in this book Huái-nán-zi (淮南子). It belongs to the Han dynasty (206 BC-220 AD).
The king of the South Heaven called Shū (怲), and the king of the North Heaven, called Hū (懟) used to visit Hūndūn (混沌, chaos), the kind king of the Middle Heaven. This Hūndūn did not have any hole in his body. Being appreciative of him and to repay his hospitality, Shū and Hū (represented Time that moves fast) made seven holes in the body of Hūndūn. However, from that time Hūndūn slept forever, and from those holes the world and the beings were created.

Xúzhēng (徐整)’s book Sānwu-liji (三五歷紀) tells another very interesting story about the origin of the world as follows:

The universe, in the beginning, was just one big lump of chaos which resembled a huge egg. The giant named Pangu slept for 18000 years therein. Then he awoke one day and found only darkness surrounding him. He then brought a huge axe out of nowhere and struck the shell of the egg. With a big sound the egg was broken, and the darkness dispersed, the lighter elements and the clear energy went up and, became heaven. The heavier and unclear elements became the earth. Now Pangu was worried that they might fuse again. Hence he pushed the sky farther away with his hands, and at the same time he trod hard upon the earth to keep it well apart from the sky. Everyday the sky and the earth went farther away from each other and with the increasing distance between them the height of Pangu too increased. He firmly stood like a pillar for eons till the sky and the earth became solidified. When he believed there was no danger of their coming together, he lay down and took rest. Then his sleep grew deeper and deeper and he drifted slowly into death. As he died his body got transformed into the world. His breath was turned into wind and cloud, his voice was turned into thunder, his left eye into the sun and his right eye into the moon. His body and limbs were turned into mountain ranges and his blood became the flowing rivers and his
veins became the roads. His flesh became the fields, his skin and the hair were turned into plants and trees....

Thus the giant Pangu sacrificed himself and created the universe just as Puruṣa produced the things, the beings, the sun... from his own sacrificed body. After the sacred death of giant Pangu, the divinities and the other animated beings were created on their own accord. However, seeing the fact that human beings were yet to be created on the earth, the greatest goddess Nüwa moulded human beings one by one with mud at the beginning, but when she realized that this moulding took long time she merely spread the mud so that they could be born in multitude.

Puruṣa, the Ṟgvedic primeval being, is supposed to have produce his female counterpart Virāj from his body and he was born again from her (RV. X. 90. 5), and by the gods’ sacrifice this Puruṣa created the universe (RV. X. 90. 7-16). Thus, Aditi and Dakṣa too may have been born from each other. Yama and

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1 The story is quoted from ‘Chinese mythology and the legends’ by Yuan Ke, translated in Korean language by Chun Incho and Kim Seonja.

2 RV. X. 72. 4; aditeḥ daksah ajāyata dakṣāt aditiḥ pari.

3 The marriage between the twin, Yama and Yami, is not clearly mentioned in the texts. However, their originatorship for the human race is generally believed by the scholars, e.g., Dandekar after a long discussion about the hymn X. 10, reaches to the conclusion (‘Vedic mythological tracts’, p, 135) that “there seem to be no reason to doubt that the hymn contains, in spite of its tendentious perversion by the poet, which only reflects the morality of his age, unmistakable traces of a distinct form of the Yama-mythology, according to which Yama and

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Fushi (伏羲), with their own sisters Yamī and Nūwa (女娲) respectively, are also said to be the originators of human beings.

Thus, the Chinese cosmogonic myth resembles the Rgvedic mythology in several respects. Considering that the Chinese is chronologically later than the Indian, most probably it was influenced by the latter, even though the seeds were considered to be latent much before that period. It appears that the Chinese cosmogony can be thought of a good mixture of all the Rgvedic cosmogony sūktas including Nāsadiya, Hiraṇyagarbha, Puruṣa and Viśvavāman.

(2) The fabricators, and the creator(s)

There is another creation theory in the Rgveda according to which the world is created or chiseled by a skillful artisan God and it is quite common in most mythologies. This act of creating is often described as a work of art and it is commonly expressed through the metaphors of ‘building’ ‘joining’ ‘weaving’ ‘moulding’ etc. Such references, however, have, in many cases, a mythological

Yamī, the twin brother and sister, were considered to be responsible for the procreation of the human race through an incestuous union.” See also Bhattacharji, ‘Indian Theogony’, p. 105.

1 Fushi (伏羲) who is believed to have brought fire form the heaven for human beings, in Chinese mythology, is said to be another creator of the universe along with Nūwa. They hid themselves in a white and round gourd, and survived in the great flood. The brother Fushi (伏羲) asked his sister Nūwa to marry him, and they became the parents of human beings.

2 RV. V. 85. 5; VI. 47. 3-4; X. 29. 6; 31. 7; 72. 2; cf. Dandekar, Universe in Vedic thought, in ‘India Mayor’, congratulatory Volume presented to Gonda, p. 93-4.
rather than a cosmogonical import. Among these gods Viśvakarman and Tvaṣṭṛ are supposed to be the most skilled artisans.

**Viśvakarman**

"The highest position in the later part of the RV. is granted to Viśvakarman"\(^1\). However, his occurrence in the RV is not frequent just as the other deities who arose from abstract notions. Only two whole hymns (X. 81. 82) are dedicated to his praise. Besides, the name occurs as an attribute to the gods, once to Indra (X. 16. 4), and once to Sūrya (X. 70. 4)\(^2\). Ragozin\(^3\) remarks that Viśvakarman, the fabricator of the universe, is originally a title given to Indra, Sūrya and other great gods. Renou\(^4\) considers that “Viśvakarman, he who makes everything is a sort of creative spirit, demiurge, a doublet of Prajāpati, master of prosperity”.

Viśvakarman is the creator and arranger (*dhātā* and *vidhātā*, X. 82. 2; 3), and the firm-minded one (*manasā dhīraḥ*, X. 82. 1). He is called the Father (*pitā*, X. 81. 1; 82. 3), and also the father of eyes (*caksuṣaḥ pitā*), the all-seer (*viśvacaksā*, X. 81. 2), and the lord of the speech (*vācaspati*, X. 81. 7). He alone produced the earth and disclosed the heaven (X. 81. 2; 3; 82. 1). With his arms and wings (*bāhu

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2 Keith (‘The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads’, Part. I. P, 207) considers that probably due to this reason, i.e., Viśvakarman as the epithet of the sun, the all-creating god, it developed into a name for the creator god. He also thinks that Viśvakarman as ‘all-maker’ is another synonym of Prajāpati (part II, p. 437).

3 Ragozin, ‘Vedic India, As embodied principally in the RgVeda’, p. 263

and pavatā?1, X. 81. 3) he blew2 the heaven and the earth. And perhaps, by this holy act of Viśvakarman the heaven and the earth were extended (aprathetām, X. 82. 1). He, like Puruṣa (X. 90) who has a thousand heads (sahasra akṣā), a thousand eyes (sahasra akṣā), a thousand feet (sahasrapād), and covering earth from all sides (bhūmim viśvato vṛtvā), Viśvakarman (X. 81. 3) has eyes on all sides (viśvatacakṣu), arms on all sides, (viśvatabāhu), faces on all sides (viśvatomukha), feet on all sides (viśvatapāt).

Apart from his being the primordial being, it is also noticed that the outstanding feature of Viśvakarman is ‘to see’. The word ‘cakṣa’ is used three times in two hymns for Viśvakarman in combination with other words. Thus he is called

1 Griffith translates the word as ‘wings’ and Wilson as ‘feet which are moving swiftly’
2 Here the word ‘dhamati’ is translated as ‘weld’ by Griffith, ‘traverse’ by Wilson, and ‘whirlwind’ by Roth. Griffith’s translation ‘weld’ may be intended to suggest that the heaven and the earth are going to meet in the end. Roth explained that the word meant the producing of whirlwind by the action of hands, feet and wings. It seems, however, that the original meaning of the word ‘to blow’ may be appropriate. For, the ancient concept of the creation is that at the beginning the universe was only chaos, and the heaven and the earth too were indistinguishable. But they were separated or created by the effort of the great primeval being, who might make further effort so as not to the heaven and the earth were close together again. And this hymn for Viśvakarman is creation hymn. Therefore, the word ‘dhamati’ may be interpreted as ‘blows’ the heaven and the earth so that they should not be mingled together again as they were in the beginning. Here, Viśvakarman, as a creator, may be compared to Puruṣa the primeval being, and Pangu who separated the heaven and the earth with his hands and feet.
viśvacaksā, cakṣusāḥ pītā, and viśvata cakṣu. Now, the root cakṣ (to which, *inter alia*, also belongs the noun cakṣus-'eye') occurs not infrequently in interesting passages. That it is applied to the visual faculty of gods who, like Agni and the Sun, possess a number of eyes, or who are stated to see all things\(^1\), to Puṣan in some places\(^2\), and also to Soma (RV. IX. 6. 5) of wide vision (*urucakṣas*) and of clear sight (*vicakṣana*). The process of ‘seeing’ implies attention and interest. The gods, who are said to be with sight, watch what is going on in the universe and the doing of men very closely\(^3\). The word *vicakṣana* which is applied to Soma is also used in the sense of ‘wise’, ‘experienced’ or ‘keen sighted’ (RV. IX. 12. 4) in connection with *sukrataḥ kaviḥ*, and with *ṛṣīvipraḥ* (RV. IX. 107. 7). ‘Omniscience’ depended on the power of sight, a knowing which comes from, or is intimately connected with, an unusual and supra-normal faculty of seeing\(^4\). The epithet *vicakṣana* which means ‘far-seeing’, ‘clear-sighted’ ‘wise’ is given to Śūrya (RV. VIII. 41. 9), to Savītṛ (as the supporter of heavens and lord of the creatures, RV. IV. 53. 2), to Agni Vaiśvanara who found the celestial light (RV. III. 3. 10), to Indra (RV. I. 101. 7), and to Soma (RV. IX. 86. 23; 107. 24; 51, 5; 12. 4). The Sun has the power of seeing everything, thus, the Sun is ‘all-seeing’ (*viśvacakṣasa*, RV. I. 50. 2; VII. 63. 1).

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\(^1\)RV. I. 164. 44: *viśvati eko abhi caṣṭe saccibhit;* V. 3. 9, *kadā cikitaḥ abhi cakṣase naḥ agne.*

I. 98. 1; *viśvati idam vi caṣṭe.*

\(^2\)RV. II. 40. 5; *viśvāni anyaḥ bhuvanā jajāna viśvamanyāḥ abhicaṅkṣāṇa eti.*

\(^3\)Cf. Gonda, ‘The vision of the Vedic poets’, p. 30.

\(^4\)ibid. p. 193.
Thus, the word ‘cakṣ’ is used for the deities whose visionary faculty is more emphasized. Therefore, the comparatively frequent use of the word ‘cakṣ’ for Viśvakarman indicates that he is a wise and visionary god. Thus, he sees the universe either with his eyes or with his mind. This wise visionary deity first imagines the world (vimana, RV. X. 82. 2), and observes the world through his viśvata cakṣu and viśvatomukha and also through the wise mental eyes. Through these true observations, he perhaps, created, fabricated the universe.

The characteristic of Viśvakarman as a creator god is also seen not only in the words like dhātā, vidhātā, and pitā but also in the words eka (alone, RV. X. 81. 3; 82. 2; 3) and aja (unborn, RV. X. 82. 5). These two words ‘eka’ and ‘aja’ are used especially in the sense of the first being who gave birth to this world. Therefore they are, perhaps, said to be closer to the true meaning of creator who created the world from nothingness or from chaos. Thus, the word eka is also used, in the RV, to designate Ka (X. 121. 7; 8), to refer to the single primordial substance (X. 129. 2), and to denote Sūrya (I. 164. 6; 46). This eka, indicates no specific god but alone in the primordial age, is also said to be the lord of what is fixed and moving, what walks, what flies (III. 54. 8). The word aja is used, in the RV., for Sūrya (I. 164. 6), to Agni (I. 67. 3) and also for Indra (I. 162. 2). In the Epics, Aja is often used as an epithet of Brahmā (Mbh. XII. 224. 45), and Viṣṇu (Mbh. III. 13. 20; VI. 24. 20; XIII. 135. 24, 35, 69).

It is thus noticeable that Viśvakarman as a creator has many common factors with other deities from the Indian as well as from the other mythologies. He resembles the primeval being Ka (Prajāpati), Puruṣa and Chinese Pangu, and also Sūrya, Agni and Indra in the Vedas as well as Brahmā and Prajāpati in the post-Vedic period. In the Brāhmaṇas Viśvakarman is frequently identified with Prajāpati (ŚB.
VIII. 2. 1. 10; 3. 13, AB. IV. 22). In the Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā (XII. 61.) too he is identified with Prajāpati as prajāpatir viśvakarmā vimuñkeatu.

In the Mbh, Viśvakarman is known mainly as a creator of things but not of the world. He is described as “the lordly Viśvakarman, progenitor of the crafts, creator of the thousands of crafts, and carpenter to the Thirty Gods; greatest of craftsmen, he created all ornaments, and fashioned the divine chariots of the Gods. On the craft of this great-spirited God do the humans live, and forever they pay worship to the everlasting Viśvakarman” (Buiten’s translation). Thus he is called Prajāpati who creates the things. He created invincible chariot, a beautiful woman, halls and cities, a garland and a throne, a bow and many other things.

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1 Mbh. I. 60. 27; viśvakarmā mahābhāgo jajñe śilpaprajāpatiḥ/
kartā śilpasahasrāṇāri tridaśānāti ca vardhakīḥ //
ibid, 28; bhūgaṇānāti ca sarveśāni kartā śilpavatām varaḥ /
yo divyāni vimānāni devatānāti cakāra ha //
ibid, 29; manusyaśa copajīvanti yasya śilpaṁ mahātmanāḥ /
pājayanī ca yatī nityatī viśvakarmāṇam avyayam //

2 Mbh. I. 216. 10: This chariot was used in khāṇḍava forest by Arjuna. In this context he was called the lord of the world (bhūvanaprabhu), he created that chariot out of power of svatapasā. He also wrought Kubera’s Puṣpaka (III. 158. 35). He designed divine car for Śiva at that time when Śiva destroyed tripura (VII. 201. 64-82).

3 The story in the Mbh. I. 203 is as follows: Brahmā who ordained the death of the pair of demons called Sunda and Upasunda, summoned Viśvakarman. Brahmā ordered him to create the most beautiful woman who can be hidden. Viśvakarman created a divine woman after
In one place, Brahmā is called Viśvakarman (I. 57. 85). Once Viśvakarman is used as an adjective of Śiva (VII. 173. 68) and many times it is an adjective of Kṛṣṇa. Thus, in the Mbh, Viśvakarman is either a divine artist or an adjective of a creator god. Viśvakarman’s important roll of creation of the universe in the Rg Veda, is apparently dimmed in the Mbh. He sank to the truly humble level of the carpenter of the gods. The reference of Viśvakarman is not found in the Pāli texts.

_Tvaṣṭṛ_

In the case of Viśvakarman, though he is classified as a creator god who fabricated the world, there is no reference of his skilful hands in the Rgveda; instead, his visionary mind is often mentioned. Only from the post-Vedic period Viśvakarman is known as the divine artist. In the case of Tvaṣṭṛ, however, the RgVedic references are mostly regarding his wonderful skill that led him to create or to carve the world and its varied components. Viśvakarman, in the Vedas, is often used as an adjective of the great gods, and due to this, he is considered also as another form of Indra and others, whereas Tvaṣṭṛ is not used as an adjective careful reflection. He collected whatever is beautiful in the three worlds. Then he created a woman out of gathering of gems with a celestial loveliness.

1 Viśvakarman built an assembly hall (Mbh. II. 3. 23) and a golden throne (Mbh. VII. 58. 23) for Yuddhiṣṭira. He also built the divine assembly hall for Yama (Mbh. II. 8. 31) and Varuṇa (Mbh. II. 9. 2). He created Śiva’s golden garland (Mbh. IV. 41. 3). He also built Hiraṇyamlapura for dāityas and dānavas with Māyā (Mbh. V. 98. 2).

2 He made a flag (_ketu_) for Arjuna (Mbh. VI. 46. 42) and Kṛṣṇa (Mbh. X. 13. 3). He also made Karna’s bow named Vijaya (Mbh. VIII. 22. 36).

3 Mbh. XII. 43. 5; 47. 13; 47. 55; 513; XIV. 51. 8; 54. 6.
and his characteristic is quite fixed as a carpenter. Notwithstanding the fact that Tvaṣṭṛ is given the title of a creator in the Vedas, his feature is, as Keith remarks¹ “the iron axe, which he bears in his hand, and which marks him out as the skilled artificer”, more inclined to create wondrous things for the gods. And in this way he may be said to be an equivalent of the divine artificer Hephaistos of Greek mythology². Tvaṣṭṛ is the generator of fair things (sujanīmā, RV. X. 8. 6), the most skilful artificer (RV. III. 54. 12; X. 53. 9) who fabricated various objects, such as, the thunder bolt of Indra³, the drinking vessels of the gods (pātrā devapāṇāṇī) with his excellent axe (RV. X. 53. 9), the sacrificial ladle (camasa, RV. I. 20. 6) and so on.

As for the characteristics of the creator, he is said to be the earliest born (agrajā, RV. IX. 5. 9) and the first-goer (agriya, RV. I. 13. 10), who possesses multiform (viśvarūpa⁴, RV. I. 13. 10; III. 55. 19). He is called pitā and also janitā father (RV. X. 64. 10; X. 10. 5). He created the heaven and the earth (RV. I. 16. 2; IV. 56. 3; X. 110. 9), adorned the beings with forms (RV. X. 110. 9). He is said to beget and to feed mankind (RV. III. 55. 19), and also makes all forms and all the cattle and caused them to multiply (RV. I. 188. 9). As he is the father of Saranyū who is the mother of Yama and Yamī (RV. X. 17. 1), Tvaṣṭṛ is, perhaps, believed to be the ancestor of the human race. He is the god who rules the world with

³ RV. I. 32. 2; 5. 7; 61. 6; 85. 9; VI.17. 10; X. 48. 3 etc.
⁴ Joshi (MVD, pp, 89-90) suggests that the word viśvarūpa means not only the varied forms but also the varied colours, especially, of the cows and the bulls.
power (RV. II. 31. 4). Tvaṣṭṛ is one of the generators of Agni\(^1\). However, all his features as the creator seem to be in the extension of his skilful hands. Therefore, although he is described as the ‘earliest born’ (agrajā), ‘father’ (pitā) and ‘the first goer’ (agriya), his figure is not as divine as Puruṣa who sacrificed himself for creating the world. Therefore, it may be said that his creatorship, in the Vedas, is not because of the divine sacrifice but because of his wondrous skill that could even carve the world and could give forms to the human beings and the animals.

In the Mbh. too Tvaṣṭṛ keeps many Rāgvedic shades. Once his name is used in the sense of a creator (III. 258. 9). He is also called a Prajāpati (V. 9. 3; 40). He, as in the RV, fashioned Vajra for Indra with Dadhīca’s bones (III. 98. 22). From the Vedas (RV. II. 11. 19) onwards he is known as the father of a three-headed son, Viśvarupa (Mbh. V. 9. 3), and also a king of Rūpā (XIV. 43. 9).

These two personalities, namely, Viśvakarman and Tvaṣṭṛ, are the creators, the fathers who are unborn or the earliest born in the Vedas. They are the fabricators and the artificers of the world, who really became the builders and the carpenters in the later period. However, neither of them is connected with the myths of the original Egg, which is very common for the creators of many mythologies. Interestingly however, the idea that the world was made through the skill of the divine god is not found in other well known mythologies, such as, Greek, Egyptian nor in Chinese mythology. No doubt that the Greek Hephitos is a divine artificer in whose hands several wondrous objects were made, and the Chinese great giant Pangu had a huge axe in his hands to break the Egg-shell

\(^1\) RV. I. 95. 2; X. 2.7; 46. 9; 70. 9; 90. 9.
(Darkness) when he opened the world, but their skill and the instrument was not used to carve and fabricate the world. It may be said that while most of the creators of the mythologies were first the breakers of the Egg (or darkness), they afterwards became creators. On the other hand, these two creators, viz., Viśvakarman and Tvaṣṭr, appear more to be the designers and the trimmers of the world.

**Prajāpati**

More than Viśvakarman and Tvaṣṭr who are classified as ‘the makers of the world’, the deities whose names are compounded with ‘pati’ are closer to the present sense of the creators, and nearer to A Creator Brahmā. Gonda remarks that, *pati* is, in the Vedas, representative of a rather ‘primitive’ type of appellations\(^1\). And it is also believed that all the gods whose names are compounded with *pati* are comparatively recent among the Vedic pantheons, and they are considered to be the products of reflection\(^2\). Therefore, the deities whose names end with *pati* are used, a number of times, as adjectives of the great gods who possess controlling power.

Among these ‘-*patis*’ who appear in the Vedas, Prajāpati and Brhaspati (Brahmaṇaspati) are connected with the Creator God Brahmā, directly and indirectly, Prajāpati with the entire picture, and Brhaspati with the idea alone. Prajāpati appears only in the 10\(^{th}\) book of the Rgveda. Considering that this last *mandala* is a racial and cultural amalgamation of Vedic and Non-Vedic, Aryan

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\(^{1}\) Gonda, ‘The vision of the Vedic poets’, p. 82.

and Non-Aryan elements, he is a god of late and indigenous creation and not a carry-over from the Indo-European period\textsuperscript{1}. Prajāpati's importance, judged by the number of occurrences in the Rgveda\textsuperscript{2}, is said to be considerably minor. But he may be said to be the deity closest to the later Creator God Brahmā. As the name itself indicates, the function of Prajāpati as a separate deity in the Rgveda is always connected with the offsprings. Thus, he is invoked to grant abundant progeny (RV. X. 85. 43), to bestow cows and auspicious cattle (RV. X. 169. 4). He is also called upon to sprinkle the seed (RV. X. 184. 1). He is said to encompass all the beings (RV. X. 121. 10). Apart from this distinctive personality as a separate god who has creative power, the name Prajāpati is usually an adjective of other gods. Thus, Savitṛ is called Prajāpati (RV. IV. 53. 2), the lord of all creatures, the supporter of the sky and of the world. Once Soma is also called Prajāpati along with Tvaṣṭṛ and Indra (RV. IX. 5. 9).

Some passages of the RV lead the scholars to consider Prajāpati in various ways. Renou considers him as an unimportant tribal chief who has a colourless figure, and his creative or procreative functions drain him of power\textsuperscript{3}. However, chieftainship of Prajāpati does not seem to have sufficient ground. Grisword\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{1} Cf. Bhattacharji, 'Myth-Vedic, Buddhist and Brahmanical', p. 48. On the contrary, Oldenberg ('The Religion of the Veda', p. 34) remarks that 'pāti'-gods leave hardly any doubt about their Indo-European origin.

\textsuperscript{2} Not as an adjective of other gods but as a distinct deity his name occurs only four times in the RV: X. 85. 43; 169. 4; 184. 1; and X. 121.

\textsuperscript{3} Renou, 'The religions of ancient India', p. 24.

\textsuperscript{4} Grisword, 'The religion of the Rgveda', p. 350.
suggested that Prajāpati is the personification of the creative activity of nature, and is identical with the generative Agni. This thought is mainly based on the RV hymn X. 121 and X. 129, and also some Agni hymns. This seems to be quite appropriate in connection with the Brāhmanic period where Agni and Prajāpati are often identified\(^1\). However, it is also true that the generative Agni resembles Viśvakarman more than Prajāpati of the RV. Joshi remarks that Prajāpati is endless sign of interrogation, for Prajāpati is Ka in that *Hiraṇyagarbha-sūkta* (RV. X. 121) which is actually an apotheosis of the interrogative pronoun\(^2\). Hopkins\(^3\) remarks that Prajāpati is a non-phenomenal supreme ruler, represented by time, by the year, but above all by the figure of a father-god. He further says that Prajāpati does not exactly create the world, but he becomes the world, he transforms himself into it. So the universe does not become God. God becomes the universe. This assumption is possible only when Prajāpati is exactly identified with Puruṣa who became the world after transforming himself into it. But he failed to explain this. Bhattacharji\(^4\) has almost the same view as Hopkins. She too suggests that Prajāpati is Time, the creator.

Thus it is observed that the scholars hold different views about Prajāpati. However, it is very difficult to picturize the real nature of Prajāpati. He may be The Time that creates and ends everything or be the generative power in the

\(^1\) Or, fire-altar, ŚB, 10. 1. 1-2.


beginning, or the endless sign of interrogation, or perhaps he might even be an unimportant tribal chief. But one thing cannot be denied that he is always, connected with fertility and he is invoked to grant the offspring. In the context of the progeny either of human beings or of animals. Further, in this connection, he is mentioned even more significantly together with the fertility divinities, such as, Viṣṇu, Śrīdevī. Thus he is always connected with procreation either as a fertility deity or as a creative energy or as The Time. Now, one may go over to the Pāli literature to see how Prajāpati is depicted there.

It appears, in the Pāli texts, that Prajāpati (Prajāpati) is an important deity for the brāhmaṇa class. The brāhmaṇas seem to invoke Prajāpati quite often along with the gods like Inda (Indra), Soma, Varuṇa, Isāna, Brahmā, Mahiddhi, Yama etc. Āśāniṣṭya sutta, Dīg. also enumerates the name Prajāpati among other gods, such as, indo somo varaṇo ca bhāradvājo pajāpati, candano kāmasēṭho ca. It is used in a phrase as: ‘ko te imaṃ kosiya diṭṭhimodahi, brahmā mahindo atha vá’

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1 RV. X. 5. 43, cf. Joshi. P. 102, op. cit.

2 RV. X. 184. 1-2.

3 It is said (Dīg. I. 13, and II. 8) that the brāhmaṇas who, though they are well versed in three Vedas, if they neglect what a brāhmaṇa should do, and do what he should not do, but only declare; ‘we call on Inda, Soma, Varuṇa, Isāna, Prajāpati, Brahmā, Mahiddhi, Yama’, after their death union with Brahmā is not possible.

4 Āśāniṣṭya sutta, Dīg. III. 9: These deities are mentioned as ones of the chief Yakkhas (mahāyakkha) whose praises are to be sung in danger by the monks, nuns, and male and female followers.
pajāpati. As a deity, Pajāpati, in the Pāli literature, is not used as an adjective of other deities as it was in the Vedas. He is clearly a separate entity, distinct even from Brahmā with whom he is identified a number of times in the later period. Pajāpati occurs along with Inda and with Brahmā. But it is noticeable that the word pajāpati is commonly used as an adjective of a (chief) wife of a man. In this case, it would be more appropriate to say that pajāpati means ‘one who is rich in offspring’ or ‘one whose husband has offspring’. The name Pajāpati might have given to a woman from whom rich children are expected. This word is relevant to the word ‘prajāvān’. Thus, the queen Malikā, the chief queen of the king Pasenadi is called Pajāpati. Also, Indra’s Asura wife Sujā is Pajāpati. Pajāpati is also used as a name for a woman. It seems that the name Pajāpati is also given to a woman who belongs to the higher rank. Thus, the name of the Buddha’s stepmother is Mahāpajāpati and she is also called Pajāpati.

As noted above, by the Buddha’s time Prajāpati and Brahmā are clearly two distinct divinities. So far as the Buddhist literature is concerned, the adjective Pajāpati is applied only to a woman having progeny, and not to any god. And, it is

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1 Asānipāto, Jāt. also in Mahānipata Jāt., ‘indo ca brahmā pajāpati, soma yamo vessavaṇo.

2 Alagaddūpasutta. Maj. I. 3. 2: The text tells that when a mind of a monk is freed the devas-those with Inda, with Brahmā, with Pajāpati-, do not succeed in their search if they think: ‘This is the discriminative consciousness attached to a Tathāgata’. A similar expression is found in the Tevijjasutta. Diq. 13. also in Sakkapaṇhasutta, Diq. II. 8.

3 Sakkasaṃ, Saṃ. I. 1. 11, Piyajātika sutta, Majjhmapannasa Pāli. IV. 7, and Gabbhini sutta, Udāna Pāli, II. 6, and other many suttas. Pajāpati is used in the sense of wife. It is also used in plural, pajāpatīyo, in Gahapati vaggio, Aṅg. Atīhanipāta Pāli. III.
known that, in the Pāli literature, neither Brahmā nor Prajāpati has any responsibility of creation or that of creating caste, though it is fairly certain that the concept of Brahmā existed among the people. In the Pāli literature the creations and the castes are said to have been formed as a natural process of development. On this background of Pāli, and also considering the nature of the ancient society where the idea of fertility enjoyed immense importance, one may infer that the god Pajāpati, as the meaning of name itself provides an idea, was a fertility deity who helped the procreation of families. Or perhaps, Prajāpati who started as an abstract concept came to the forefront by the end of the Vedic period as the creator of the world, maintained this position through the Upaniṣadic period, but at the time of the Buddha he was relegated to the position of a deity of procreation in keeping with the etymological meaning of the word, and was also used as an adjective of a woman excepted to have rich progeny.

(3) The general concept of the creators

The Vedas refer to many creators. Among them, the grandest cosmic functions are ascribed to Varuṇa. He has fashioned, and upholds (astbhnaṁ) heaven and earth; he dwells in all worlds as sovereign ruler. Three worlds are embraced by him¹. He upholds heavens (astabhnaṁ dyām, RV. VIII. 42. 1) and measures out earth (amīṁta prthivyaṁ).

Though great universal power has been ascribed to Indra, the creation of whole world is not his responsibility; Indra settled the ancient mountains, directed the

¹ RV. VII. 87. 5: ā asidat vīśvā bhuvanāṁi samrāt. Similar expression is in RV. VIII. 42. 1.
action of the waters downwards, supported the earth and, propped up the sky from falling (RV. II. 17. 5). Indra grasped two boundless worlds (RV. III. 30. 5). Thus the idea of upholding and propping the sky, and supporting the earth by the great gods is common even in the Vedas. As Pangu the giant and Prometheus the sage, Indra and Varuṇa did the same task. Indra fixed and established the lights of the sky (RV. VIII. 14. 9). He supported the two worlds, the mountains, waters and heavens (RV. VIII. 15. 2). He produced these worlds and creatures (RV. VIII. 85. 4). It is said that from Indra’s own body the father and mother (heaven and earth) were produced\(^1\), in this way Indra has immeasurable cosmic power, and he also resembles Puruṣa. Once Indra is called Viśvakarman (RV. VIII. 98. 2). Through fear of him, mountains, heaven and earth are agitated (RV. I. 61. 14). He is also said to be superior to men, heaven and earth (RV. I. 73. 6).

**Sūrya** also is said to have cosmic power, and quite a number of times he is (or his function is) identified with Viśvakarman. Thus, Sūrya upholds the sky\(^2\), and by him all existing things are brought together, he is the maker of the world and possessor of all-godhood\(^3\), *eka* and *aja* (RV. I. 164. 6).

The characteristic of *Agni* as a cosmic deity is, more than any other god, much closer to Viśvakarman. He is said to have produced heaven and earth\(^4\), and he

\(^1\) RV. X. 54. 3: *yat mātaram ca pitaram ca sākam ajanayamāh tanvah svāyāḥ*

\(^2\) RV. X. 85. 1: *sūryena uttabhitā dyaubh.*

\(^3\) RV. X. 170. 4: *yena imā viśvā bhuvanāni ābhṛtā viśvakarmanā viśvadevyāvatā.*

\(^4\) RV. I. 96. 4: *janiitā rodasyob*, while Sāyaṇa and Wilson interprete it as progenitor of heaven and earth, and Griffith ‘father of heaven and earth’.
supported earth and sky\(^1\); stretched them out\(^2\); kept asunder the two worlds\(^3\). Agni is also called ‘the unborn (\emph{aja}, RV. I. 67. 3) which was once the epithet of Viśvakarman as a creator of world. Agni formed the mundane regions and luminaries of heaven\(^4\). He, being the first priest (\emph{prathamahotā}, RV. VI. 7. 7), made all that flies, walks, stands or moves\(^5\).

The sun deity \emph{Savitṛ} too has great cosmic power. He measures the terrestrial region (V. 81. 3), and is said to bestow immortality on the gods (RV. IV. 54. 2).

Thus, several great gods are praised for their great cosmic power which created the world, even though they randomly indulged in the work of creation. Muir\(^6\) thinks that when the functions of the greater gods, such as, Varuṇa, Indra, Sūrya, Savitṛ and Agni, were enlarged and expanded there was a need for division of work and specialization. In the Vedas they are said to be the later products. However, this general concept of the creator gods appears to be little different from the earlier mentioned deities. Viśvakarman, Prajāpati and Tvaṣṭṛ may be said

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1 RV. I. 67. 3: \emph{kṣāmā dādhār prthivim tastambha.}

2 RV. III. 6. 5: \emph{tava kraitavā rodasi tatantha.}

3 RV. VI. 8. 3: \emph{vi astabhnād rodasimtrito adbhutābh.}

4 RV. VI. 7. 7: \emph{vi yah rajātīni amītā sa kroto vaiśvanāraḥ vi divaḥ rocanā kaviḥ.}

5 RV. X. 88. 4: \emph{svatrem sah patatri ivaram sthāḥ jagat yat jātavedāt.} Sāyaṇa explains \emph{akroṭ} as \emph{ajanayat}. Compare with the verse III. 54. 8 which is ascribed to Viśvakarman.

to be the actual workers of the creation of world, who concentrated purely on the
work of creation, and therefore, who were, so to say, ‘the pure creator gods’. The
great gods like Varuṇa, Indra, Sūrya, Savitṛ and Agni are ‘the symbolic authors of
the world’. This power of creation, sometimes, seems to be stereotypical
compliment to their greatness.

(ii) Brahmā the Creator and Brahmās the highest gods

(1) The meaning of brahmā

It has already been observed that the Vedic creators are varied and many, and by
these various creators the world is created in diverse ways. There is, in the Vedas,
no concept of Brahmā as the Creator, or even of Brahmā the god. ‘The word
brahmā in the RV. meant ‘hymn’, ‘formula’, ‘something that one speaks or chants
in the formula’, and ‘a kind of energy which uses the word to express itself.’ It
can also designate the three Vedas in their totality and as individual texts. In
addition it can designate the philosophical absolute of the Upaniṣads and that
which is possessed by the brāhmaṇa priest, analogous to the kṣatra of the kṣatriya
and the viś of the vaiśya’1. Even in the Brahmānic period during which the term
‘brahmā’ was most popularly used, it was not understood as a Creator god but a
‘(creative) principle’ therefore, it was more philosophical than mythological.

1 Bailey, ‘The mythology of Brahmā, p. 5.
(2) **Date of the god Brahmā**

Brahmā must have been known as a god probably from 8th century BC, since his first appearance is in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, the book which is dated back to 8th century BC. Therein he is referred to along with other deities, and he is simply called a *deva*. In the text, a *deva* Brahmā is clearly distinguished from Prajāpati with whom he usually is identified in later period. In the ŚB, Prajāpati is said to create living beings, and is also identified with Agni. The text X. 1. 3. 1-7 observes as follows:

*Prajāpati created living beings. From the out-(and in) breathings he created the gods, and from the downward breathings the mortal beings; above the (mortal) beings he created Death as their consumer. Now, one half of that Prajāpati was mortal, and the other half immortal; with that part of him which was mortal he was afraid of death; and being afraid of, he became twofold, clay and water, and*

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1 ŚB. X. 1. 3. 8. cf. 5. 2. 2: the verse is in connection with the immortality of Prajāpati. The text is read as: *te vai devāstam nāviduh—yadyenaṃ sarvam vā akurvan—na vā sarvam, yadyati vā arecayan-na vā abhyāpayan. Ta etām rcam apaśyān. 'dhāmacchad aṅgir indro brahmā devo bhṛhaspatih sacetaso viśve devā yajñam prāvantu nah śubha’* (But the gods knew not whether they had made him complete or not; whether they had made him too large, or left him defective. They saw this verse (Vāc. Ś. XVIII. 76). ‘The seat-hiding Agni, Indra, god Brahmā, Bṛhaspati and the wise All-gods may speed our sacrifice unto bliss!')—Eggeling’s translation.

2 Or, fire-altar, 10. 1. 1. 1-2.
entered this (earth). Then the gods decided to make him immortal\(^1\) (Eggeling’s translation).

(3) \textit{brahma}, \textit{Brahmā} and \textit{brahmā}

In context mentioned earlier, and in many other Brahmanā texts, the creator is Prajāpati, and Brahmā is simply a \textit{deva} but clearly not the Creator. In the Brāhmanā texts and in the Upaniṣads, Brahmā is a god only a few times (but not a creator god), at other times the term is meant for a special priest \textit{brahmā} or is used as an impersonal spirit \textit{brahma}. It is because of this that some scholars have remarked that Brahmā is the masculine personification of the term \textit{brahmā} which has appeared extensively in the texts from the RV onwards. And probably this masculine personification is known as a god amongst the religious specialists whose views are so strongly represented in the ritual literature\(^2\). This \textit{brahmā} is the supervisor of the entire sacrifice in the ritual of the later Vedas. He should know all the three Vedas, he rules over the sacrifice with thought, over the priests

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\(^1\) The ŚB 10. 1. 2. 1 also tells us that Prajāpati who was desirous of gaining thses worlds, fashioned fire altar (\textit{agni}), and thereby gained terrestrial world (\textit{loka}), and in the same way he fashioned the great rite (\textit{mahāvrata}) and great litany (\textit{mahādikha}), and thereby he gained air (\textit{antarikṣa}) and sky (\textit{diva}) repectively. Whereas GB I. 1.13 tells that when Prajāpati was alone he wanted to create beings. Hence he practiced penance and created fire. Being afraid of the fire he created milk and ghee so as not to be burnt by it.

\(^2\) Cf. Bailey, op. cit, p. 4.
with words\textsuperscript{1}. Therefore, the common factors of priests are words, knowledge, and vision.

Sacrifice is conceived of as the microcosm (the ritual sphere) and whatever happens in the microcosm is reflected in the macrocosm (the actual world) and whatever happens in the macrocosm is also reflected in the microcosm. Further, the Brāhmaṇa texts tell that the world itself is sacrifice\textsuperscript{2}. Now, this sacrifice is ruled over by the priest called brahmā. And this brahmā priest protects the sacrifice\textsuperscript{3} with silence (AB V. 33). He is also called the physician of the sacrifice\textsuperscript{4} since he performs expiations (prāyaścitis) whenever there is something done in excess or in defect\textsuperscript{5}.

The view that ‘Brahmā is the deification of the brahmā priest in the śrauta sacrifice’ is apparent from the fact that the brahmā priest who oversees the sacrifice which is understood as the minimized world, created the real world with his words, vision and knowledge of the sacrifice. Then, why is the brahmā priest who was merely one member of the chief priests in the sacrifice, viz., the chief priest of Atharvaveda, take over the whole responsibility of creation, and become a Creator finally? The texts\textsuperscript{6} tell that the brahmā priest used to take half of the

\textsuperscript{1} Oldenberg, ‘The Religion of the Veda’, p.218.


\textsuperscript{3} ŚB. I. 7. 4. 18; II. 4. 3. 26 etc.

\textsuperscript{4} AB V. 34; ŚB. XIV. 2. 2. 19.

\textsuperscript{5} ŚaḍB I. 5. 9; cf. Thite, op. cit, p. 206.

\textsuperscript{6} GB. I. 3. 4; AB. V. 34.
dakṣiṇas, for he bears half of the sacrifice. Thus, the brahmā priest alone was supposed to be half the part of the sacrifice and all other priests together formed the other half. At another place, the brahmā priest is conceived as the entire sacrifice (ŚB. VI. 2. 2. 40). Elsewhere it is said that the sacrifice is based on brahmā alone\(^1\). It is also said that the brahmā who knows the Bṛgṇavagirasas (Atharvaveda) is knower of all (samarvid)\(^2\).

(4) Bṛhaspati and Brahmā

Some scholars put forth the theory that Bṛhaspati is the ‘root-god’ of the creator Brahmā, or at least the ‘link-god’ between pure Vedism and rising Brāhmaṇism\(^3\). This god Bṛhaspati, Joshi remarks, has been made up of two main aspects, namely, priestly and warlike\(^4\). His priestly characteristics are variously theorized by the scholars like Roth\(^5\), Oldenberg\(^6\), Muir\(^7\) and many others. Now, Max

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\(^1\) AB VII. 226; KB. VI. 12.

\(^2\) GB. I. 2. 18; cf. Thite, op. cit, pp. 206-7.

\(^3\) Ragozin, ‘Vedic India’, p. 262. Hopkins (‘The Religions of India’, p, 136) too point out that it is from this god (Bṛhaspati) that comes probably the head of the later Trinity, Brahmā, through personified brahma, power, prayer, with philosophical development into the Absolute.

\(^4\) Joshi. ‘Minor Vedic Divinities’. P. 22.

\(^5\) Roth, ‘Brahma und die Brahmanen’, ZDMG, I. P. 73.

\(^6\) Oldenberg, ‘The religion of the Veda’, p. 66-68.

\(^7\) Muir, Original Sanskrit Texts’, Vol. V. p. 272.
Müller, Keith, Macdonell and also Wilson think that Brhaspati represents the form of Agni. Bloomfield considers that the god Brhaspati or Brahmanaspati or the Lord of Prayer presents himself at first as a mere personification of the acts of the poets and priests. The Vedic poets' consciousness is invaded by and impressed with the dignity and charm of their own poetic devotions. In Brhaspati we have a personification of prayer and religious performance both in one (RV. X. 71. 1). Therefore, A Creator God Brahmā who represents the prayer (brahma) and the performer (brahma) of religious act, i.e., sacrifice could easily turn into One Creator, the God Brahmā.

Now, the highest importance is given to sacrifice in the Brāhmaṇic period. As a result, the importance of the priestly class is also increased. The most important deity in the sacrifice is Prajāpati who is often identified with the sacrifice itself. This Prajāpati who is said to create Agni is often identified with Agni. A close connection was established between Agni and Brhaspati in the Vedas through priest craft. Thus, the latter is identified with Agni. In the Brāhmaṇas, the brahma priest represents the god Brhaspati. The theory is now established, thus: Brhaspati is another form of Agni, and Agni is identified with Prajāpati. Hence, the relation and identification of Prajāpati, Agni and Brhaspati is confirmed. Now,

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1 Max Müller, 'Vedic Hymns', SEB 32. p. 94.
2 Keith, 'The Religions and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads', p. 163.
3 Macdonell, Sanskrit literature', p. 102.
4 Wilson, 'RV. Translation'. Vol. 37.
5 Bloomfield, 'The religion of the Veda', p. 243.
Bṛhaspati is said to be the first divine priest who is represented as brahmā priest who is the overruler of the microcosm of sacrifice. Therefore, Bṛhaspati and brahmā priest are easily equated. Then, Bṛhaspati, the other form of Agni, and also the brahmā priest is indirectly identified with Prajāpati who is again identified with the Creator God Brahmā in later times. In this way, the personification of the priest brahmā as the Creator God Brahmā is settled.

Basically the view that the Creator God Brahmā is the personification of the priest brahmā may be agreed upon. But here, an essential question arises as to why, among four chief priests of the rituals, brahmā alone is personified, or in other words, why Bṛhaspati the divine priest is represented as brahmā, viz., the priest of Atharvaveda, and why not the other priests like Hotṛ, Adhvaryu and Udgāṛ, who represent the three main Vedas, are not personified? It may be like this:

When the importance of sacrifice grew, value of Agni who is the other form of divine priest Bṛhaspati, also increased proportionately. So automatically the position of the bringers of the god Agni, i.e., Brṛgus and Aṅgirasas was enhanced. These Brṛgus and Aṅgirasas have the authorship of Atharvaveda, and the chief priest of AV is brahmā. Then, naturally the importance of the brahmā priest of the Atharvaveda might have been highlighted. The root meaning of both brahmā and the divine priest Bṛhaspati are the same. Or, as Joshi remarks that out of admiration for the first purohita, i.e., Bṛhaspati, the Brṛgvaṅgirasas must have made him their mouth-piece for propagating their wishes. Then slowly,

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1 Joshi, ‘Minor Vedic Divinities’, p. 25-27; He further remarks that the ṛks devoted to Bṛhaspati are mainly expressed through the Aṅgirasa priests. ‘Bṛhaspati is praised mainly by
Bhrgvaṅgirasas adopted the idea of priesthood from Brhaspati and, applied it to their Atharvaveda priest brahmā and the roles of this priest brahmā obviously now carried even more weight than previously. He rules over and oversees the sacrifice the microcosm, with his divine figure which he has already acquired by identification with the god Brhaspati. Then, this brahmā slowly changes into the God who rules over and creates the big, actual world, the macrocosm, with the words (prayers) and the knowledge of sacrifice.

(5) Date of the Creator god Brahmā

Here another question surfaces: from when is this Brahmā, the deified brahmā priest, or the personified creative principal brahmā, without debate called the Creator? To this, a direct and bold assumption may be made that it was in the Pāli literature or at least approximately from the time of the Buddha that Brahmā started becoming popular as the Creator God for first time in the Indian mythology. Moreover, it was only in Pāli literature and in that period that Brahmā enjoys the admirable title of the Creator by himself to the exclusion of any other god to share it with. Even though, the title ‘Creator(s) was given to so many gods in the Vedic and also in post-Vedic literature, in the Pāli literature no other god but Brahmā was said to be the Creator. Brahmā, along with Inda (Indra), also enjoys maximum popularity with his frequent appearance in the Pāli canon. This hypothesis, ‘Brahmā, among commoners, was believed to be and was formed to

Anāgirasas priests’ is also pointed out by Shende (‘Brhaspati in the Vedic and the Epic literature’, BDCRI, 8, p. 227).
be the Creator God from the time of the Pāli literature', is based on the negative talks\(^1\) by the Buddha with regard to the Creator God Brahmā.

It is to be noted that Pāli literature does not generally speak of creation of the universe. It deals with the never-ending cycles of destruction and renovation of the universe\(^2\). It does not mention the Creator or the creators of universe in an affirmative way\(^3\). However, the idea of the Creator God Brahmā is scattered in the texts as the reflection of social belief, and the several Brahmās are also referred to, though not as the creators, but as the highest gods. It reflects the popular belief among the inner circle of common people. The Creator God Brahmā was popularly believed in and the people regularly offered him the offerings\(^4\), but among the thinkers, headed by the Buddha and the Mahāvīra, the belief in a supreme personal Creator god is always denied. However, the statement of Coomaraswamy and Horner\(^5\) that ‘Buddhism knows only of the personal God Brahmā and nothing of the Godhood Brahma’ is not borne out by facts. For, negative reference itself suggests that Buddhism surely knows of Godhood Brahmā. Therefore, it cannot be posited that they did not know it but it was a

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\(^1\) Here the word negative is used in two senses, one is in the sense of the negative film which shows the original picture in a reverse way, and the other is in the sense of ‘opposite’, ‘denial’ or ‘contradition’.


\(^3\) Read Brahmjālasutta, Dīg. I. 1, p. 16.

\(^4\) Read the phrase like, \textit{brahmadevassa mātā brāhmaṇī brahmuno āhutim niccam pagganhāti}, Brahmasarī, Sārin. I. 6. 5. p. 167.

\(^5\) Coomaraswamy and Horner, The Living Thoughts of Gotama the Buddha, pp. 25-26.
problem of believing and non-believing of the God Brahmā or the Godhood Brahmā. They further state that this aspect of unknown Godhood Brahmā would have been strange in India of the fifth century BC, in one who had studied under the brāhmaṇa masters, and in scriptural contexts that are so often reminiscent of the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads. An overview of India of the fifth century BC will help to decide the acceptability of the remark. As many scholars agreed that this century was the richest period for various philosophical schools and thoughts and new religions. The thinkers roamed freely, expressed their thoughts openly, the students learned the new thoughts eagerly, discussed and exchanged their thoughts heartily. It might also be the period when the concept of Godhood Brahmā was newly established and accepted widely by the people, or perhaps, it might be about to form. Fifth-sixth BC were just two-three hundred years after the first appearance of Brahmā as the deva in the text (ŚB). It might also be possible that even though Brahmā was called the deva in the eighth BC, his development into the Creator God might be very slow because there was no such religious danger to counteract. But when Brāhmaṇism (or theism) had to face the new strong thoughts, which were opposed to the Vedic and Brāhmaṇic ideas, on the part of the ritualists had to strengthen their base with the constructive use of the god and the gods. It may be like that among the theist brāhmaṇas whose foundation was in the Vedas, trying to convince the masses about the advantage of performing the rituals and believing in the gods. On the other hand, the atheist thinkers like the Buddha preached that these thoughts were worthless. In this way, many old thoughts died away and new thoughts came up. In order to take hold of the people within their circle and to draw more attention from them, thus various efforts would have had to be made both from the side of the existing philosophies and religions, and from the new thoughts and religions as well. Therefore, it is
conjectured that the philosophical concept *brahma* would have turned into the mythological idea, the Creator God Brahmā.

Now, for the common people of India of the fifth century BC, the Upaniṣadīc principle *brahma* must have been difficult to understand. In order to draw them inside their circle, the teachers had to preach them with easier langue. When the teachers explained the principle of *brahma*, i.e., the impersonal Absolute, they would use the term ‘brahmā priest’ to personify and so simplify the abstract and impersonal idea of ‘brahma’. Moreover, Brahmat was already known and called the ‘deva’. Then, this *deva* was easily turned into the Creator, the god Brahmā who created the world and thereby became the master of their class, i.e., *brāhmaṇa* class. In this way, perhaps, the philosophical term the absolute reality or the creative energy ‘*brahma*’ and the priest ‘*brahmā*’ might have turned into the mythological term, the Absolute Creator ‘Brahmā’. “Just as the *brahmā* priest must maintain continuity of the rite, so too must Brahmā ensure continuity of

1 Similar condition was found in Korea of the seventh AD. When Buddhism came to Korea for the first time, it was known only among the high-class people, and due to its difficult terms and philosophy the common people were away from it. At that time, a great monk called Wonhyo realized this and started preaching the people in a different manner. He told the old Korean stories and related them to the Buddhist ones; changed the difficult terms to mythological stories; taught some simple incantation to recite. People started to come inside the circle of Buddhism, and it spread like wild fire. Many other philosophies and religions based on the Chinese and ancient Korean thoughts died away, but the Buddhism was strengthened with the help of the multitudes who were strongly bound by the Buddhist mythology which was mixed with typical Korean Shamanism.
creation until the right time has come for it to end. Thus, with the exception of the idealistic notions of the Upaniṣads, all the meanings of the words brahmā and brahma are to some extent found in the figure of Brahmā 

Buddhism is inclined more to philosophical than mythological explanation. Therefore, the Buddhists denied to existence of a personal creator god, but did not disagree with the philosophical term brahma itself. Thus, the Buddhists use the philosophical term brahma throughout the texts with little changes.

Now, there were the wanderers or the learners or the practitioners or even the spies and the messengers, who learned and listened from one teacher and passed that knowledge over to the other. In this way the teachers of certain thoughts, even though they did not meet each other could be aware of the thoughts of other unknown thinkers, and would exchange and discuses their thoughts. Many Pāli suttas show the evidence of this aspect. The Aggaṅṇasutta\(^2\) tells the problem of two young novices from brāhmaṇa family who were the disciples of renowned teachers. They told the opinion of their previous teachers and asked what the Buddha’s thought of it. Vāseṭṭha, one of the two, says:

*The brāhmaṇa teachers told that the brāhmaṇa caste, is the highest caste, other castes are base... the brāhmaṇas are purified, non-brāhmaṇas are not. The brāhmaṇas are the true children of Brahmā, born from his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā. And you (Buddha) have deserted*

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2 Dīg. III. 4.
the highest class and gone over to the base class of shoveling petty ascetics, servants, dark fellows born of Brahmā’s foot. (Maurice Walshe’s translation)

To this the Buddha answers:

These brāhmaṇas misrepresent Brahmā, tell lies and earn much demerit. He whose faith in the Tathāgata is settled, rooted...can truly say, ‘I am a true son of Blessed Lord, born of his mouth, born of Dhamma, created by Dhamma, an heir of Dhamma. Why is that? This designates the Tathāgata: ‘The Body of Dhamma, that is, ‘The Body of Brahmā, or ‘Become Dhamma’, that is, ‘Become Brahmā’. (Maurice Walshe’s translation)

This kind of thought which is scattered throughout the Pāli texts is, indeed, very important to understand the Buddhist idea about the creation and Brahmā. The sutta shows the Buddhist disbelief of the Creator God Brahmā, but at the same time it reveals the popular preachings of the brāhmaṇa teachers, and the popular belief of A Creator God. More important to know is that though the Buddha is not spoken of as an Almighty god, he only is the omniscience and omnipotence, therefore, in Pāli literature, the Buddha is the spiritual Creator of the world.

1 There are many such suttas which tell the teachings of other teachers, and counter teachings of the Buddha. The disciples usually bring that opinion back to their own teachers. See, Tevijja (Dīg. I. 13), Ambaṭṭha (Dīg. I. 3), Vāsetṭha (SN. III. 9), Subha (Maj. II. 5. 9), Assalāyana sutta etc (Maj. II. 5. 3).
6) Brahmas and Mahabrahmas

In fact, as Joshi remarks, "in the canonical Pali, Brahmá turns into common noun to denote one among the gods belonging to the Brahmá world. Some of them are said to be the Mahabrahmas. The original single concept was transformed into plurality, the original details also became scattered among many". However, as it is remarked that the Creator God Brahmá exists in the discussions, always negatively whereas many numbers of the great Brahmas exist in Pali literature, not as the creator(s) but as mainly the supporters of the Buddha and Buddhism. The Mahabrahmas were the practioners of jhana and attained a certain level of meditation. As a result of that they were born in the Brahmá world and became Mahabrahma. However, the Mahabrahmas were not free from wrong view and could be possessed by Mara. The Buddha went to the Brahmá world and corrected their view. All of them consistently praised the Buddha, requested others to respect the Buddha and the great Elders, i.e., the eminent monks. Thus, a Mahabrahma called Sanañkumara who had great power, and who was supposed to be the supreme among the devas, was satisfied with the gods due to their adhering to the Buddha Dhamma. Sahampati is another Mahabrahma who played an important role in Buddhism. This Mahabrahma rejoiced at the

1 Joshi, 'Mythology in Vedic, Pali and Ardhamagadhi', CASS, no. 6, p. 17.
2 Brahmanimantanikasutta, Maj. I. 5.9.
4 Janavasavasutta, Dig. II. 5.
5 This Mahabrahma, according to Joshi, who also denotes a Brahmá god, is identified with Sanskrit Svayambhú or Swayampati (CASS, no. 6, p. 16).
Enlightenment of the Buddha and when the Buddha was hesitated to preach people, he requested the Buddha to do so. And it is believed by some scholars\footnote{e.g. Joshi, ibid.} that “as Sahampati was the most senior of the Mahābrahmās (jeṭṭha-mahābrāhma), the Buddha thought that if Sahampati requested him, the people would pay more attention to the Dhamma”. This Mahābrahmā tried to keep a bhikkhus at the higher position than the Brahmā himself\footnote{Ghaṭikārasutta, Saṃ. I. 2. 3. 3.}, carried the news of the monks to the Buddha\footnote{Susimāsutta, Saṃ. I. 2. 3. 9.}, praised the Buddha and the monks with the verses\footnote{Nānātithiyasāvakasutta, Saṃ. I. 2. 3. 10.}. In this way the Brahmās, Mahābrahmā appeared at important events, such as, at the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha, and also appeared to the monks whose belief was not firm in the Buddha. In this way the Mahābrahmās provided the turning points in Buddhism throughout. This aspect shows that the Buddhist actively used the mythological references for preaching method not only to the commoners but to the monks as well. In the same way, to the brāhmaṇas and their followers whose ultimate aim was to unite with brahma, the concept was turned into the Ultimate God Brahmā, who became their master. But to the monks and the Buddhists whose final aim is to become a buddha, the concept of brahma was made into the servers and helpers of the Buddha and the great monks who may lead them to become a buddha. Or sometimes, even to achieve the world of Brahmā also was the higher purpose for the common Buddhists. In the Pāli texts, most of the Brahmās are the Buddha’s pupils, and the Buddha had been in
previous births, a Brahmā and Mahābrahmā\(^1\). The Buddha is often addressed by the *brāhmaṇas* as Brahmā\(^2\), but here Brahmā is not the name of the God, but the designation of a true and learned *brāhmaṇa*, and equivalent to *arhat*\(^3\).

Practice for the attainment of the Brahmā world also seems to be very popular. And to be born in the world of Brahmā is regarded as ‘blessing’. The ‘good deed’ is said to lead to the Brahmā world and become one of Brahmās\(^4\). Merely to reach the Brahma-worlds or to have become a Brahmā there is not the final aim; to have become a Brahmā, or even the Mahā Brahma of the aeon, is a tremendous achievement\(^5\). And the Buddha would direct their practice to the Buddhist way. However Sariputta said ‘as these *brahmaṇas*’ hearts are set on the heaven of Brahmā, I would show them the way to union with Brahmā’\(^6\). Thus the layman was to lead such a life so as to win *saga* (heaven), happy rebirth; on the other hand the monk was to live in such a manner so as to win no rebirth\(^7\).

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\(^1\) Metta sutta, Âṅg, II-2-2, 6. 9.

\(^2\) Sundarikabhāradvāja sutta, SN, III. 3; Māgha sutta, SN. III. 5.

\(^3\) Sabhiya sutta, SN, III. 6, no. 518, 519.

\(^4\) Tuda Mahābrahmā achieved the good merits of present life, and that merit lead him on to reborn as a Mahābrahmā (Katamodakatissa sutta, Saṃ. I. 6. 1. 9; Paṭhamakosala sutta, Âṅg. III-2-1, 3. 9).

\(^5\) Coomaraswamy and Horner, ‘The Living Thoughts of Gotama the Buddha’, p. 27

\(^6\) Dhānañjāni sutta, Maj. II. 5. 7.

\(^7\) Cf. Mrs. Rys Davis, Sakya, p. 227
Thus, the Buddha talked about the Creator but his attitude vis-à-vis the Creator is indifferent. He adopts an attitude of agnosticism to the question of a personal Creator. But paradoxically at the same time, Buddhist literature shows the existence of firm belief of A Creator God Brahmā among the brāhmaṇa caste and the common people by the process of discussing the Buddha. The Brahmās often appear in connection with the Buddha, play the significant roles in Buddhism, but they are different personalities from Brahmā the Creator. The Mahābrahmās exist to serve and to help the Buddha and the monks, and also to divert the rigid brāhmaṇas and commoners to Buddhism.

(iii) Brahmā and the Lords of Creation in the Epics

(1) Status of the Creator Brahmā in the Mahābhārata

Enjoying a glorious but doubtful status in Pāli literature, Brahmā made his position firm as the Creator God in the Mbh. though even here he did not enjoy this title purely alone. Brahmā was believed to be the Creator who played a vital role in the work of creation with the help of many assistants. There is one Brahmā the Creator, and there are many other Prajāpatīs, the Lords of creation. As in the Vedas, several deities are told to be the creators in the Mbh. However, only Brahmā who is called the grandfather of the world (lokapitāmaha), is responsible for creating both the devas and the asuras, and all the beings of the world. Also, the responsibility of forming the castes lies clearly on Brahmā only, not on any other deities, not even on Prajāpati(s).
In the Mbh., Brahmā, along with Viṣṇu and Śiva, gains the highest position, the god of gods, the Creator and above all the gods. However, it is also true that he is always subordinate to Viṣṇu and Śiva in the Epics even in the work of creation, thus, Śiva created all the beings\(^1\). In many important events Brahmā asked for a boon from Viṣṇu and Śiva. However in some places he is described as above Śiva too\(^2\). Brahmā is subordinate to Viṣṇu and his incarnation Kṛṣṇa\(^3\). It seems that true feature of Brahmā in the Mbh. is characterized as a shadowy, fatherly, beneficent advisor to the gods\(^4\). Brahmā is rather like Dyaus in the Vedas if only his functions are considered.

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\(^1\) Mbh. XIV. 18. 27; XIV. 21. 14; XIV. 23. 6; XIV. 35. 31. Being asked by Brahmā, Rudra wanted to create living creatures and went into water to do penance. But when he came out from water creatures had already been created by other Prajāpatis, hence, Śiva withdrew his oragn (XII. 201. 12; XII. 210. 4; XII. 211. 9). Śiva is Prajāpati (XII. 122. 51). Prajāpati is Mahādeva, Devadeva, Īśvara (XII. 300. 13; XIII. 17. 57). He can give immortality (X. 17. 7). He is the beginning, the middle and the end of all creatures. This universe acts and moves through his power (Mbh. X. 17, 10-11).

\(^2\) Mbh. XII. 249. 3 XII. 299. 4; XII. 338. 13.

\(^3\) Thus, Mbh. XIII. 7. 25; XIII. 143. 32; not only Prajāpati, but also every deity has come from Kṛṣṇa. Viṣṇu is called the lord of Prajāpati, Viṣṇu himself (or Kṛṣṇa) is Prajāpati; III. 13. 9.and Viṣṇu was the sole Prajāpati at the first creation of the creatures (III. 13. 43) Puruṣa is the highest of all divinities, he is Parameśvara and Brahmā bows down to him (VI. 33. 39; VI. 61; XII. 47.11, 21; XII. 53. 3; XII. 59. 93; XII. 328. 2; XIII. 135. 21). Prajāpati is one god of the world, īśānaḥ prāṇadaḥ prāṇo jyeṣṭhaḥ śreṣṭhaḥ prajāpatiḥ (XIV. 43.12). Kṛṣṇa is compared to Brahmā Prajāpati (V. 76. 7).

(2) *Various uses of the term Prajāpati*

In the Mbh, Prajāpati is used in various senses. It is often used as the adjective of Brahmā as the one and the greatest Creator. Thus, in the Mbh (XIV. 43. 8) it is

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1 On the one hand, it still contains Vedic meaning of Prajāpati, viz, ‘unborn’ and ‘the lord of creatures’, and he is said to create everything that exists, standing and moving, on the other hand it is used more or less as adjective of the deities or the great sages. Not only of the living beings but also of the non-living beings, such as, chariot, assembly hall etc. Many Prajāpatis are referred to in the Mbh. Three deities are called Prajāpati in the story of Kadru and Vinatā (I. 14. 6.27. 3), viz, Brahmā (I. 32. 20), Dakṣa (I. 14. 16), and Kaśapa (I. 17. 16.17; 21; 30). Dakṣa is many times, perhaps, next to Brahmā, called Prajāpati (I. 14. 6; I. 60. 11; I. 70. 7; I. 70. 4). Apart from Brahmā only Dakṣa is also unusually called *pitāmaha* (VI. 64. 5), Dakṣa Prajāpati is also called Viṣṇu (VIII. 24. 45; IX. 34. 45. 66. 72; XII. 200. 19. 22; XII. 201. 7; XII. 274. 18). Kaśapa is called Prajāpati (VI. 7. 19; XII. 323.; XI. 330.24). Tvāṣṭṛ is Prajāpati (V. 9. 3; V. 9). 40. The son of Pitāmaha is Prajāpati (*pitāmaho munirdevah tasya putrah praṭipatih* III. 83. 46-47). As one of the deities enumerated along with Agni, Varuṇa. Hari, Mahādeva and Pitāmaha (III. 83. 65-68; III. 83. 73; III. 87. 14; IV. 38. 40; VIII. 63. 46). Brahmā and his assistance Prajāpatis (XII. 291. 20). Sequence of creation is given, first Brahmā, then Hiraṇyagarbha, next is Prajāpati (XIV. 35. 24). Manu Prajāpati is mentioned (I. 90. 3; XII. 37. 4; XII. 137. 99; XIII. 151. 49). Prajāpati, not as an adjective of other deity but as a single form (I. 114. 42; I. 116. 90; II. 49. 14. III. 129. 1; 33. 1; 181. 11; VI. 25. 10; V. 146. 22; XII. 184. 13; XII. 185. 20; XII. 193. 12; XII. 155.; XII. 84. 15; XII. 122. 43; XII. 326. 79. XIII. 20. 67; XIII. 21. 12.; XIII. 62. 31, 37.; 66. 6; XIV. 42. 35). Prajāpati is a presiding deity of origin of generation (XIII. 43. 10; XIII. 44. 5). He is also the first of all the
said that Agni is the eternal lord of the elements while Brhaspati is of the Brāhmaṇas, Soma is of the herbs, so is Viṣṇu of might. Tvaṣṭi is king of Rudras, and Prajāpati is the lord of all creation. Here, Prajāpati surely means Brahmā as A Creator. Apart from this example, Brahmā Prajāpati is referred to throughout the text thus: I. 1. 30 (he is also Pitāmaha, and Prabhū Ekaḥ Prajāpatīḥ, and identified not only with Prajāpati but also with Ka, Sthāṇu and Manu); I. 32. 20 (also Mahīpati, Bhūtpati, Jagatpati); I. 49. 10 (also Pitāmaha); I. 58. 43 (also Pitāmaha, Bhūmpati, Vibhu, Sarvabhūtanāṃ Īśa); I. 214. 8; III. 160. 13 (Bhūtātmā); III. 185. 2; III. 185. 48; III. 187. 6 (the story of the Fish and Manu, Prajāpati is Brahmā and Viṣṇu, Dhātā, Vidhātā, Sarvabhūtanāṃ Sarīnhartā, and also Indra); III. 220. 8; III. 258. 11 (He is grandfather of demon Rāvaṇa); V. 126. 40, 44 (Parameśṭīn); VI. 13. 24; VIII. 24. 128 (Lokadhātā, Pitāmaha, but inferior god to Śiva); XII. 60. 23; 12. 60. 27; XII. 65. 30 (assigned duties of men given by Brahmā, the creator); XII. 181. 1; XII. 217. 52; XII. 224. 44 etc. XIII. 40. 12; XIII. 83. 24; XIII. 138. 15-17 (Brahmā was not born from an egg, since he is celestials (XIII. 50. 14). Prajāpati is also used in plural (III. 129. 1; XIII. 84. 49). It is used for adjective of heroic beings either Indra (III. 183. 12) or a King (III. 183. 23) is Prajāpati (XII. 92. 5; XII. 122. 17) or one who controls the senses is Prajāpati (XIV. 42. 60) or one who performs sacrifice will become Prajāpati (XIV. 70. 21). The daughter of Hirabyakaśipu called Rohinī, is Prajāpati Fire (III. 211. 18). Soma is Prajāpati (V. 147. 3). Nara is Prajāpati (V. 186. 19). Prajāpati is the father of Dakṣa but created by Brahmā (X. 17. 16). Prajāpati is incarnation of punishment (XII. 121. 40). Prjāpati also means the founder of family (XII. 300. 12). Ahūkāra is Prajāpati (XIV. 41. 2). atmā is Prajāpati (XII. 301. 3). Sanatkumāra is Prajāpati (XII. 336. 37). Gold is foremost of all Prajāpatis (XIII. 84. 79). Agni is Prajāpati (XIII. 85. 54).
unborn (aja) and no one had seen the creation). In XIII. 145. 5. The name Prajāpati indicates without specially mentioning the name of any particular deity but, perhaps, Brahmā; V. 111. 8; Prajāpati (Brahmā) is ultimate power; (VI. 13. 29) Prajāpati, i.e., Brahmā created four castes (X. 3. 18; XII. 260. 21; XII. 288. 3; XII. 330. 29; XIII. 4. 3; XIV. 26. 7) In some places Brahmā and Prajāpati are clearly different deities (I. 60. 16).

‘Brahmā, who is called pitāmaha, is the Creator god’ is undoubtedly the most common belief. However, “of the three gods of the Hindu trimūrti, Brahmā never attained a large following of devotees nor was worshipped as a šakti god in the same way as Viṣṇu and Śiva”¹. It is believed that in the Buddha’s period Brahmā achieved highest popularity, along with Indra, among the people. Their frequent appearance in Pāli literature may prove this. However, after the Buddha’s era their figures have gone down, as the unpopular and nonsensical deities, rapidly, perhaps, owing to these gods’ service to the Buddha as his faithful disciples². Or perhaps, due to the weak effort of Hindus who live still within the period of meditation. One more point may be noted that Brahmā is a creator who has passed away. His duty of creation has been successfully finished like the grandfather of a family because of whom the family lines flourished but who is no more in the world, but exists only in the memory of the offsprings, as we have seen in the case of the great Creator Viśvakarman and the other creator gods in the ṚV. These gods too, in the Epic period, returned to their original nature of making, building etc., when their function of creation of the world was over. In the same way the

¹Bailey, ‘The mythology of Brahmā’, p. 3.
²They are also said to be the servants of Mahāvīra.
colour of the gods, who have epithets like eka, aja, dhatā, pitā, dimmed with the passing of time just like energy of the human mother and father becomes weak after their function of giving birth to the offspring and after bringing them up sufficiently.
2. Viṣṇu—Suggestion regarding Viṣṇu’s aspect of fertility
   with relation to Yin-Yang theory

Viṣṇu, who enjoys supremacy among the Hindu divinities in present days, was not an outstanding deity in the Vedas. His features considerably differ from the Vedas to the later literatures. His personality too, has been much changed with the passage of time and literature. In the RV. only five entire hymns and some stray verses are ascribed to him. Judged by numbers of hymns, he occupies merely a minor and subordinate status among the Vedic pantheon. Therefore, his rising to the highest status in the later period has become one of the most debatable points in the Indian mythology. To this, Dandekar¹ assumes that “there had been some elements in the original nature and personality of Viṣṇu, which, at one time, ensured his position as an all-important god, but that these elements were suppressed, perhaps consciously, by the Vedic poets and priests”. This leads us to the question—what sort of elements of Viṣṇu did the Vedic poets purposely suppress, and why? It is the uncouth and frivolous fertility and phallic nature of Viṣṇu, Dandekar remarks, that leads the Vedic priestly intellectuals to avert from him, and therefore makes them hesitate in legitimately admitting him to the Vedic pantheon². Agreeing to this view basically, one may also try to approach this point, i.e., fertility and phallic nature, from different and diverse angles, and so see other probabilities in the nature of Viṣṇu.

¹ Dandekar, ‘Vedic Mythological Tracts’, p. 69.

² ibid. p. 85-88.
In the Vedas, Viṣṇu is not only less mentioned number-wise, but celebrity-wise also he is pretty indistinct and vague, and his personality too is not very clear. It is no wonder, then, that many and varied are the interpretations related to him regarding his later avatāras, his connection and relation with Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa worship, and his rising to the higher status in the later period. But keeping these interpretations and views aside for the present, even though they are quite noticeable, the present chapter, deals chiefly with the RV., from a different angle, i.e., the point of view of the adjectives and epithets of Viṣṇu. And the result thus brought out from this study, is compared with the Chinese thought, especially with ancient Yin-Yang theory.

Besides the commonly shared characters of the gods of the Vedic pantheon, Viṣṇu’s Vedic characteristics can be condensed mainly into two points¹:

(i) A solar luminary
(ii) A fertility deity

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¹ Dandekar (‘Vedic mythological tracts’, pp. 68-90) pointed out three characteristics of Viṣṇu in the RV. (1) generally accepted as sun-god, (2) the helper of Indra with his ojas. However, Dandekar remarks that the association of Viṣṇu and Indra, in the RV, is clearly superficial and this association is artificially drawn by the Vedic priests as to legitimize Viṣṇu’s entry into the Vedic pantheon. For, he remarks, if religious dignity and recognition had to be specially granted to any particular god it was the practice of the Vedic poets to do so by associating that god with Indra and his fight with Vṛtra. (3) the fertility god whose phallic nature is vaguely seen or hidden.
(i) *Viṣṇu as a solar luminary or a sun deity*

According to the traditional view, Viṣṇu is a sun god. The majority of modern scholars too basically tend to accept the traditional interpretation\(^1\), though they add their own different views. This view is chiefly based on Viṣṇu’s Vedic epithet ‘three strides’ (*tripadān*, R.V. I. 22. 18; 154. 3)\(^2\). In addition to this, the epithets and adjectives like ‘hundred rays’ (*ṣatārc*, R.V. VII. 100. 3), ‘far-shining’ (?) (*vibhūtadyumna*, R.V. I. 56. 1) and ‘mountain dwelling’ (*girikṣīt*, R.V. I. 154. 3) ‘mountain staying’ (*giriṣṭha*, R.V. I. 154. 3), ‘fierce’ (*tigma* AV. XIII. 2. 33), ‘shining’ (*vibhrāja*, AV. XIII. 2. 33), ‘moving by himself’ (*svayāva*, R.V. VIII. 25. 12), ‘speed goer’ (*eṣa*, R.V. II. 34. 11) etc., are the adjectives used for him. And also the comparisons like ‘Viṣṇu is as if the eye in the heaven’ (*dīvīva cakṣu*, R.V.

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\(^1\) e.g., Hopkins (‘The Religions of Inida’, p. 57), Hillebrandt (‘Vedic. Mythology’, p. 201), Keith (‘The Religions and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads’, part I. p. 109).

Apart from the views that Viṣṇu is a sun god, there are also many different opinions with regard to Viṣṇu’s Vedic nature. According to Ghose (‘Aryan Trail in India and Iran’, p. 62) Viṣṇu was the god of grassland nomads. Oldenberg (‘The religion of the Veda’, p. 233) believes that Viṣṇu was a space-god, and Monier Williams (‘Hinduism’, p. 101) thought that Viṣṇu was a form of the ever-moving solar orb etc.

\(^2\) The epithet *trinipadā* or the ‘three strides’, is interpreted variously by scholars. Macdonell (Vedic Mythology’, p. 38) considers it as rising, culminating and setting of the sun, or, as the course of the solar deity through the three divisions of the universe. Hillebrandt (Vedic Mythology’, p. 200) thinks that it denotes the three realms of earth, atmosphere and sky.
I. 23. 20) etc., provide the reason for interpretation of Viṣṇu as a sun deity. But the problem is, do these adjectives clearly denote him as the sun god?

The epithet normally denotes the character and personality of a thing and a being. However, the epithets of Viṣṇu given above girikṣit and others, are quite insufficient for fulfilling the conditions of being a sun god. It may also be disputable that some of these epithets are applied even to Indra and Maruts in the RV, and to Rudra in the VS. The common factors of the sun gods which are found in the Vedas are: having golden or yellow colour (hiranya); far-sighted (urucaksas or mahācaks); killing the diseases (apa amivam) and scattering darkness (bādhase tamāḥ) with their blazing heat (jotiśā); removing sin (vyayotana naḥ arhasah); and expelling evil (apasedhan rakṣasaḥ yātudhānān). Viṣṇu, however, lacks those characteristics. He is not said to be golden-eyed, or golden coloured, and is invoked, in the Vedas, neither for expelling evils nor for purifying the prayers. Could he, then, really be the sun god?

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1 In the RV., Indra (X. 180. 2) and Maruts (VIII. 94. 12) are called giristhā. And in the Śatarudriya hymn, VS. XVI, Rudra is called giristhā, and there Rudra is apparently a mountain deity but not a sun deity. See the discussion in the next chapter for Rudra.

2 Savitṛ, RV. I. 35. 8-10; VI. 71. 1; VII. 45. 2., and Sūrya RV. X. 37. 9.

3 Varuṇa, RV. I. 25. 5-6; VII. 90. 2.

4 Sūrya, RV. X. 37. 1; 4: VII. 35. 8.

5 Āditya, RV. VIII. 18. 10, and Savitṛ, X. 100. 8.

6 Savitṛ, RV. I. 35. 10; VII. 38.7.
(ii) Viṣṇu as a fertility deity

Viṣṇu is considered to be a fertility god. The reason behind considering him as a fertility god is mainly his appellation Śipiviṣṭa and his connection with the goddess Sinīvālī as a consort. Also some of the verses and the adjectives suggestively denote that he is a fertility god. Thus, the epithet ‘a protector of embryos’ (niśiktapa, RV. VII. 36. 9), and the verse ‘may Viṣṇu construct conception’ (viṣṇuryonim kalpayatu, RV. X. 184. 1), ‘(the poet) gains progeny from Viṣṇu’ (avitsi napātam, RV. X. 15. 3), and ‘many young maidens never disregard him’ (vasya pūrvir na mardhantī yuvatayah janitrīḥ, RV. III. 54. 14) etc., connote Viṣṇu’s fertility.

The most veiled and perhaps the oldest appellation of Viṣṇu, i.e., Śipiviṣṭa has been much discussed right from Yaska and the Mbh., upto the modern scholars. But surprisingly the word is used only four times in the RV. (VII. 99. 7; 100. 5-7) as the adjective of Viṣṇu, and once in the VS. in Śatarudriya hymn in praise of Rudra. This appellation might have drawn more attention because Vasiṣṭha who lost his hundred sons, invokes Viṣṇu by this name.

The word śipiviṣṭa appears in Nirukta as: “Śipiviṣṭa and Viṣṇu are two synonyms of Viṣṇu, ‘the former has contemptuous meaning’ says Aupamanyava1”. Further in V. 8 reads, “O Viṣṇu, what is there obscure about yourself, i.e., not worthy of being known, that thou sayest to us, ‘I am denuded like a phallus’, i.e., whose rays

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1 V. 7: śipiviṣṭo viṣṇor iti dve nāmanī bhavataḥ kutsiyārtiḥyārīm pūrvarī bhavati iti aupamanyavaḥ.
are not displayed”1 (Sarup’s translation). Again the Nirukta explains that “rays are here called sipayaḥ, i.e., he is enveloped by them”. Thus, Yaska understands the word sipiviṣṭa as the other form of the rays of the sun.

Mbh. XII. 330. 6, following Nirukta, gives importance to this name and explains it as; ‘the name Śipiviṣṭa means a person who has no hair on his body’2. Hopkins, following the Mbh says, Śipiviṣṭa is of unknown significance, but meaning literally ‘bald’3. Dandekar, with the support of philological explanation4, tried to prove that the name Śipiviṣṭa has the ‘connotation of fertility’. He remarks that “Śipiviṣṭa means the changing phallus; the swelling and diminishing penis. However, this old, connoted meaning of Śipiviṣṭa might have been suppressed intentionally in the Vedic period by the priests”5. Or perhaps, it might have disappeared in the course of time, because “the taboos against speech on matters of sex have grown stronger in the course of centuries and, as a result, a word commonly used in a certain period might be abandoned by the next generation when it acquired a vulgar connotation and, after some time later, its meaning might have been completely forgotten”6. Thus, about the word ‘Śipiviṣṭa’ opinions are varied. It may indicate the other form of Viṣṇu as a sun luminary or it may also designate Viṣṇu as a fertility deity. Keeping this conclusion aside for

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1 V. 8: kiṁ te viśṇo’prakhyātam etadhavatyaprakṛtyāpanīyati yannah prabrūṣe ēperia iva nirvesṭitaḥ asmityapratināpanaraśmiḥ.

2 śipiviṣṭa iti ca ākhyāyām hinaṃ ca yo bhavet.

3 Hopkins, ‘The religion of India’, p. 56.

4 For instance, the word śipt from ēperia (penis), śipḥā (root) from the similar IE word.

5 Dandekar, ‘Vedic mythological tracks’, p. 86.

the time being one may proceed with Viṣṇu’s connection with the goddess Sinīvāli.

Viṣṇu’s partnership with Sinīvāli who is clearly a goddess of fertility offers another reason to conceive of ‘Viṣṇu as a fertility deity’. Sinīvāli is mentioned at one place of the AV. as the wife of Viṣṇu¹. She is traditionally considered as amāvāsyā ‘a new moon’ deity². She is invoked along with Sarasvatī and Aśvins to bless the seeker with an embryo (ṚV. X-184. 2). Along with Prajāpati and Anumati she is again invoked to produce a male child (AV. VI. 11. 3). The gods assigned the skin to Sūryā (daughter of the sun god, viz., Sūrya, according to Griffith), and to Sinīvāli a gudam ‘intestine or an anus’³. In the AV. XIV. 2. 15, the poet prayed to Sinīvāli to help him to bear children (sinīvāli prā jāyatām). Again in the ṚV. II. 32. 6 the singer prayed to Sinīvāli to grant the progeny

¹ AV. 7. 46. 3:

yā vispatindramasi pratīcī sahasrastukābhīyanī devī /

viṣṇoḥ patni tubhyam rātā havirīṇi patim devi rādhase codayasa //

² According to the phases of the moon, i. e., waning and waxing, four days are specially important from the mythological and cultural point of view and over each phase a different deity presides. In Saḍvimsa Brāhmaṇa V. 6. 6 reads, ‘nyūne ca anumatirī vidyāt yasmin drśyeta sā sinīvāli rākā yadi sampārnaḥ candrah tu kuhāḥ na drśyata’. The deity Anumati represents the ‘14th day of the bright half’ (prior to pūrṇamāśī), Rākā is for the full moon day’ (pūrṇamāśī), Sinīvāli is for ‘the 14th day of the dark half’ (prior to amāvāsyā when the moon is seen scantily), and Kuhū is for the following day, that is ‘the 15th day of the dark half’ (amāvāsyā when moon is not seen at all).

³ AV. IX. 4. 14: gudā āsantsinīvālyāḥ sūryā́śātvacamabruvan.
(praśātī didīdhī naḥ). She is a prolific Mother of many sons (suṣūmā bahusūvarī, RV. II. 32. 7). She is a sister of gods (devānām svasā, RV. II. 32. 6). Besides, the nature of Sinīvālī in the Vedas is clearly that of a fertility goddess. She is invoked for prosperity of cattle also. In the AV. she is prayed to to guide the most prized of the beasts homeward². Her physical description given in RV. II. 32. 7 is, ‘having lovely arms (subāhu),’ ‘having lovely fingers (svaṇguri),’ ‘broad-tressed (or hipped, prthuṣṭuka),’ ‘queen of men ‘ (or the wife of all?, viśvapatiṇī)’ etc. Thus, from the description one may know that Sinīvālī is undoubtedly a fertility goddess.

In the post-Vedic literature the relation between Viṣṇu and Sinīvālī as fertility deities, becomes clearer and tightly bound. In Gobhila grhyasūtra, it is said that in Caturthī Karma ‘the performer is enjoined to touch the female organ of his wife, by the right hand followed by recitation of the two ṛks addressed to Viṣṇu and Sinīvālī³’. The Mbh mentions (III. 208. 6) Sinīvālī as the third daughter of Aṅgirasas. Her body was so slender that she was visible at one time and invisible

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¹ This phrase occurs also in AV. 7. 46.
² AV. II. 26.2:

\[ \text{imam gośṭham paśavaḥ sarī śravantu bṛhaspatirā nayatu prajānan /} \]
\[ \text{sinīvālī nayatvāgramesāmājagmuṣo anumate ni yacchā //} \]
³ Gobhila grhyasūtra, with Bhaṭṭanārāyana's commentary, II. V. 9. reads;

dakṣiṇena pāṇinā upastham abhīṃrṣet viṣṇuryonim kalpayatu iti etayā ṛcā garbham dehi sinīvālī iti ca. It is commented further yadā prathamam sambhavet tadā dakṣiṇena pāṇinā upastham guhyam abhīṃrṣet viṣṇuryonim....
at another (drṣyādrṣyeti). Therefore, according to the Mbh. she was likened to the
daughter of Rudra (kapardisutā).

Considering the above points, i.e., the name Śipiviṣṭa and his relationship with
Śiṅväli, Viṣṇu’s nature as fertility god becomes quite clear. Now, apart from
these points one may find the fertility feature of Viṣṇu in more places after a
careful study of adjectives and epithets used in the Vedas.

It is quite apparent but was not very noticed by the scholars, that for most of the
Vedic gods it is their separate bodily aspects that are praised, for Viṣṇu however,
it is his body itself that is particularly emphasized. His bodily movement or his
body itself is much more eulogized than that of the other deities. This is rather
unique in the RV. The adjectives, brhaçcarira, paro mātrayā tanvā vrđhāna are
only once used in the RV and only for Viṣṇu. No god, so far as the RV is
concerned, is praised for his or her body itself. Some part of the body, viz., strong
and broad chest or shoulders, or skillful and helpful hands, golden mouth or lips,
or beautiful eyes are praised in accordance with their personal aspect, e.g., in the
case of the solar deities their eyes and complexion are praised.

The sun god Sūrya is ‘the lord of eyes’ (cakṣusām adhipati, AV. V. 24. 9), and
‘all seeing’ (viśvadrśa, RV. I. 50, 1). The feature of another sun deity Savitṛ is
always connected with gold, he has ‘golden eyes’ (hiraṇyaśa, RV. I. 35. 9),
‘golden-hands’ (hiraṇyapāṇi, RV. I. 35.10), ‘golden-tongue (hiraṇyajihva, RV.
VI. 71, 3), ‘golden-arms (hiraṇyabāhū, RV. VI. 71. 1) and so on. Savitṛ is also
‘broad-handed’ (prthupāṇi, RV. II. 38, 2), ‘iron-jawed’ (ayohanu, RV. VI. 71. 4),
‘yellow-haired’ (harikesa, RV. X. 139. 1). As the eyes and complexion are special
qualities of the sun deities, hair and beard are special to the pastoral god Pūṣan.
He has ‘braided hair’ (*kapardin, RV. VI. 55. 2), and ‘beard’ (*śmaśru, RV. X. 26. 7). The beautiful goddess Uṣas is said to ‘display her bosom (apa ṛṇute vakṣaḥ, RV. I. 92. 4). Aśvins are ‘honey-hued’ (*madhvāvarṇā, RV. VIII. 26. 6), ‘possesses many forms’ (*puruvarpā, RV. I. 117. 9). Varuṇa is ‘having beautiful-hands’ (supāṇi), he is ‘yellow-eyed’ (*piṅgākṣa), ‘fair’ (*śukla) and ‘bald’ (*khalati). Tvaṣṭṛ also is supāṇi. Rudra’s hand is divine which removes injuries having cooling medicine (*hasto yo asti bheṣajo jalāṣaḥ, apabhartā rapasodaivyasya, RV. II. 33. 7). He has ‘soft bellied’ (*ṛḍūḍara), ‘beautiful cheeked’ (*sutipra), and ‘brown coloured’ (*babhru, RV. II. 33. 5). He is ‘braided hair’ (*kapardin, RV. I. 114. 1; 5), ‘having steady limbs’ (*sthirāṅga), and is ‘multi-formed’ (*pururūpa, RV. II. 33. 9). He is ‘thousand-eyed’ (*sahasrākṣa, AV. XI. 2. 7), ‘black-bellied’ (*nilodaram, AV. XV. 1. 7.), ‘red-backed’ (*lohitam prṣtham, AV. XV. 1. 8), and he is ‘blue-tufted’ (*nīlaśikhaṇḍa, AV. XI. 2. 7; II. 27. 6).

The parts of the body of the deities are thus described matching with their qualities. But no deity is praised for his or her body itself. Even in the case of Indra, the hero of war, though supposed to use his body to the maximum, praise of his body itself is not found. Sometimes the word ‘body’ is used but it is not for praising his body but simply for eulogizing his whole character. In RV. II. 16. 2. reads as:

\[ \text{yasmādindrād bhṛataḥ kiṇi canemṛte viśvānyasmintsambhṛtādhi viryā} / \]
\[ \text{jāthare soman tanvī saho maho haste vajram bharati śīrṣaṇi kratum} // \]

*Without whom naught exists, Indra the Lofty One; in whom alone all powers heroic are combined, the Soma is within him, in his frame vast strength, the thunder in his hand and wisdom in his head.* (Griffith’s translation)
His jaws and beard are agitated when he is exhilarated or puts himself in motion. In Indra’s case, rather than his bodily description his weapons are often described and praised, e.g., vajra is said to be four-angled (caturaśri, RV. IV. 22. 2), and thousand-pointed (sahasrabhrṣṭi, RV. I. 80. 12), and his ‘arrow’ (iṣṭu) is described as having thousand feathers and hundred barbs (śatabaghna iṣustava sahasraparna, RV. VIII. 66. 7; 11) etc.

As observed in the above examples, the outstanding characteristics of the gods are picturesquely depicted in their epithets. And their representative features are also shown through them.

Some of the following adjectives and description about Viṣṇu are mentioned earlier. Now, one may observe them from the point of view of his body. Viṣṇu is said to be brhaçcharira. And his body is ‘growing beyond measurement’ (paro mātrayā tanvā vrddhāna). His movement is ‘like a ferocious animal whose gait is uncontrollable’ (mrgo na bhīmaḥ kucaraḥ, RV. I. 154. 2). He is growing (vardhayanta, RV. VII. 99. 6). He is ‘a giver of noble birth’ (or himself has noble birth, sūjanimā RV. VII. 100. 4), ‘the guardian of progeny’ (niṣiktapā, RV. VII. 36. 9), ‘moving by himself’ (svayāva, RV. VIII. 25. 12). He is a ‘wide striding bull’ (urūgāya vrṣṇi RV. I. 154. 4), urūgāya (RV. I. 154. 1; 3) or urūkrama (RV. 154. 5). He is fierce (tiṃga, AV. XIII. 2. 33) and shining (vibhrāj, AV. XIII.

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1 RV. II. 11. 17; X. 23: pradodhuvat ṣmaśrusu priṅāno yāhi haribhyām sutasya pītim

2 This phrase is also used in the hymn for Indra (RV. X. 180. 2), and for Rudra (RV. II. 33.

11) without using the word kucara.
2. 33) and a speedy mover (esa, RV. II. 34. 11). He is ‘a youth not a boy’ (yuvā akumāra, RV. I. 155. 6). He is girīṣṭhā, giriksita etc.

There are some adjectives and description mentioned above, e.g., brhaccharira, paro mātrayā tanvā vṛdhāna, niśiktapā and sūjanimā etc., in which Viṣṇu’s ‘body’ and its unusual movement are noticed. Majority of them, directly and indirectly, show that Viṣṇu is a fertility deity. A question may arise with reference to this statement how from the words like brhaccharira and tanvā vṛdhāna etc., can one draw the conclusion of Viṣṇu’s fertility? Here, one may have to take note that in many languages, cultures and societies either ancient or modern, the male and female organ is expressed not in a direct way but in an indicative way. The words such as ‘that’ or ‘thing’ or ‘it’ even ‘tool’, ‘peg’ and ‘body’ are practically used for male and female organs among the people. Especially in literature rather than the word ‘sexual-intercourse’ sentences such as ‘the bodies are exchanged’ ‘she gives her body’ or ‘the growing of the body’ etc., also the euphemistic words are more often used. At the time of the Rgvedic period when refined priestly language was more respected than uncouth ordinary words, perhaps, the social acceptance of language might have been the same. Then it is not difficult to draw a conjecture that in religious literature the word phallus or penis cannot openly be mentioned. Instead using the commonly practiced word ‘the body’ could have felt more comfortable as well as acceptable.

There are also found some adjectives and epithets, e.g., svayāva, yuvā akumāra etc., in which Viṣṇu can be interpreted both as a sun god and as a fertility god. In a single adjective one can observe the two qualities of Viṣṇu. In other words, by these epithets one cannot easily decide whether Viṣṇu is a sun god or a fertility god. These adjectives do not directly say that he is of a certain character. He may
be a sun god or a fertility god, again he can be said neither to be totally a sun god
nor is e wholly a fertility god. Another very interesting example can be given
from the RV. VII. 99. 3 in this connection where both ‘rays of sun’ and ‘the
phallus’ are possibly implied.

irāvatī dhenumatī hi bhūtaṃ sūyavasini manuše dasasyā /
vyaśtabhnā rodasi viṣṇavete dādhartha prthivīmahito mayūkhaiḥ //

Rich in sweet food be ye, and rich in middle kine with fertile pastures, fain to do
men service. Both these worlds, Viṣṇu, hast you stayed asunder, and firmly fixed
the earth with pegs around it. (Griffith's translation)

In the last hemistich of the above verse the words prthivī and mayūkha may have
to be taken a look at. It is a general belief that the body of a human being is equal
to the small universe, and the happenings of universe are often compared to those
of the human body. In the same way, (the body) of a man is believed to represent
the sky that gives light and life to the earth; and that of a woman is usually
denoted to be the earth especially in their productiveness, absorbing the light from
the sky. There is a reference in the Mbh XII. 109. 22 that prthivī is mātr. Prthivī
gives birth to all creatures and woman partakes of her nature. The ‘earth’ in the
above verse, therefore, can easily be perceived both as the earth itself and as a
woman. Consequently the word mayūkha which is used in connection with the
word prthivī can be used denote both the rays of the light and the phallus of a
man. In the same way his epithet yuvā akumāra also can be interpreted as both

1 Mbh. XII. 183. 15: prthivī sarvabharātanām janitri tadvidyāh striyaḥ.
the sun god and fertility deity. He is, as the sunrays, always young but never too young. He is a youth but no more a (chaste) youth\(^1\).

In this way Viṣṇu can be conceived of as a fertility god as well as a sun god, and at the same time, as it is noticed, he is not merely a fertility god or a sun god. To totally be a sun god Viṣṇu lacks some qualities, viz., having golden colour etc., mentioned earlier. Again, to fulfill the condition of a fertility god his, so called, fertility qualities such as Śipiviṣṭa etc., are very much obscure and only suggested. Thus, Viṣṇu is a deity whose characteristics are difficult to put in one category. Perhaps, to the Vedic people he could have been a being or a deity who cannot easily be explained by one concrete theory or concept. So the Vedas leave him vague as he is seen, vague but positive and active as well. He is not directly said to be rich in seeds nor does he enrich the earth with his generative power, nor is he called, like those who are said to be the fertility deities, Father. The rain god Parjanya impregnates everything (RV. VII. 101. 6), and is several times called ‘Father’\(^2\). Dyaus, even though it is not because of his fertility character, but due to his nature of covering the entire universe, is rich in seed (sūretāḥ) and is honoured as Father\(^3\). However, in the case of Viṣṇu more than parenthood his personal organ itself seems to be considered more important.

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\(^1\) cf, Fiśer, ‘Indian erotics’, p. 49.

\(^2\) RV. VII-101. 3; IX-82. 3; AV. IV-15. 12; XII-1. 12.

\(^3\) In a few passages Dyaus is called a bull (RV. V. 36. 5) that bellows (RV. V. 58. 6) as he is conceived as a roaring animal that fertilizes the earth, cf, Macdonell, ‘Vedic Mythology’. p. 22). Dyaus being the bull fertilizing the earth (Prthivī) in the manner commonly adopted by male and female deities in the ancient East (Joshi, ‘Some minor divinities’, pp. 110-111)
Again, Viṣṇu cannot be considered to be a perfect and concrete sun god due to many reasons. First of all, to the Indian mind it is very hard to accept a fact that the sun deity can, at the same time, bear the fertility nature. For, in India, it is always the rain that is praised for fertility but not the sun. It means it is very difficult that Viṣṇu can be a sun god and a fertility god at the same time. But as we observe it cannot be denied that Viṣṇu is a sun god as well as a fertility god though it is not explicit. Now, leaving the matter aside for a while, it will be worthwhile to observe with what things, in the Vedas, Viṣṇu is compared with.

He is compared generally with something which is of moving and shining nature, for instance, he is, as mentioned before, mṛgā na bhīmaḥ kucarḥ, and he is like arvataḥ ‘a speedy steed (RV. I. 155. 1)’, and he is one minded with Maruts, the winds (RV. V. 87. 8), and the Maruts are again referred to as his swift band (RV. VIII. 20. 3). He is vibhrāḥ, evayāḥ, eṣāḥ, svayāḥ... Again, many of his epithets are ‘big or wide’ viz. bhṛccharīrāḥ, bhṛṅkṣayāḥ, bhṛṅtopakramaḥ, uṛgāya, uṛukrama, uṛukramaḥ kakuḥaḥ, etc.

Through the adjectives and epithets of Viṣṇu one can observe that his chief traits are vast and wide, and further all pervading. In addition to those traits he again is connected with something growing, shining and moving. However, as it is already discussed that, even though he is thus all pervading, shining and moving, he does

Dyaus is again said to be a prolific bull, and Prthvi a variegated cow (RV. I. 169. 3), both rich in seed (VI. 70. 1. 2).
not seem to have the figure of a typical sun god. At the same, even though he is being asked to bestow sons, he does not seem to be merely a fertility god.

(iii) Viṣṇu and Yin Yang Theory

If thus Viṣṇu is not entirely the sun god or perfectly the fertility deity, what then could his real nature be? Here, it would be interesting to apply another theory borrowed from another part of the world, without assuming that one culture influences another. For it is believed that the mind and the eye that observe and think certain phenomena are not very different throughout the times and the regions. Due to this reason, even assuming that there is no exchange of thoughts between the regions, it is possible that similar cultures and thoughts flourish coincidently.

The Chinese theory Yin-Yang deals with the male and female principles. According to that, these two complementary forces, or principles, compose all aspects and phenomena of the universe. Yin is conceived of as moon, earth, female, dark, passive and absorbing; Yang is conceived of as sun, heaven, male, light, active and penetrating. Again that which is exposed is Yang and that which is hidden is Yin. The two are said to proceed from the Supreme Ultimate (or the Great Universal Energy, T'ai Chi). In harmony, the two are depicted as the light and dark halves of a circle\(^1\). In Chinese philosophy it is said that one must make

use of the regularities of the Yin and the Yang, and comply with the regularities of Heaven and Earth; be soft yet not yielding, strong yet not hard...

Now, this leads us to a valid question: might all these Viśṇu's complicated and mixed personalities, i.e., either the trait of a sun-god or of a fertility deity or of a sacrificial god, indicate that he could have been a Spirit or a stream of energy like Yang that prevailed through the entire universe? Is it possible that Viśṇu denotes the Yang characterized divine being while the goddess Sinīvālī the Yin? Viśṇu is light while Sinīvālī is darkness. Viśṇu is said to be a sun deity while Sinīvālī is a moon deity. Viśṇu is actively moving (or moving without particular rules? kucara), penetrating (mayūkha), and exposed (as his nature is shining brightly). Sinīvālī is perceived as passive, absorbing and hidden (as she is invisible moon). Viśṇu is vast (like the sky). Sinīvālī is productive (like the earth). Viśṇu appears to be a phallic deity or even perhaps, phallus itself (as his appellation Śipaviṣṭa suggests). Sinīvālī is known as a goddess of bestowing anus (or intestine, gudam). Viśṇu's abode is in the highest heaven (or the supreme Ultimate, paramam padam), (However, reference to the abode of Sinīvālī was not found). In this way many aspects of Viśṇu match with those of Yang, and many qualities of Sinīvālī can be compared with Yin characters. Therefore, it may be suggested that Viśṇu and Sinīvālī together, in the Vedic times, were considered to be bright and dark stream of energy like Yin Yang, though they have different names.

1 Yu'eh Yu, II. 1.
2 RV. I. 23. 21.
However, in Pāli literature no Vedic characteristics of Viṣṇu are retained. He is neither a sun god nor a fertility deity, and he cannot be compared to the Yin-Yang theory. He is called Veṇḍu or Veṇḍu or simply a devaputta. In one sutta\(^1\) devaputta Veṇḍu visited the Buddha and expressed his envy of human beings who can attend the discourse of the Buddha. He was also present at the preaching of the Mahāsamaya sutta\(^2\), but no special quality of Viṣṇu is mentioned. Compared the Epics and the Vedas, Viṣṇu’s role in Pāli literature is by far minor. But considering Pāli literature where most of the deities are totally ignored, Viṣṇu’s position is not very low.

Viṣṇu is the most prominent god in the Epics especially in the Mbh. He is considered as the most influential even among the members of the Hindu triad. He and his incarnations are predominant throughout this book. The Mbh. starts with the prayer to Nara and Narayāṇa, another name of Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa (or Viṣṇu). According to the Vaishṇavas, there is only one god and he is Viṣṇu. He takes the designation of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva, accordingly as he creates, preserves and destroys. Like the Vedas, in the Epics too, Viṣṇu is a god whose characteristics are difficult to perceive. He is believed to be the combination of Vasudeva-Kṛṣṇa (the man god) and the Cosmic god Nārāyaṇa\(^3\). Many of Viṣṇu’s acts are transferred from Brahmā, e.g., he is often called a creator. Viṣṇu is still called the son of Aditi, but there is no trace of his being a sun-god or a fertility god, in the Mbh. Viṣṇu cannot be even considered as the Yang energy since his power as All-

\(^1\) Veṇḍu sutta, Anāthapiṇḍika vagga, Saṁ (I. 2. 2. 2).

\(^2\) Dig. II. 7.

\(^3\) Gupta, ‘Viṣṇu and his incarnations’, p.10.
God (*viśvam*) is too emphasized. But at one point in the *Mbh.*, one may compare Viṣṇu to Yang or the Streams of Energy. The *Mbh.* III. 98 tells a story of the battle between Indra and Vṛtra, and the procedure of making Vajra, and further Indra’s triumph over Vṛtra. At the commencement of the battle, when Indra and the gods flee from the battle, Vṛtra grows in size. Then, the scared Indra went to Viṣṇu who bestows his Energy (*tejas*) upon Indra. The other gods and the sages do the same thing, i.e., they place their energy upon Indra. Here, the mighty streams of energy of Viṣṇu may be compared to the *ojas* of Vedic Viṣṇu who with it helps Indra. Or perhaps, it can be compared to the bright stream of universal energy, i.e., Yang.
3. Śiva (Rudra)- and The Korean Mountain Gods

(i) General remarks

The name Śiva seems to be unknown to Vedic, Brahmanic, and even old Buddhistic literature. In the RV. the word śiva, is employed exclusively as an adjective, and, only in one passage, i.e., RV. X. 92. 9, as an epithet of Rudra1. However, in the post-Vedic literature, Śiva and Rudra are generally believed to be one and the same god. This fact will be clearly understood when one compares the characteristics of Śiva in the post-Vedic literature with those of Rudra in the Śatarudriya hymn of the YV. XVI.

A mention should be made here that the present chapter does not attempt to research the vast-ranging personality of Śiva (or Rudra) as a whole. This has already been tackled by many scholars. Nor does this study aims at proving the identification of Vedic Rudra and post-Vedic Śiva. However, it should also be mentioned that this discussion is based on the theory that Śiva is the same as Vedic Rudra and the three headed-deity who was found in the Indus Valley. This chapter confines itself to one particular aspect, i.e., Rudra (or sometimes Śiva) as a general mountain or forest jungle deity. This aspect of Rudra or Śiva as a mountain deity will also be compared with the concepts and legends of Korea relating to Mountain gods.

1 Cf, Dandekar, Ṛudra in the Veda, Vedic Mythological Tracks, p. 258.
(ii) The deity of Harappa - Mohenjodaro

It is known that the concept of Śiva is not built up by the Vedic faith and tradition alone. The most important figure, in this regards, is undoubtedly the nude deity who was found in the Harappa-Mohenjodaro civilization and who is believed to be a prototype of Śiva. This deity is seated on a stool, with legs crossed in the fashion of a yogi, with his heels pressed closely together and with penis erect. He is surrounded by an elephant, a tiger, a rhinoceros and a buffalo, while two antelopes are seen under his seat. He wears a large number of bangles on each arm and a pectoral round the neck, and a fan-shaped head-dress rises between his horns. The head-dress of this god is supposed to have been made of two horns and the fan-like thing protruding in the middle of those horns. Dandekar has equated this deity of Indus Valley with the post-Vedic Śiva and also with Vedic Rudra. It has been suggested that this three-pronged headgear later "took the

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1 Dandekar, ‘Some aspect of the History of Hinduism’, pp. 3-4, and also Majumdar, India’, p. 25.

2 Dandekar (Vedic Mythological Tracts, pp. 207-210) has variously asserted identifying Vedic Rudra with post-Vedic Śiva and a deity of the Indus Valley. The three deities are identified:

(1) With their connection of yoga. The Indus Valley deity sits in a yogic posture, Rudra is said to be the leader of munis (RV. X. 136. 7), of vrātyas (AV. XV. 1. 4) and perhaps, of brahmacārin (AV. XI. 1.5) who appear to follow the different religious practice, i.e., yoga, austerities and renunciation etc, and post-Vedic Śiva is undisputedly a deity of yoga. (2) The phallus of the figure on the Indus Valley seal represents that he is a fertility deity, and it is indirectly indicated through vrātyas (due to their adjective bhacchepa), and is passed on to the livgam of Śiva. (3) The three heads of the Indus deity is indicated in the Rudras epithet

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form of the triśūla or trident, and, in that guise, continued to be a special attribute of Śiva.

\[\text{trayambaka, and the three-headed post-Vedic Śiva.}\]

\[\text{(4) Indus Valley deity who is surrounded by various animals can be equated with both Vedic Rudra and post-Vedic Śiva called Paśipati, i.e., the lord of the animals. Thus, Dandekar has remarked that, an almost unbroken continuity is established from the proto-Indian Śiva to the epic Śiva-the Vedic Rudra being, as it was, an offshoot in the direct line of development but, at the same time, representing a significant intermediate stage.}\]

\[\text{1 However, some scholars do not agree with this hypothesis that this three-headed deity is a proto-Śiva. Joseph Campbell points out that Śiva is not the only great figure of later Indian myth suggested by this form; for the two gazelles before the dais are posed as in the classic imagery of the Buddha preaching his first sermon in the Deer Park of Benares. The form of the head piece furthermore is familiar in the Buddhist art as symbolic of the 'Three Jewels: the Buddha, the Law and the Order' (The Masks of God: Oriental Mythology, p. 169). And Sullivan (A re-examination of the religion of the Indus Civilization) remarks that identification of this Harappan ithyphallic male deity with Rudra is not correct but those seals depict a female deity. Shubhangana Atre (The Archetypal Mother, p. 17) also points out that J. Marshall, the pioneer of interpretation of Harappan seals, unnecessarily tried to stretch the comparison with a cult like the Saktism of a much later period though there is no apparent link between them. For, Harappan civilization itself was proved to be an isolated phenomenon from the mainstream of the cultural history of peninsular India. Various cults within the latter-day Hinduism were developed almost two thousand years later and in areas quite far from the main locus of the Harappan civilization.}\]
(iii) Mountain deities of Korea and deity of Harappa - Mohenjodaro

It may be now interesting, to compare this Indus Valley deity who has clear mark of paśupati and also āraṇyapati or giripati, with the figure of the Korean mountain deities, before we proceed to compare Vedic Rudra (or post-Vedic Śiva at times) with Korean mountain gods.

Korea is an exceptional country where the mountains and their deities are commonly worshipped, knowingly and unknowingly, even in the present days. Almost every mountain of Korea, small and big, has mountain gods or goddesses. Mountain climbers, one after the other pile up stones and make a tower here and there in the mountains in worship of the gods. At the entrance of the village or at the foot of the mountains mountain-god-shrines are often seen. In some places Korean groups and the individuals still perform rituals for the mountain deities. The shamans light the candles in the mountains and pray to the mountain gods overnight. As an acknowledgement and consequence of this common belief, almost all Buddhist temples and the monasteries have shrines for mountain gods, and they have smoothly entered into Buddhism as members of the Buddhist protector-gods. In some pictures of Buddhist temples, peculiarly, Skanda, who is known as the son of Śiva in the Epics is depicted. In the classical literatures, he is depicted in the picture of Korean temples as the leader of groups of the mountain gods who protect the Buddha and Buddhism. Many great historical heroes of Korea, such as, Dangun, the originator of Korea, and the founder Yi Seongkye, of the Yi dynasty etc., are turned into mountain gods and worshipped by people. Thus, the mountains and the mountain gods are considered very important in the life of Koreans, and this may be the same for the regions where the mountains are the basic providers of livelihood of people.
The erected penis of the Harappan deity clearly indicates his fertility. The Korean mountain deities are surrounded and served by young attendants who hold and serve peaches\(^1\) which are the symbol of fertility and of a long healthy life. As the Harappan deity is sitting in a yogic posture, many Korean mountain deities are sitting crossed legged in the posture of meditation. The Harappan deity is surrounded by various animals, while the Korean mountain deities are surrounded mainly by the tiger(s) and the birds, and rarely by antelopes and bulls. Their figure riding on tiger’s back is also not rare. The Harappan deity wears a fan-shaped headdress, the Korean mountain gods too wears a crown like head dress usually holding a fan and a crooked long stick in one hand, and the health-substances like ginseng or an elixir in the other hand. The former is three headed and nude, however, no deity in Korea is ever multi-headed or nude but rarely may expose their belly. Thus, comparing the Harappan deity with clear indications of the Korean mountain deities it is noticed that they have many similarities and common features. Therefore, we may assume that this Harappan deity, i.e., proto-Śiva, is a forest or a mountain deity at least to some extent.

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\(^1\) The peaches and young attendants are traditionly believed to give long life and health in both China and Korea. Especially the peaches are considered to be brought to earth from the heavenly garden. A famous mythical monkey called Sun-wo-kong (he is mentioned in the book called Si-you-ji, and may be the Chinese analogue of Hanuman) was punished for thousands of years for stealing peaches from the garden of heaven.
(iv) Vedic Rudra

Now, we will observe some traits of Vedic Rudra. Dandekar\(^1\) have remarked that unlike the general Vedic pantheon whose characteristics are pale and colourless, Vedic Rudra possesses a distinct individuality of his own, which clearly bears the stamp of concreteness. He is not a stereotyped or conventionalized mythical figure. He is not at all conceived of as an ethical beings either as an exclusively benevolent god or as an exclusively malevolent demon. Rudra is a mysterious being with two contradictory sets of attributes. He is Rudra and Śiva, Ugra and Śambhu, Bhīma and Śaṅkara, Hānṭr and Mayaskara, Hanīyas and Śīvatara\(^2\).

Rudra's connection with Maruts as their father and the sons in the Vedas\(^3\) leads many scholars to consider him to be a storm god\(^4\). For Dandekar\(^5\), Rudra is the god of lightening. Griswold\(^6\) believed that Rudra is not the storm pure and simple, but rather its baleful side in the destructive agency of lightening. Monier Williams thinks that Rudra is a destroying god. He also links Rudra with Vāyu and Maruts, who intimately associate with Indra, and are really only forms and modifications

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\(^1\) Vedic Mythological Tracks, p. 200-202.

\(^2\) S. Bhattacharji. op. cit. p. 95.

\(^3\) RV I. 64. 2; 16. 12, 5; 42. 15; 85. 1; VI. 66. 3, 11; VII. 56. 1.

\(^4\) Whitney, JAOS, III. 318ff, Hopkins, JAOS, 16, cl-clii, Macdonell, VM. P. 76ff.

\(^5\) Dandekar, VMT, p. 216.

\(^6\) Griswold, op. cit. p. 205.
of that god\textsuperscript{1}. Roman traveler historian Arrian mistook Śiva for Dionysus whose cult also included similar merrymaking and frenzied dancing\textsuperscript{2}. Keith too considers him as the Indian Dionysus\textsuperscript{3}. Gadkari\textsuperscript{4} believes that originally Rudra was the god of some non-Aryan tribes, who were able to put up a stiff resistance to the Aryans and harass them. This scholar thinks that in the process of social assimilation between Aryans and non-Aryans, Rudra appears to have been accepted as a god of the assimilated tribes. Macdonell wrote, ‘Rudra’s uncanny and baleful traits have, however, been explained as starting from the conception of a deity of mountain and forest whence storm and disease attack man and beast’\textsuperscript{5}. Oldenberg extensively remarks that Rudra is a Mountain God or ‘Old Man of the Mountain’. Bhattacharji points out that a non-Aryan mountain deity, who obviously had associations with storm, cloud, and rain has lent some of his characteristics to Rudra\textsuperscript{6}. Weber regards Rudra, in the Vedas, as an ancient fertility god, with his orgiastic cults of sex and meat, and who has a diabolical character\textsuperscript{7}. Thus, the scholars have different and diverse views with regard to this colourful deity Rudra.

\textsuperscript{1} Monier Williams, Brahmanism & Hinduism—religious thought and life in India, p, 9.

\textsuperscript{2} Sukumari Bhattacharji, Myths, p. 86.


\textsuperscript{4} Jayant Gadkari, Society and religion, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{5} Macdonell, Encl. of. Region and Ethics.

\textsuperscript{6} Bhattacharji. ‘Myths’. p. 95.

\textsuperscript{7} Weber, The Religion of India, p. 138.
(v) **Traits of Rudra as a mountain deity**

Oldenberg firmly believes that firmer and deeper than the relation of Rudra to wind and weather, is the one which connects him with mountains and forests. Though he is described as the one who resides at all places. The mountains, woods and trees, at least in the later Vedic texts, are his favourite resting places. He remarks that the reference ‘Rudra should be given the offering in the northern regions’ shows that Rudra’s house is in the north which is separated from the east, where there is the kingdom of the gods. To the north of the Vedic land lie the Himālayan mountain-ranges, with which Rudra is, with great propriety,

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1 Oldenberg, ‘The religion of the Vedas’, p. 110-113. Hillebrandt remarks that in one passage of AV. Rudra is actually referred to as the Prince of Mountains while Oldenberg calls him ‘the Old Man of the Mountains’. Macdonell (JRAS. 1985. 956) calls him ‘Mars Silvanus’, and Mannhardt (Wald-und Feldkulte, I. 14. 22ff) compares Rudra with Fauni and Silvani, woodmen and wild people of European types. In later times, Rudra-Śiva is actually called Mallayā. This word is to be connected with the Dravidian word, *male* which means mountain (Dandeekar, op. cit. p. 230). In the Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā (I. 10. 20), the mountain is specially said to be the abode of Rudra (girir vai rudrasya yonih). He lives among the mountains with his wife Rudrāṇi. Besides this Rudra is often called *giriśanta, giritra*, and *giriśa* etc (TS. IV. 5. 1), and also *vananām pati, vrksānām pati, and aranyānām pati* etc.

The RV mentions the other minor mountain deities Parvata and Aranyāṇi. Parvata ‘he of the mountain’ is trice conjoined with Indra to form the dual divinity (I. 122. 3; 132. 6; III. 53. 1). They are invoked as ‘van fighters’. Aranyāṇi is ‘she of the wild-wood’ a jungle goddess (RV. X. 146). She is harmless unless one becomes too intimate with her gloomy recesses or encounters her children the wild beasts.
associated. And therefore, Rudra has very often the name ‘Mountain dweller’, ‘Mountain Wanderer’, or ‘Protector of mountains’. The mountain is also invoked besides the other numerous names of Rudra in a sacrifice for the preservation of the cattle. The YV hymn XVI fully supports the theory of Oldenberg, i.e., Rudra is a mountain god. There, Rudra is called a mountain haunter (giriśanta, vs. 2; 3, giricara, XVI. 22), mountain lord (giritra, vs. 3), and dweller on the mountain (giriśābda, vs. 4) etc. He is also called the first divine physician (prathamo daivyop bhīṣak, vs. 5), and a healer (bheṣaji, vs. 49), hence he is prayed to for a healthy life (ayakṣma, vs. 4). He is the lord of the forest (vanapati, vs. 18). He crushes all the serpents and drives away all yātudhānis. He is golden-armed leader of hosts (hiranyabāhusenaṇipati, vs. 17), lord of trees (vrkṣapati, vs. 17), is golden-haired (harikesa, vs. 17), and at the same he is also disheveled haired (vyuptakeśa) and lord of beasts (paśupati, vs. 17). Sometimes Rudra is said to be old and poor, at other times he is also praised as an auspicious god bringing blessings. He is invoked for long life, growth and healing. He looks over food, fields, forests, trees, herbs, animals and paths. In the Epics, Rudra is quite frequently mentioned to be as engaged in deep meditation (Mbh. III. 33. 46-7; III. 82. 119-123).

It may be noted here that these kinds of characteristics of Rudra, which are shown above, are the very typical of the mountain god(s). This figure of Rudra resembles very much the mountain gods of Korea in some respects, while it also differs from

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1 Cf, Dandekar, Vedic Mythological Tracks, p. 229.
2 XVI. 5: ahiṁśa sarvāṇāmbhayantasarvāśca yātudhāmyo ‘dharmicḥ parāsuva /
them in other respects. This feature has come down to as one part of the Epic Šiva.

The figure of Vedic Rudra is very much gruesome and destructive. Rudra is particularly described as: a fierce god (RV. II. 33. 9; 11; X. 126. 5), destructive like a terrible beast (RV. II. 33. 11). Rudra also becomes a slayer of man and cow (RV. I. 114. 10) when he is not properly treated. This fierce and beast like nature of Vedic Rudra is an in extension of the fierce nature of the mountain gods, and this quality is further handed down to the Epics and merges in Šiva’s personality, at least in some parts. Thus, in the Mbh Sātyaki’s fierce fighting and slaughter are compared to the slaughter of the animals by Šiva (VII. 111. 9).

Rudra’s wrath is generally due to the non-worshippers or due to non-admitting of his greatness. The account of destruction of Dakṣa’s sacrifice, which is narrated three times in the Mbh⁰ shows the beast like nature of the Vedic mountain god Rudra. The account in brief is as follows:

_Not being invited by Dakṣa, and seeing Uma’s distress who was not invited by her own father, Šiva was infuriated. He started destroying Dakṣa’s sacrifice. Then, the scared sacrifice assumed the shape of a deer and fled. From the sweat of the chasing Šiva sprang a dwarf who shook the earth. The gods fainted, and part of the bodies of the god Bhaga, Saviṭr, Pūṣan were destroyed. After crushing them all Šiva returned to his own nature._

⁰ VII. 201; X. 18 and XII. 28-3.
Similar is the Mbh. account of Aśvatthāman’s vision of the blazing altar where out of the fire emanated hordes of beast-faced, dwarfish and deformed creatures mentioned as Rudra’s retinue. They devour human flesh, drink blood, praise Śiva and make merry (Mbh. XIII. 7. 13-47)\(^1\). This odd type of retinue of Rudra may be said to be those creatures who are imagined to live in gruesome mountains.

**(vi) Rudra and mountain deities of Korea**

The personality of the mountain gods generally goes parallel with the characteristics of the mountains. When people look at the mountains they generally feel both fear and shelter, and this feeling unintentionally shifts to the mountain gods as well. Just like the mountains, the mountain gods too have the nature of sternness and kindness equally towards man and animals. The more magnificent is the mountain the fiercer is the figure of its deity. The safer is the mountain the gentler is the personality of its divinity. Therefore, the inhabitants who live under the shadow of the grand mountains usually eulogize the mountain god and try to gain him/her favour and win their blessings through proper and regular worship with offerings. In this case, notwithstanding the fact that generally men are virtuous, they are punished when they do not pay proper homage to the god, and even if men do not have any virtue they could obtain blessing from the god, only because they worship that god. And those of the small mountains obtain the favour of the god by their own good deeds, and by offering occasional worship to the mountain gods. Therefore, in this case, if men are virtuous they obtain the blessings from the gods even if they do not worship him.

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\(^1\) cf, Bhattacharji. ‘Myths’. p. 85.
Thus, the first Korean map drawer Kim Chungho was said to mount the back of a huge tiger that was believed to be a mountain god when he climbed the inaccessible Mt. Baekdu, the highest peak of Korea.

The Himalāyas are precipitous but at the same time they are the store house of many benevolent things and benefits to both man and the animals in various ways. Rudra, as the Dweller of the Himalayas\(^1\), resembles that mountain in many aspects. As Himalāyas are the mountain that do not allow man easy access, so too Rudra becomes fierce and unpredictable when someone does not approach him in

\(^1\) Mujavat in the texts. Rudra is asked to go far away from the human habitations to Mūjavat mountain after having received his portion (Dandekar, op. cit. pp. 227-8, VS. 3. 6. 2, Hillebrandt, Vedic Mythology, Vol. II. p. 200). We suppose Rudra is a Himālayan mountain deity, though he is not openly said to stay there, nor is there any mention of Himālayas in the Vedas. However, his residing in the northern region of the Vedic land as a mountain dweller suggests that he is a mountain deity of the grand Himālayas.

Hillebrandt remarks that in one passage of AV. Rudra is actually referred to as the Prince of Mountains while Olddenberg calls him ‘the Old Man of the Mountains’. Macdonell (JRAS. 1985. 956) calls him ‘Mars Silvanus’, and Mannhardt (Wald-und Feldkulte, I. 14. 22ff) compares Rudra with Fauni and Silvani, woodmen and wild people of European types. In later times, Rudra-Śiva is actually called Mallayā. This word is to be connected with the Dravidian word, male which means mountain (Dandekar, op. cit. p. 230). In the Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā (I. 10. 20), the mountain is specially said to be the abode of Rudra (girir vai rudrasya yonī). He lives among the mountains with his wife Rudrāṇi. Besides this Rudra is often called girīṣanta, giritra, and girīṣa etc (TS. IV. 5. 1), and also vanānām pati, vykṣānām pati, and aranyānām pati etc.
a proper manner. Rudra who has a resemblance to these mountains, is the deity who does not admit man easily, and Rudra too is said to look after the welfare of both man and animal (RV. I. 43. 6), and also bestow his blessings on (RV. II. 33. 6; I. 114. 1, 2) the worshippers and the good people. In Paśupati in the guise of Kirāṭa (III. 40-42), in the Epics, we can see the best part of Śiva as a mountain god who is good for his worshipper. In the Kirāṭa–Arjuna episode, Śiva appears to Arjuna in the guise of the kirāṭa the hunter. In the beginning of the account, Kirāṭa-Śiva and Arjuna argued and fought with each other over a victim who was shot by both. However, Kirāṭa soon manifested into his true form as Śiva, and praised Arjuna for his fighting skill and devoted mind. Arjuna pleased him with a beautiful prayer. Thus pleased Śiva bestowed the powerful weapon called paśupata on Arjuna so that he could win over the enemy in battle. Śiva allows Arjuna to ascend heaven. The weapon which he gave to Arjuna is reputed to be such that not even the great gods like Indra and Kubera were able to handle it.

The Korean mountains are generally gentle and beneficent. They are full of eatables, wild vegetables, and medicinal herbs. But at the same time they are also precarious. Naturally these characteristics of the mountains are depicted in the figures of mountain gods. They are generally kind and favourable to men but at the same time when they are angry they are immensely fierce. They have almost absolute authority over animals, people and the things living in the region of the mountain. People who live under their shadow should accept the authority of the mountain gods. People should, however, worship the deities with all their heart and offer them food, and should not be aggressive either to the gods or to the things and animals in that mountain. If they infringe the rules they would get severe punishment. The fierce nature of the mountain gods of Korea is depicted in the story of a childless couple:
In some remote corner of the famous Mt. Chiri there lived a childless couple named Yeonjin and Hoya. One day a bear came and told them about a well, called Eum-Yang (Yin-Yang). By drinking the water from which one can obtain a child. The wife Yeonjin, without discussing with her husband, excitedly rushed to that place and drank water heartily. But a tiger who was the enemy of the bear ran to the mountain goddess and squealed. She was angry with the bear for divulging the heavenly secret, and cooped the bear in a dark cave for a long long time. On the tiger, the goddess bestowed on him the title of king of animals, and to Yeonjin she meted out a severe punishment that Yeonjin had to plant thorny flower throughout her life on a pebbly field. From Yeonjin’s torn fingers blood oozed out, and besmeared the flowers. Till now those flowers have Yeonjin’s bloody marks on their petals.

The general mountain gods bring diseases and also the remedies for the sick by searchings for medicinal herbs from the mountains. As it is described above, the mountain gods of Korea hold the wild ginseng (sansam), the health giving plant in their hands (or even, in their custody). Due to this reason they are specially worshipped by the group of people called simmani whose livelihood is on the wild ginseng whose medicinal potency is much more than the cultivated one. The simmanis pay proper homage before they leave for the mountain, and sometimes, the gods are said to appear in their dream and show the place where wild ginseng grows. The mountain gods also wear the skin of wild, especially carnivorous animals. They are adept in archery therefore often they wield arrows and bows, and also other weapons. It is for this reason that they enjoy the epithet ‘lord of animals and the hunters’ and are, ironically, followed and surrounded by animals.
Rudra’s archery is well known not only in the Vedas but in the Epics too. Rudra bears swift arrows (RV. II. 33. 10), and possesses a strong bow (RV. VII. 46. 1). TS (IV. 5. 10. 4) says that Rudra keeps his weapons on the top of tall trees. As an archer, Rudra is said to be the equal to Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna in the Mbh (VII. 32. 11).

The tripurahahana-episod (Mbh. VII. 201. 64-82) shows Śiva’s extremely good skill of archery. He shot three indestructible demon cities tripura only with one good shot. Mbh. III. 41 gives the account as follows:

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*The three demon brothers Kamalākṣa, Tārakākṣa and Vidyumālin built three cities of gold and silver and iron respectively. They had become virtually invincible and invulnerable through Brahmā’s blessing. Brahmā paid a compliment to Śiva’s marksmanship and archery in VIII. 33. 42, where with reference to the three cities he says that none but Sthānu can pierce them. Śiva, after waiting for 1000 years till the cities which revolving in mid-air came in one line and then with one single arrow he pierced them. The cities were burn to the ashes.*

Unlike the Indian mountains gods the Korean mountain gods do not use their weapons themselves but help needy persons and their worshippers and the kings by bestowing on them the weapons and divulging the skills of using them. Thus, Kim Yousin, the hero of the ancient Silla dynasty (6-7 AD) went to the mountain cave, prayed to god for a long time in order to obtain a good weapon. The mountain god in the guise of an old man appeared in front of him and bestowed on him the required weapon and divulged the skill of using it. Kim won the battle and united the scattered countries with the help of that weapon. Similar is the story of the king Yi Seongkye, the founder of the Yi dynasty (14-19 AD).
The mountain gods are swift, frank and naïve... Thus, Rudra is described as: having a divine hand that removes injuries and having cooling medicine\(^1\). He carries medicine in his hands (RV, I. 114. 5), therefore he is called a physician of physicians (bhiṣakttamaṁ bhiṣajāṁ, RV. II. 33. 4), and a healer. It is further very significant that Rudra is normally worshipped outside the village. Offerings to be made to Rudra must be such as are not derived from the village, they must be derived from the forest. From his mountain-recesses and from the forest Rudra visits men and cattle, from time to time with sickness, disease, and death, which are his weapons\(^2\). Rudra is clothed in a skin\(^3\). He is swift (RV. I. 114. 4). Rudra is well connected with the forest and domestic beasts. He is called the lord of the beast (paśupati), two whole hymns of AV are addressed to this Rudra\(^4\). However, we could not find myths which are connected with medicine and beasts in the Vedas and in the Epics.

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\(^1\)RV, II, 33, 7, hasta yo asti bheṣajo jalāṣaḥ, apabhartā rasapodaivyasya, similar descriptions are also RV. II. 33. 4, 7; I. 114. 5; V. 42. 11; VII. 46. 3, and VS. 3. 59; 16. 5, 49, also AV II. 27. 6. Hopkins states that (PAOS, Dec. 1894) Rudra's medicine against the sickness are probably the rains(?).

\(^2\)Dandekar, 'Vedic Mythological Tracks'. p. 229.

\(^3\)VS. III. 61: etatte rudrāvasan tena paro mājayato'īhi /avatatadhanvā pinākāvasaḥ kattivasā ahissannaḥ sīvo'īhi // and also in XVI. 51: kṛttīṁ vasānam ācara pinākam bibhradāgahi.

\(^4\)AV. II. 34 and XV. 5
The mountain gods in Korea are often represented as the wild animals, especially, the tiger, which, by this reason, is worshipped as the sacred animal among people. They especially know about the medicinal herb and, always hold them in their hands or lead the needy person to the places where the herbs are. There is a beautiful story of a mountain god and a virtuous couple which runs as follows:

In a far corner of the mountainous region of Korea, there lived a family, poor but virtuous, consisting of an old mother, a young couple and their a three year old only son. They lived by cutting wood and cultivating a small field. One day, the old mother fell seriously sick, and they knew that there is only one medicine for her, that is, sansam (mountain ginseng) which was considered to be a panacea. A hundred year old ginseng is known to cure even a deadly disease. The son, combed the mountains out far and near, high and low, deep and shallow, dense and sparse. Everyday he went in search of ginseng. His wife took up the duty of earning a livelihood for the family and prayed to the mountain god untiringly to cure the mother. The son did not care for the wounds and hunger, dangers and wild beasts. The wife was not bothered about her hard work. However, he could not find ginseng and the mother was in a critical condition. The son, one day, faltered by the root of a tall tree which stood on the edge of a sheer cliff and fell down. He lost consciousness then and there. When he woke up he saw an old man standing beside him. The old man with unkempt hair had wrapped himself with tiger skin and held an axe in his hand. He told the son that if he was offered his baby after boiling it in an iron cauldron, he could show him the place where a hundred-year-old mountain ginseng grew. The son waited till his mother fell asleep, and silently with his wife boiled water and put his own baby in it. They cried silently and waited in the kitchen till the dawn came. After the ritual was properly taken care of for the offering, when they opened the lid of cauldron they
found a well-boiled big ginseng inside, and the baby soundly sleeping in the room.

The mountain gods are also said to be physically attractive. In the RV Rudra is described as a physically attractive god, with well formed jaws, strong limbs, massively built, bold and powerful and brave like a bull\(^1\). He has a soft belly, has beautiful cheeks, his colour is brown\(^2\), and he wears braided hair (kapardin, RV. I. 114. 1, 5.), his shape is dazzling (tvesam rūpam, RV. I. 114. 5) and he has steady limbs, having multi-form (sthirebhiḥ aṅgaiḥ pururūpa, RV. II. 33. 9), he is thousand-eyed (sahasrākṣa, AV. XI. 2. 7), he has a mouth, a tongue, and teeth\(^3\), his belly is black and his back red\(^4\), he has blue neck (nīlagrīva, VS. XVI. 7) and blue tuft (nīkaśikhaṇḍa, AV. XI. 2. 7; II. 27. 6), he is copper-coloured and red (lohitā, VS. XVI. 7).

The mountain gods are connected not only with the animals but also with various groups of people. The mountain gods of Korea are always connected with shamans, even in today’s time, woodcutters, forest thieves, plunderers, and even with the poor farmers. Rudra too, very interestingly, is connected with those people. In the famous Šatarudriya hymn of the VS, Rudra is called the lord of thieves (stāyūnāṁ patiḥ, VS. XVI. 21), of plunderer and robbers (kuluṅkānām patiḥ, taskarāṇām patiḥ, VS. XVI. 21; 22). He himself is said to be a cheater

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\(^1\) cf, Bhattacharji, ‘Myths’. p. 92.

\(^2\) RV. II. 33. 5. mṛḍūdara, suśipra, babhru.

\(^3\) AV. XI. 2. 6. aṅgebhyasta udarāya jihvāyā āsāyā te / dadbhyo gandhāya te namaḥ //

\(^4\) AV. XV. 1. 7. 8. nīlamasyodaram lohitam prṣṭham.
(vaṅkata), and a prowler (parivaṅkata, XVI. 21). He is wearer of sword and quiver (niṣaṅginā'iṣudhimata, XVI. 21). It would appear from that litany that Rudra is more directly and intrinsically related to the wild forest-people, to the wandering gypsies, and, perhaps to a slightly lesser degree, to the settled agriculturists than the other classes of the population.

The mountain gods also change their forms into various denizens of forests, such as, a tiger, a poor old man, and sometimes the demons, they usually give boons and curses to men by appearing in such forms.

In the Mbh. Rudra-Śiva too can assume various forms especially those of foresters, śavaras, yakṣas, rākṣasas, nāgas, daitya and dānavas and hole dwellers (XIII. 14-21). Thus, Śiva changes his form into a kirāta when he helps Arjuna, and the Korean mountain gods often change their form into a tiger or an old man. Thus, a man who lived in a far corner of a mountain, got help from a mountain god in the form of a tiger. A son of the man was critically sick, and the only medicine for his ailment was Miyuk, a seaweed. However, the sea was too far away from his village. The man desperately mad his way toward the sea, and to him a tiger appeared and took him to the sea.

Rudrāṇī is the female counterpart or the consort of Rudra in the Vedas. This Rudrāṇī is identified, in later period, with Umā who is a syncronistically a goddess of nature and fertility in the beginning. In the course of the development of her personality and character, she became Śiva’s counterpart. In her northern

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1 Dandekar, op. cit. p. 274
cradle land she was a mountain goddess Pārvatī, and there she acquired the wild and furious attributes of a similar mountain goddess, Vindhyavāsinī, who also became a wife of Śiva\(^1\). It is also said that Sinīvāli who was considered as the wife of Viṣṇu in the RV, is said to be Śiva's daughter (Mbh. 3. 218. 5). All these female counterparts of Rudra-Śiva are more or less connected with fertility as one of the functions of the mountain gods was fertility.

The female counterparts of the Korean mountain gods are generally the mountain goddesses of the nearest or the opposite mountains, and they are often independently worshipped. Sometime these mountain goddesses actively meddled in the national affairs. When the Yi dynasty was harassed by Japan (1592-1598), the Korean army stationed on top of Mt. Samkak threw some lime through the river-valley down to where the Japanese army was stationed. On seeing the white water, the Japanese army hesitated to drink it, however, an old woman appeared in front of them, told them to drink saying that the water was nutritious. The Japanese army drank it and died. Approximately 10% of the mountain deities are said to be goddesses or the wives of the mountain gods\(^2\). They too sit surrounded by, or mounted on tigers. It is generally said that if the Eum (Yin) energy is stronger than the Yang, the mountain has a female deity, and if Yang is more, a male deity. It is also believed that the mothers of the great heroes and the kings became the mountain goddesses. Thus, the mother of Park Hyukkuse, the originator of Park family, and of the Kim Suro, the king of Kaya dynasty were turned into the mountain goddesses. These mountain goddesses are also often

\(^1\) cf. Joshi, goddess relating to Rudra, BDRI, 35, p. 56

\(^2\) cf. Mason, Spirit of the Mountains, p. 41
manifested as Samsin Halmae who is traditionally believed to be a fertility
goddess who not only bestows children but also helps women to deliver infants.
She appeared in the form an old woman. She was also worshipped in almost every
house independently.

Thus, the mountains, Rudra (Śiva) and the mountain gods of Korea are closely
connected with the life and livelihood of men. They have certain essential quality,
the quality of fear and benevolence, which draw people to worship them. Perhaps,
due to these qualities, Rudra as a mountain god could reach the height of being
one of the most important trinity Śiva, and the Korean mountain gods too can be
worshipped even in the present days as one of the most important deities, though
many times without being fully aware of it.