

SĀVITRĪ AND RESURRECTION

The Ideal of Devoted Wife, her Forehead Mark, Satī, and Human Sacrifice in Epic-Purāṇic, Vedic, Harappan-Dravidian and Near Eastern Perspectives

Asko Parpola

LIST OF SECTIONS

Preliminary note	169
1. The ideal of wife fully devoted to her husband (<i>pativrātā, satī</i>)	169
2. The Sāvitrī legend	172
3. The <i>vaṭa-sāvitrī-vrata</i>	184
(a) Ritualistic descriptions	184
(b) The <i>vaḍasāvittīmahūsava</i> in Rājaśekhara's Karpūramañjarī	193
4. The <i>brahma-sāvitrī-vrata</i>	195
5. Brahmā's sacrifice and his two wives Sāvitrī and Gāyatrī	199
6. The theme of death and resurrection and the ancient Near East	201
7. Cilappatikāram and the cult of Goddess Pattinī '(faithful) wife'	203
8. Sāvitrī verse as the 'mother' of the 'twice-born' Vedic student	205
9. Sāvitrī and the twilight adoration	209
10. Sacrifice to Brahman at sunrise	211
11. Sāvitrī verse, the sacred syllable <i>om</i> , and the 'mystical utterances'	212
12. The 'utterances' <i>bhūr bhuvaḥ svaḥ</i> and the beginnings of Brahmanism	214
13. Formation of the middle Vedic culture of the Brāhmaṇa texts and rituals	215
14. The historical and geographical background of the Sāvitrī legend	217
15. Inanna-Ishtar and Sāvitrī/Rohiṇī as the light of early morning	224
16. Agnihotra at sunset and sunrise: fire and night, sun and day	227
17. Decapitation of God Brahmā and his resurrection through Sāvitrī	228
18. Vedic creator god Prajāpati as the dying and revived primeval man	231
19. 'Asura' origin of beheading and revival	233
20. Sāvitrī, the Vedic marriage hymn, and resurrection of the moon	234
21. Sītā Sāvitrī, the moon, and the forehead mark of married women	236
22. Rohiṇī and the moon	239
23. Rohiṇī and the rising sun (Rohita)	240
24. The red forehead mark, the sun, and Rohiṇī	242

25. Rohiṇī as the star of Goddess Durgā.....	247
26. Harappan and Dravidian origin of the red forehead mark.....	249
27. The banyan tree and its association with Yama and Varuṇa.....	252
28. Dravidian <i>vaṭa</i> 'banyan tree' and <i>vaṭa-mīn</i> 'north star'.....	254
29. Arundhatī, <i>cem-mīn</i> and Rohiṇī.....	256
30. Pole star and the heavenly banyan tree.....	257
31. Śiva's castration at the hermitage of the seven sages.....	259
32. The death and resurrection of Kāma.....	260
33. Sītā and Rāma, and Sītā Sāvitrī and Bala-Rāma.....	263
34. Sāvitrī and Śraddhā as the elder and younger wives of the moon.....	268
35. Sāvitrī as prototypal satī.....	271
36. <i>Akṣaya-vaṭa</i> : Death in a sacred banyan tree.....	274
37. Human sacrifice beneath the banyan tree in the <i>Vetāla-Pañcaviṃśatikā</i>	278
38. The sacrificed victim and the sun.....	281
39. Shattered heads, Vidyādhara and Gandharvas.....	283
40. Sacred trees, caityas, citis and stūpas.....	285
41. Consummation of marriage and human sacrifice under a fig tree.....	287
42. Rohita, Rudra and the human sacrifice.....	293
43. Severed heads and rituals of revival.....	298
44. Sprouting of grains and the 'Adonis garden'.....	300
45. Conclusion.....	302
References.....	305

0. PRELIMINARY NOTE

The epic heroine Sāvitrī has been one of the most important models of proper behaviour for Hindu women, and in this role of an ideal she continues to exert much influence even today (see Section 1). Sāvitrī is therefore one of the key figures to be studied if one wants to penetrate into the ideological and historical background of the patterns of kinship and family in South Asia. In the short paper read at the symposium I could not go much beyond describing the Sāvitrī legend (Section 2) and just hinting at the associated ritual (Section 3) and the significance of these two for understanding the evolution of religion in South Asia. There being more space in the volume, I have in this written version tried to spell out what I meant. Restrictions of time, however, have compelled me to leave this study somewhat sketchy here and there¹, but I hope to return to the topic soon.

The Sāvitrī legend is focused on death and resurrection, a centrally important theme in the ancient Near East (Section 6), from where it seems to have been imported into South Asia by the Dravidian-speaking people of the Indus Civilization. As the Sāvitrī legend contains some elements that in my opinion can be securely considered to be of Harappan/Dravidian origin (cf. especially sections 28 & 30), I have used this legend as a clue for identifying other key elements of the religion that prevailed in the Greater Indus Valley before Vedic times and in Vedic times outside the sphere of the Vedic culture. For this purpose I have analysed the Sāvitrī legend and vow and the divinities involved in the light of parallels provided by epic-Purāṇic, Vedic, Old Tamil, Harappan and Mesopotamian sources. Among other things, this research has added new evidence to the previously little known history of the forehead mark of married Hindu women.

1. THE IDEAL OF WIFE FULLY DEVOTED TO HER HUSBAND (*pativratā, satī*)

From ancient times the ideal of *pativratā* or *satī/sādhvī*, faithful and devoted wife who is dutifully obedient to her husband, has been imposed upon Hindu women. Thus states Manu in his famous Laws (9.29):

She who, controlling her thoughts, words, and deeds, violates not her duty towards her lord, dwells with him (after death) in heaven, and in this world is called by the virtuous a faithful (wife, *sādhvī*). (Transl. Bühler 1886: 332.)²

¹ Many sources still remain to be searched, among them the articles of Gubernatis (1898) and Della Casa (1954) directly dealing with the Sāvitrī theme; accented Vedic texts are quoted without accentuation here; and so on.

² Manu 9.29: *patim yā nābhicarati manovāgdehasaṃyutā / sāv bhartṛlokam āpnoti sadbhīḥ sādhvīti cocyate ॥* The verse is repeated in Manu 5.165, after which the following variant is

This is echoed in South India in the Old Tamil classic of life wisdom, Tirukkuraḷ:

If wife be wholly true to him who gained her as his bride,
great glory gains she in the world where gods in bliss abide.
(Tirukkuraḷ 58, transl. Pope 1886: 11.)³

Tirukkuraḷ (55)⁴ also refers to the supernatural might that a chaste wife is believed to possess like an ascetic who has accrued religious merits by means of austerities (*tapas*):

No god adoring, low she bends before her lord;
then rising, serves: the rain falls instant at her word!
(Tirukkuraḷ 55, transl. Pope 1886: 10.)⁵

Such praises of the perfect wife are found everywhere in Indian literature.⁶

In the 18th century, a Tamil Brahmin called Tryambakayajvan wrote a 'Manual of women's duties', in which he stipulates in detail how the perfect wife is expected to behave. He concludes that obedient service to one's husband is the primary religious duty of a wife (*patiśuśrūṣaṇaṁ mukhyo dharmah*). In the final section, Tryambakayajvan

defines 'obedient service to one's husband' in three ways. First, a wife should serve her husband 'without regard for her own life'... Secondly, she should accept whatever her husband does, 'even the sale of herself'... Thirdly, she should obey his will 'even when it conflicts with other religious duties'... (Leslie 1989: 305.)

The copious examples given by Tryambakayajvan were

probably intended for the ears of the young daughters-in-law of the household... It was presumably hoped that such lengthy retellings of favourite and traditional tales would inspire impressionable young women to conform to the highest ideals of *śrīdharmā*. (Leslie 1989: 305.)

All Hindu women have not accepted this view of the proper role of women defined by religious and popular texts written almost exclusively by men. The following is an excerpt from the introduction Madhu Kishwar wrote in 1984 to a collection of articles and letters published during its five first years in *Manushi*, a magazine devoted to feminist issues:

given as verse 166: *anena nārīṅgittena manovāgdehasaṁyutā / ihāgryāṁ kīrtim āpnoti pati-loke paratra ca //*. These two verses of the fifth chapter are omitted in Medhātithi's commentary, and are evidently interpolations there.

³ Tirukkuraḷ 58: *peṭṭāṭ perit̃ peruvār peṅṭir peruñ ciraṅṅu p-puttēḷir vāḷum ulaku*.

⁴ Tirukkuraḷ 55: *teyvan toḷāaḷ koḷunaṭ toḷuṭ' eḷuvāḷ peyy ena p-peyyu maḷai*.

⁵ Cf. Pearson 1996: 55-59 for the power of austerities (*tapas*) in relation to (Sāvitri's) *vrata*.

⁶ Cf. Kane 1941: 566-568.

The pervasive popular cultural ideal of womanhood has become a death trap for too many of us. It is woman as a selfless giver, someone who gives and gives endlessly, gracefully, smilingly, whatever the demand, however unreasonable and harmful to herself. She gives not just love, affection and ungrudging service but also, if need be, her health and ultimately her life at the altar of her duty to her husband, children and the rest of the family. Sita, Savitri, Anusuya and various other mythological heroines are used as the archetypes of such a woman and women themselves are deeply influenced by this cultural ideal... (Kishwar & Vanita 1984: 46f.; quoted from Leslie 1989: 2.)

Indeed, *pativrata*, a faithful wife fully devoted to her husband, is not only an ancient and widespread ideal in India, but also one that still exerts a powerful influence. Doranne Jacobson has demonstrated this with her intensive interviews of Bhūrībāī, a Brahmin woman of a small Central Indian village. Jacobson's 1978 paper highlights

the development of her feelings about chastity from her childhood to her old age, how she dealt with threats to her chastity and to her image as a woman of high morals, and the relationship of her chastity to her security and well-being: For Bhūrībāī, as for millions of other Indian women, the ideal of being a *pativrata* has been a significant focus of her life and a major component of her sense of identity. (Jacobson 1978: 97.)

Indeed, although she never actually worshipped him, Bhuribhai conformed to the view widely held by both men and women throughout India that the perfect wife should regard her husband as her personal God... In 1977, however, Bhuribai's husband died... she announced her intention to become a *satī* or truly 'virtuous' wife herself. But... the immolation of widows has been illegal in India since... 1829. The village elders made her take the required 'test' of the true *satī*: she had to perform the miracle of changing a ball of cow-dung into a coconut. Bhuribai failed. She was denied the supreme sacrifice of the ideal wife. (Leslie 1989: 1.)

Sāvitrī is one the most famous models of the chaste and faithful wife in Sanskrit literature. The legend of Sāvitrī, told in the Mahābhārata and many Purāṇas, is also called *pativrata-māhātmyam* 'praise of the nobility of the chaste devoted wife'. As Doranne Jacobson notes, Sāvitrī as well as

Sītā, Jasmā and others of their kind are not merely literary figures, but represent ideals that live in the hearts of millions of Indians today. Countless wives struggle to follow without complaint the dictates of often inconsiderate husbands, and Sītā's example helps many to suffer their lot bravely. (Jacobson 1978: 97.)

In Jacobson's opinion 'it is unlikely that male conspiracy is the cause of this male dominance... and female subservience' that 'are hardly exclusive to India'; in her opinion 'this system apparently exists simply because it has worked to the benefit of the society as a whole' (Jacobson 1978: 102). Thus, she points out,

the chastity of women is apparently a key component of a system of hierarchically-ranked castes in which caste membership is based upon purity of lineage... since it is women who actually give birth to new members of the caste group, control of women's sexuality and reproductive powers is vital to the prestige and access to power of individual castes and of family and kinship units within them. It should not be for-

gotten that status is an economically valuable commodity – a basis for maintaining or increasing influence, control of resources, and power. (Jacobson 1978: 100.)

2. THE SĀVITRĪ LEGEND

The best known version of the Sāvitrī legend is found in the Mahābhārata,⁷ and this is, in fact, one of the most popular passages of the epic besides the Bhagavadgītā, recited as it is yearly in connection with the *sāvitrī-vrata* fast widely practised by Hindu women. Sage Mārkaṇḍeya tells the story to Yudhiṣṭhira, when the Pāṇḍava king asks him if there ever was a wife as devoted as his own wife Draupadī. I have compared the story as told in the Mahābhārata with all its other main versions, paying particular attention to details that seem significant to me. These have been included in the following summary (details not in the Mahābhārata are in parentheses), and the particulars can be found in the footnotes quoting the original texts in Sanskrit.

(The Śākala) king Aśvapati ('lord of the horses')⁸ ruling the Madra⁹ country is childless. (On the advice of Vasiṣṭha,¹⁰ his principal queen worships with devotion

⁷ The Sāvitrī legend is recounted in Mahābhārata 3.(42.)277-283 in the critical edition, and 3.293-299 in the Bombay edition. For a translation of this episode, see especially Buitenen 1975: 760-778 and Brough 1951: 22-69 (with Sanskrit text). I have also used the text and glossary published by Caland (1917). Other versions of the Sāvitrī legend are found in the Purāṇas, including the parallel versions of the Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa (Uttara-Parvan 102 = 4.102) and the Skanda-Purāṇa (Prabhāsa-Khaṇḍa 1.166 = 7.1.166) [available to me in the Venkaṭeśvara Press edition, but having important variants in another version quoted by Dange 1963 and Śaṅkara son of Nīlakaṇṭha in his Vratārka written in 1678, from which extracts are cited and translated by Allen 1901 on the basis of a lithographed edition printed in Benares 1931 (AD 1875), cf. Konow & Lanman 1901: 279, n. 5]; Matsya-Purāṇa (208-214) and Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa (2.36-41) (these two come from one source, reconstructed by Della Casa 1954); Brahmavaivarta-Purāṇa (Prakṛti-Khaṇḍa 23-34 = 2.23-34); and Bhaviṣyottara-Purāṇa, quoted by Hemādri (c. AD 1250) in his Caturvarga-Cintāmaṇi (Vrata-Khaṇḍa 21), ed. Bhaṭṭācārya & Tarkaratna 1878-79: 258-269 (only this version has been available to me).

⁸ Aśvapati's name reminds one of the Vedic gods Varuṇa and Prajāpati, to whom the horses were considered to belong. See Section 24 for some considerations relating to this.

⁹ Cf. Matsya-Purāṇa 208.5 = Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa 2.36.3: *madreṣu śākalo rājā babhū-vāśvapatiḥ purā...* The Madra country belonged to the Bāhlika (also Bālhika, Bāhika, Vāhika, etc.) region, i.e. the Panjab, and its capital city was Śākala, modern Sialkot (cf. Awasthi 1992: 88; see Law 1960 for mainly Greek and Buddhist references to the city of Śākala, and its identification). Śākala means both 'living in the city of Śākala' and 'descendant or follower of Śākalya'. One Śākalya is a famous Vedic authority, on whom see especially Witzel 1987: 375ff. On 'Śākala rite', cf. also Horsch 1966: 74. On the religion and customs of Śākala and the Madra country, see Section 14.

¹⁰ The priests officiating at the principal temple of God Brahmā at Puṣkara [where King Aśvapati, according to Brahmavaivarta-Purāṇa, went on a pilgrimage to worship Sāvitrī] must always be from the Vasiṣṭha gotra, cf. Malik 1993: 12. The Brahmā priest of the Vedic *śrauta* ritual should be chosen from the Vasiṣṭha gotra (cf. Baudhāyana-Śrautaśūtra 2.3: 39.9-11: *...vāsiṣṭho brahmā...*). Sage Vasiṣṭha is closely associated with Varuṇa (tradition considers Vasiṣṭha, the author of the seventh book of the Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā, to be a son of

Goddess Sāvitrī, but does not receive a vision of her. As she is desperate, the king goes to Puṣkara and worships there Goddess Sāvitrī with austerities for a hundred years, but does not receive her vision, until finally a bodiless voice from the air tells him to mutter the Gāyatrī mantra one million times.)¹¹ In order to obtain offspring, the king fasts, skipping every sixth meal and restricting his food at other mealtimes, abstains from sexual intercourse and pours libations of ghee into fire reciting the holy Sāvitrī stanza a hundred thousand times. Eventually, after eighteen years have been completed with these restrictions,¹² Goddess Sāvitrī is pleased with the king's

Mitra and Varuṇa), and Varuṇa is one of the most important predecessors of the Vedic creator god Prajāpati, the direct predecessor of the Hindu god Brahmā. See also Sections 28-30 for Sage Vasiṣṭha as the husband of Arundhatī, Sāvitrī's double as the paragon of faithful wife.

- 11 Cf. Brahmvaiṣṭha-Purāṇa 2.23.6-11: *madradeśe mahārājo babhūvāśvapatis mune / vai-riṇām balahartā ca mitrānām duḥkhanāśanaḥ // āsīt tasya mahārājñī (vl. mahārājñah) mahiṣī dharmacārīṇī / mālātī ca sā khyātā yathā lakṣmī gadābhṛtaḥ // sā ca rājñī mahā-sādhvī vasiṣṭhasyopadeśataḥ / cakārārādhanam bhaktyā sāvitryās caiva nārada // pratyā-deśam na sā prāpa mahiṣī na dadarśa tām / grhaṇ jagāma sā duḥkhādd hrdayena vidū-yatā // rājā tām duḥkhitām dṛṣṭvā bodhayitvā nayena vai / sāvitryās tapase bhaktyā jagāma puṣkaram tadā // tapaś cakāra tatraiva saṅyataḥ śatavatsaram / na dadarśa ca sāvitriṃ pratyādeśo babhūva ha // śusrāvākāśavāṇīm ca nṛpendraś cāsarīriṇim / gāyatrīdaśalakṣaṃ ca japaṃ kurv iti nārada //*. In verses 13-39 the text goes on giving a detailed instruction (by Sage Parāśara, who comes to see the king) about the Gāyatrī mantra and its recitation, which worked, since worshipping Sāvitrī in this way, the king saw her and obtained a boon from her (39: *rājā saṃpūjya sāvitriṃ dadarśa varam āpa ca*). Nārada now asks (40-41) what meditation of Sāvitrī, what method of worshipping her, what song of praise and mantra did Sage Parāśara give, and in which way did the king worship the Mother of the Vedas, and what boon did he get. Nārāyaṇa explains all this in verses 42-87, including the (*brahma-*) *sāvitrī-vrata* (see Section 4), after which the Sāvitrī legend is continued in chapter 24.1ff.
- 12 A slightly different version is found in the Matsya-Purāṇa (208.5-7) and the Viṣṇudharmot-tara-Purāṇa (2.36.3-5, the variant readings of which are noted here in parentheses). Doing penance in order to get a son, Aśvapati, through Brahmins mentioning his name, worshipped Goddess Sāvitrī who grants all wishes (VDhP: Aśvapati had Brahmins perform to Sāvitrī the fire sacrifice of 100,000 [oblations] that grants all wishes). The most accomplished Brahmins numbering hundreds daily poured fire offerings to Sāvitrī on his behalf. But on the fourth lunar day after ten months had passed, the Goddess showed her own body to the king in the early morning. *madreṣu śākalō rājā babhūvāśvapatiḥ purā / apuras tapyamāno 'sau putrārthī sarvakāmadām* (VDhP: *putrārthe sarvakāmadam*) // *ārādhayati sāvitriṃ lakṣito 'sau* (VDhP: *sāvitryāḥ kārayām āsa lakṣahomaṃ*) *dvijottamaiḥ / siddhārtha-kair hūyamānām sāvitriṃ pratyahaṃ dvijaiḥ* (VDhP: *hūyamānā sāvitriḥ pratyahaṃ dvija*) // *śatasamkhyaiś caturthyān tu daśamāsāgate dine* (VDhP: *tu māsād daśadine gate*) // *kāle tu darśayām āsa svān tanūṃ manuḥśvaram* (VDhP: *manuḥśvare*) // – It appears that the sacrifice performed by Aśvapati was *lakṣahoma*, which is described as follows in Agni-Purāṇa 149.1-5: 'The Lord said: A *homa* (oblation) performed after having practised the *prāṇāyāma* (control of breath) hundred times and purifying with the rite of *kṛcchra*, confers victory in battle, gets kingdom and destroys obstacles. After having repeated *gāyatrī* (*mantra*) (remaining) in the water, one should perform *prāṇāyāma* sixteen times. Oblation of *havis* (clarified butter) should be made into fire in the forenoon. One should eat only that which is procured after begging or eat only fruits and roots. One should take only single morsel of food such as milk or flour or ghee. O Pārvatī, as soon as the (rite of a) lakh of oblations concludes, one should give cows, clothes and gold as fees. (The oblation should be done) by fifteen brahmins in the case of all disasters that befall. There is no disaster in the

continence, purity, restraint and self-control and his whole-hearted devotion to the Goddess. She appears to him in person from the *agnihotra* fire (holding a religious student's water-vessel) and gives him a boon.¹³ The king asks for many boys. The Goddess says that knowing his wish in advance she has asked the Grandfather (of gods, i.e. God Brahmā) for a son for the king, and by the grace of the Self-Born one (Svayambhū, i.e. Brahmā), a radiant maiden will soon be born to Aśvapati. The king should never say anything in reply to this; this the Goddess tells him since she is pleased with him. The king (bent down in front of the Goddess) expresses his acceptance and the Goddess vanishes from his sight (into the air like lightning).¹⁴ (In another version, it is Goddess Sāvitrī herself who gives Aśvapati, her constant

world that does not get warded off by this oblation.' (Transl. Gangadharan 1985: 425f.) – Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa 4.102.4-5 = Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.6 says that Aśvapati personally together with his wife took the vow known as *sāvitrī-vrata*, which fulfills all wishes: *sa sabhāryo vratam idaṃ cacāra nṛpatiḥ svayam* (SkP: *sa sabhāryo vratam idaṃ tatra cakre nṛpaḥ svayam*) / *sāvitrīvratasiddhaṃ tat sarvakāmapradāyakam* (SkP: *sāvitrīti prasiddhaṃ yat sarvakāmaphalapradam*) / – Cf. also Bhāradvāja-Gṛhyasūtra 2.7 which orders a married couple wishing to have a son 'to regale the brahmins with a meal etc. and to eat a special mess prepared to the accompaniment of an 8000 times repeated *sāvitrī*' (Gonda 1980: 204); and the *prajārthihomas* 'oblations for the sake of offspring' 'described in Baudhāyana-Gṛhyaśeṣasūtra 2.4; Āgñiveśya-Gṛhyasūtra 2.5.6 (worship of Brahmā, Dhātār ['creator'], causing one's wife to bathe with the *sāvitrī* and 1008 *palāśa* branches, sacrificing with the *puruṣasūkta* (RV. 10.90) and pouring the residue on her head); Baudhāyana-Gṛhyaśeṣasūtra 4.11' (Gonda 1980: 439).

13 Cf. Mahābhārata 3.277.5 and 7-12: *āsin madreṣu dharmātmā rājā paramadhārmikah / ... atikrāntena vayasā saṃtāpam upajagmivān // apatyotpādanārthaṃ sa tīvraṃ niyamam āśhitaḥ / kāle parimitāhāro brahmacārī jitendriyaḥ // hutvā śatasahasraṃ sa sāvitrīyā rājasattama / ṣaṣṭhe ṣaṣṭhe tadā kāle babhūva mitabhojanaḥ // etena niyamenāsīd varṣāny aṣṭādaśaiva tu / pūrṇe tv aṣṭādaśe varṣe sāvitrī tuṣṭim abhyagāt / svarūpiṇī tadā rājan darśayām āsa taṃ nṛpam // agnihotrāt samutthāya harṣeṇa mahatānvitā / uvāca cainaṃ varadā vacanaṃ pāṛthivaṃ tadā // brahmacaryeṇa śuddhena damena niyamena ca / sarvātmanā ca madbhaktyā tuṣṭāsmi tava pāṛthiva // – Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa 4.102.4-6 = Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.7-8: *tasya tuṣṭābhavad rājan* (SkP: *devi*) *sāvitrī brahmaṇaḥ priyā // bhūr bhuvaḥ svar itīty eṣā sāksān mūrtimatī sthitā / kamaṇḍaludharā devī prasanna-vadaneḥṣaṇā* (SkP: *kamaṇḍaludharā devī jagāmādarśanaṃ punaḥ*) // – Brahmavaiivarta-Purāṇa 2.24.1-2: *stutvā so 'śvapatis tena saṃpūjya vidhipūrvakam / dadarśa tatra tāṃ devīm sahasrārkasamaprabhām // uvāca sā taṃ rājānaṃ prasannā vismitā satī / yathā mātā svaputraṃ ca dyotayantī diśas tvīṣā //*.*

14 Cf. Mahābhārata 3.277.14-20: *apatyārthaḥ samārambhaḥ kṛto dharmepsayā mayā / putrā me bahavo devi bhavyeḥ kulabhāvanāḥ // tuṣṭāsi yadi me devi kāmam etaṃ vṛṇomy aham / saṃtānaṃ hi paro dharmā ity āhur mām dvijātayaḥ // sāvitrī uvāca / pūrvam eva mayā rājann abhiprāyam inam tava / jñātvā putrārtham ukto vai tava hetoḥ pitāmahaḥ // prasādāc caiva tasmāt te svayambhuvihitād bhuvī / kanyā tejasvinī saumya kṣipram eva bhaviṣyati // uttaram ca na te kiṃ cid vyāhartavyaṃ kathaṃ cana / pitāmahanisargena tuṣṭā hy etad bravīmi te // mārkaṇḍeya uvāca / sa tatheti pratijñāya sāvitrīyā vacanaṃ nṛpaḥ / prasādayām āsa punaḥ kṣipram etad bhaved iti // antarhitāyāṃ sāvitrīyā jagāma svagṛhaṃ nṛpaḥ / svarājye cāvasad prītaḥ prajā dharmeṇa pālāyan // – Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa 4.102.7 = Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.8: *uvāca duhitā hy ekā tava rājan bhaviṣyati / ity evam uktvā sāvitrī jagāmādarśanaṃ punaḥ* (SkP has only: *kamaṇḍaludharā devī jagāmādarśanaṃ punaḥ*) //.*

devotee, a beautiful daughter by whose grace he will also get sons.)¹⁵ After some time Aśvapati makes his most senior queen pregnant. That embryo carried by the princess hailing from Mālava¹⁶ grows like the moon in the sky. In due course the queen gives birth to a girl with a shining face.¹⁷ The delighted king has the birth rites performed for her, and tells the Brahmins to give her the name Sāvitrī after the Goddess who has been pleased to give her and after the Sāvitrī mantra through the repetition of which she has been obtained.¹⁸ All the texts emphasize Sāvitrī's taking after the Goddess in her beauty, knowledge and virtue.¹⁹

The princess grows up, looking like a manifestation of the goddess of beauty and welfare (Śrī), or like a golden statue (of the Goddess); her eyes are like lotus

- 15 Cf. Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa 2.36.6-7: *sāvitrī uvāca / rājan bhakto 'si me nityaṃ prāpsyase tanayāṃ śubhāṃ / maddattāṃ yatprasādāc ca putrān prāpsyasi śobhanān // puṣkara uvāca / etāvad uktvā sā rājñāḥ praṇatasyaiva bhārgava / jagāmādarśanaṃ devī khe yathā rāma cañcalā //* – Brahmapurāṇa 2.24.3-5: *sāvitrī uvāca / jānāmi te mahārāja yat te manasi vartate / vāñcitaṃ tava patnyāś ca sarvaṃ dāsyāmi niścitam // sādhvī kanyābhilāṣaṃ ca karoti tava kāmīnī / tvaṃ prārthayasi putraṃ ca bhaviṣyati ca te kramāt // ity uktvā sā mahādevī brahmalokaṃ jagāma ha /*
- 16 Mālava is present-day Malwa. Its capital was Avanti, modern Ujjayinī (cf. Awasthi 1992: 91). Cf. also Sukthankar 1942, II: 1108 (on the reading *mālavayāṃ*, for which many mss. and editions of the Mahābhārata wrongly read *mānavyā*): 'That the mother of Sāvitrī was a Mālavī (a lady or a princess of Mālava, modern Malwa) follows from a clearer reference in the sequel; cf. 3.281.58abcd: *pitūś ca te putraśataṃ bhavitā tava mātari / mālavayāṃ mālavā nāma śāśvatāḥ putrapautriṇaḥ /*, where the MSS. almost uniformly read *mālavayāṃ mālavā* (and not *mānavyāṃ mānavā*), a reading confirmed independently by the Matsya Purāṇa (213.15cd-16).' In Matsya-Purāṇa 208.8, the principal queen is called Mālatī, but the parallel verse in Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa (2.36.8) reads Mālavayā: *mālavayā nāma tasyāsti rājñāḥ patnī pativratā / suśāva tanayāṃ kāle sāvitrīm eva rūpataḥ //*. Brahmapurāṇa 2.23.7, however, also calls the queen Mālatī.
- 17 Cf. Mahābhārata 3.277.21-22: *kasmīṃś cit tu gate kāle sa rājā niyatavrataḥ / jyeṣṭhāyāṃ dharmacārīṇyāṃ mahiṣyāṃ garbhāṃ ādadhe // rājaputryāṃ tu garbhāḥ sa mālavayāṃ bharatarṣabha / vyavardhata yathā śukle tārāpatir ivāmbare //*
- 18 Cf. Mahābhārata 3.277.23-24: *prāpte kāle tu suśuve kanyāṃ rājīvalocanāṃ / kriyāś ca tasyā muditaś cakre sa nṛpatiś tadā // sāvitrīyā prītayā dattā sāvitrīyā hutayā hy api / sāvitrīty eva nāmāsyāś cakrur viprās tathā pitā //* – Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa 2.36.9: *sāvitrīyā hutayā dattā tadrūpasadrśā tataḥ / sāvitrī eva bhaved eṣā jagāda nṛpatir dvijān //* – Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa 4.102.8-9 = Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.8-9: *kālena sā tathā rājan (SkP: kālena bahunā jātā) dukhitā devarūpiṇī / sāvitrīyā prītayā dattā sāvitrīyā japtayā tadā (SkP: sāvitrīyāḥ pūjayā tathā) // sāvitrīty eva nāmāsyāś cakrur viprās tathā pitā (SkP: cakre viprājñayā nṛpaḥ) //* – Brahmapurāṇa 2.24.5-6: *rājā jagāma svagṛhaṃ tat kanyādau babhūva ha // rājño dhanāc ca sāvitrīyā babhūva kamalā kalā / sāvitrīti ca tannāma cakārāśvapater nṛpaḥ //*
- 19 In Matsya-Purāṇa 208.8 = Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa 2.36.8, the Goddess promises Aśvapati a 'beautiful daughter' (*putrīm... śobhanām*), and Aśvapati's faithful wife Mālatī/Mālavī gave birth to one who 'in beauty was like (Goddess) Sāvitrī' (*sāvitrīm iva rūpataḥ*). In Brahmapurāṇa 2.26.2-3, Yama addresses Sāvitrī as a 'beauty' and praises her wisdom that is greater than that of wise ancient sages, and says that she is like Goddess Sāvitrī and contains a part of the Goddess, because she was given by the Goddess and obtained (as daughter) by the king through austerity (*sāvitrīvaradāne tvaṃ sāvitrīkalā sati / prāptā purā bhūbrtā ca tapasā tatsamā śubhe*).

flowers with their petals and as if effulgent with brilliance.²⁰ When she comes of age, she is so radiantly beautiful that no wooer dares to ask her hand.²¹ Finally Sāvitrī (undertakes the *sāvitrī-vrata* prescribed by Bhṛṅgu; she) fasts, takes a bath immersing her head, goes to worship the deity on a new or full moon day, has the Brahmins perform a fire offering and recite a blessing. Then she takes the flowers remaining from the worship (as the grace of the deity), goes to her father, and bowing to his feet and worshipping them with those flowers, greets him respectfully and remains at his side with hands folded in obeisance.²² King Aśvapati realizes that his daughter has come of age and must be married, following the law texts (which say that if a girl sees her menses in her father's house unmarried, the father incurs a sin equal to the murder of a Brahmin, and the girl becomes defamed as if she was a woman of low birth).²³ As no worthy wooers have appeared, the king decides to

²⁰ Hopkins (1915: 73) notes: 'When the beauty of Sāvitrī is likened to "a living image of Śrī", it may be a statue of the goddess, *vīgrahavatī* 'va Śrīh, for the people, seeing her, *pratimāṃ kāñcanīm iva*, "like a golden image", thought that she was a Devakanyā (3.293.25f.).' Here Hopkins leaves *prāpteti/prāpteva* untranslated: (other) people noticed that Sāvitrī had come of age, but apparently not her father (cf. Jamison 1996: 246).

²¹ Cf. Mahābhārata 3.277.25-27: *sā vīgrahavatīva śrīr vyavardhata nṛpātmajā / kālena cāpi sā kanyā yauvanasthā babhūva ha // tāṃ sumadhyāṃ pṛthuśroṇiṃ pratimāṃ kāñcanīm iva / prāpteyaṃ devakanyeti dṛṣṭvā saṃmenire janāḥ // tāṃ tu padmapalāśākṣiṃ jvalantīm iva tejasā / na kaś cid varayām āsa tejasā prativāritaḥ //* – Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa 4.102.9-11 = Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.10-11: *sā grhvatī saśrīr vyavardhata (SkP: sā vīgrahavatīva śrīh prāvardhata) nṛpātmajā / sāvitrī kusumārāṅgī yauvanasthā babhūva ha // tāṃ sumadhyāṃ pṛthuśroṇiṃ pratimāṃ kāñcanīm iva (SkP: yā sumadhyā pṛthuśroṇiṃ pratimā kāñcanī yathā) / prāpteva devakanyeti dṛṣṭvā tāṃ itare janāḥ (SkP: prāpteyaṃ devakanyā vā dṛṣṭvā tāṃ menire janāḥ) //*

²² Cf. Mahābhārata 3.277.28-30: *athopoṣya śiraḥsnātā daivatāny [v.l. devatām, devatān] abhigamya sā / hutvāgniṃ vidhivad viprān vācayām āsa parvaṇi // tataḥ sumanasah śeṣāḥ pratigṛhya mahātmanaḥ / pituḥ sakāśam agamad devī śrīr iva rūpiṇī // sābhivādya pituḥ pādaḥ śeṣāḥ pūrvaṃ nivedya ca / kṛtāñjalir varārohā nṛpateḥ pārsvataḥ sthitā //* – Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa 4.102.12-14 = Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.12-15: *sā tu padmapalāśākṣī (SkP: padmā viśālākṣī) prajvalantīva tejasā / cacāra sā ca sāvitrīvrataṃ yad bhṛṅguṇoditam // athopoṣya śiraḥsnātā devatām abhigamya sā (SkP: ca) / hutvāgniṃ vidhivad viprān vācayitvenduparvaṇi (SkP: vācayed varavarṇinī) // tebhyaḥ sumanasah śeṣāḥ (SkP: śeṣāḥ; gloss: sumanasah śeṣāḥ = puṣpaprasādam) pratigṛhya nṛpātmajā / sādhvī pativratābhyetya (SkP: sakhīparivṛtābhyetya) devaśrīr iva rūpiṇī (SkP: devī śrīvat surūpiṇī) // sābhivādya (BhvP. ed.: sobhivādya) pituḥ pādaḥ śeṣān (SkP: śeṣāṃ) pūrvaṃ nivedya ca / kṛtāñjalir varārohā nṛpateḥ pārsvataḥ sthitā //*

²³ Cf. Mahābhārata 3.277.31-36: *yauvanasthāṃ tu tāṃ dṛṣṭvā svām sutāṃ devarūpiṇīm / ayācyamānām ca varair nṛpatir duḥkhito 'bhavat // rājovāca / putri pradānakālas te na ca kaś cid vṛṇoti mām / svayam anviccha bhartāraṃ guṇaiḥ sadṛśam ātmanaḥ // prārthitāḥ puruṣo yaś ca sa nivedyas tvayā mama / vimṛśyāhaṃ pradāsyāmi varaya tvam yathepsitam // śrutam hi dharmasāstre me paṭhyamānaṃ dvijātibhiḥ / tathā tvam api kalyāṇi gadato me vacaḥ śṛṇu // apradātā pitā vācyo vācyaś cānupayan patiḥ / mṛte bhartari putrasā ca vācyo mātur arakṣitā // idaṃ me vacanaṃ śrutvā bhartur anveṣaṇe tvara / devatānām yathā vācyo na bhaveyaṃ tathā kuru //* – Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa 4.102.15-18 = Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.16-19: *tāṃ dṛṣṭvā yauvanaṃ prāptāṃ (SkP: yauvanaprāptāṃ) svacchām tāṃ (SkP: svām sutām) devarūpiṇīm / uvāca rājā saṃmantrya smṛtyarthaṃ (SkP: putryarthaṃ) saha*

send Sāvitrī off on a tour in the company of elderly ministers, so that she herself can select a suitable husband worthy of herself.²⁴

The divine Sage Nārada happens to be visiting Aśvapati when Sāvitrī returns. Sāvitrī says that she has chosen to marry prince Satyavat, the 'truthful'²⁵, also called Citrāśva.²⁶ Sage Nārada laments that Sāvitrī has made a wrong choice. Although Satyavat in all other respects is an excellent man, he has one great fault: he is doomed to die when exactly one year has elapsed from the marriage.²⁷ But Sāvitrī is adamant in her resolve and does not agree to choose any other man. She has made her decision: a decision is made by mind, expressed by voice, and carried out by deed, and her authority is the mind. Nārada observes that Sāvitrī is so very strong-willed that it will never be possible to make her depart from this *dharma*, and recommends that her father should give her to Satyavat who after all is more virtuous than any other man.²⁸ Aśvapati now takes Sāvitrī to the forest hermitage of

mantribhiḥ // yuktaḥ pradānakālo 'syās tena kaś cid vṛṇotv imām (SkP: *putrī pradānakālas te na hi kaś cid vṛṇoti mām*) / *vicārayitvā* (SkP: *vicārayan na*) *paśyāmi varaṃ tulyaṃ mahātmanaḥ* (SkP: *ihātmanaḥ*) // *devādīnāṃ yathā vācyo na labheyaṃ* (SkP: *bhaveyaṃ*) *tathā kuru* / *bodhyamānā* (SkP: *paṭhyamānaṃ*) *mayā putrī dharmasāstreṣu gaccha tam* (SkP: *ca śrutam*) // *pitur gṛhe tu yā kanyā rajah paśyaty asaṃskṛtā* / *brahmahatyā pitus tatra* (SkP: *tasya*) *sā kanyā vṛṣalī smṛtā* // See also below Section 24.

- 24 Cf. Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa 4.102.19 = Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.20: *ato 'rtham preṣayāmiti* (SkP: *preṣayāmi tvām*) *kuru putrī svayaṃvaram* / *vṛddhair amātyaiḥ sahitā śighraṃ gaccha vidhāraya* (SkP: *gacchāvadhāraya*) // For this form of marriage, with a thorough discussion of the relevant passages including in particular the Sāvitrī legend (pp. 245-247), see Jamison 1996: 207ff., 236ff. Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa 2.36.12 skips all the arrangements and Sāvitrī's tour: *kālena yauvanaṃ prāptāṃ dadau satyavate pitā* /.
- 25 Satyavat has got his name because both his father and his mother speak (nothing but) truth and is expected to do so himself; cf. Mahābhārata 3.278.12: *satyaṃ vadaty asya pitā satyaṃ mātā prabhāṣate* / *tato 'sya brāhmaṇāś cakrur nāmaitat satyavān iti* // Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.30 = Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa 4.102.26: *satyaṃ vadaty asya pitā satyaṃ mātā prabhāṣate* / *satyaṃ vadeti munibhiḥ satyavān nāma vai kṛtam* (BhvP: *upeto 'sti guṇaiḥ sarvair dyumatsenasuto balī*) // Cf. below Section 14.
- 26 On the name Citrāśva, cf. below Section 43.
- 27 Cf. Mahābhārata 3.278.22: *eko doṣo 'sya nānyo 'sti so 'dyaprabhṛti satyavān* / *saṃvatsareṇa kṣiṇāyur dehanyāsaṃ kariṣyati* // – Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa 4.102.27 = Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.34: *eko doṣo 'sti nānyo 'sya* (SkP: *nānyāś ca*) *so 'dyaprabhṛti satyavāk* (SkP: *satyavān*) / *saṃvatsareṇa kṣiṇāyur dehatyāgaṃ kariṣyati* // – Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa 2.36.11: *kṣiṇāyur eṣa varṣeṇa bhaviṣyati nṛpātmajaḥ* / *pradīyate sakṛt kanyā cintayitvā narādhipaḥ* /.
- 28 Thus from the very beginning, Sāvitrī is singularly devoted to her husband to be. Cf. Mahābhārata 3.278.23-29: *rājovāca* / *ehi sāvitrī gaccha tvam anyam varaya śobhane* / *tasya doṣo mahān eko guṇān ākrāmya tiṣṭhati* // *yathā me bhagavān āha nārado devasatkṛtaḥ* / *saṃvatsareṇa so 'lpāyur dehanyāsaṃ kariṣyati* // *sāvitrī uvāca* / *sakṛd amśo nipatati sakṛt kanyā pradīyate* / *sakṛd āha dadānūti trīṇy etāni sakṛt sakṛt* // *dīrghāyur atha vālpāyur saguṇo nirguṇo 'pi vā* / *sakṛd vṛto mayā bhartā na dvitīyam vṛṇomy aham* // *manasā niścayam kṛtvā tato vācābhidhīyate* / *kriyate karmaṇā paścāt pramāṇam me manas tataḥ* // *nārada uvāca* / *sthirā buddhir naraśreṣṭha sāvitrīyā duhitus tava* / *naiṣā cālayitum śakyā dharmād asmāt katham cana* // *nānyasmin puruṣe santi ye satyavati vai guṇāḥ* / *pradānam eva tasmān me rocate duhitus tava* // On similar lines Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa 4.102.29-32 and Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.35-39. In Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa 2.36.11 the dictum 'a maiden is

Satyavat's father, the dethroned Śālva²⁹ king Dyumatsena, who has become blind and has been unjustly deprived of his kingdom. Satyavat's father welcomes the proposed matrimonial bond with Aśvapati. The marriage is celebrated, and Sāvitrī stays at the hermitage. She puts away all her ornaments and starts wearing the bark dress of forest hermits. With her modesty, attentions and virtues, her affection and restraint, and her seeing to all wants, Sāvitrī charms everybody at the hermitage.

When the time for Satyavat's predicted death approaches, Sāvitrī starts a complete fast of three days, vowing to stand up day and night throughout that time, and she does stand up (motionless) as if she had become a piece of wood. Her father-in-law considers these austerities as too severe and tries to dissuade her, but Sāvitrī remains firm,³⁰ and assures him that she will finish the vow as it is done with resolve.³¹ On the third day of the vow, which is the anniversary of the marriage, Sāvitrī with much distress in her mind offers a libation into fire at the moment when the sun has arisen the measure of a yoke, performs her forenoon duties, and then respectfully greets her parents-in-law and all the ascetics of the hermitage, touching their feet in the order of seniority, and remains standing with her hands folded in obeisance. Everybody pronounces on her the wish that she should not become a widow, and Sāvitrī accepts these wishes in her mind.³²

given just once' is less dramatically said by Nārada, who advises Aśvapati to consider before giving Sāvitrī to Satyavat (see note 27).

29 Śālva 'is a famous *janapada* of ancient India. It is placed among the countries of Aparānta [and] denotes Alwar district of Rajasthan as well as some neighbouring region.' (Awasthi 1992: 102.)

30 Cf. Mahābhārata 3.280.1-8: *tataḥ kāle bahutithe vyatikrānte kadā cana / prāptaḥ sa kālo martavyaṃ yatra satyavatā nṛpa // gaṇayantyās ca sāvitrīyā divase divase gate / tad vākyam nāradenoktaṃ vartate hṛdi nityasaḥ // caturthe 'hani martavyam iti saṃcintya bhāminī / vrataṃ trirātram uddīśya divārātram sthitābhavat // taṃ śrutvā niyamaṃ duḥkhaṃ vadhvā duḥkhānvito nṛpaḥ / utthāya vākyam sāvitrīm abravīt parisāntvayan // [dyumatsena uvāca /] atitviro 'yam ārambhas tvayārabdho nṛpātmaḥ / tiṣṇāṃ vasatūnāṃ hi sthānaṃ paramaduḥkaram // sāvitrī uvāca / na kāryas tāta saṃtāpaḥ pārayiṣyāmy ahaṃ vratam / vyavasāya-kṛtaṃ hidaṃ vyavasāyaś ca kāraṇam // dyumatsena uvāca / vrataṃ bhinddhīti vaktuṃ tvāṃ nāsmi śaktaḥ kathaṃ cana / pārayasveti vacanaṃ yuktam asmadvidho vadet // mārkāṇḍeya uvāca / evaṃ uktvā dyumatseno virarāma mahāmanāḥ / tiṣṭhantī cāpi sāvitrī kāṣṭhabhūteva lakṣyate // – Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa (2.36.15-16) is here rather laconic: *caturthe 'hani martavyaṃ yadā satyavatā dviḥ / śvaśureṇābhyanujñātā tadā rājñā tu sā snuṣā // cakre trirātraṃ dharmajña...**

31 'In other words,' notes Pearson (1996: 54), 'her fixed determination (or resolution) is her support during her self-imposed acts of austerity, and is what makes these acts of austerity a vow.'

32 Cf. Mahābhārata 3.280.9-14: *śvobhūte bhartṛmaraṇe sāvitrīyā bhāratarṣabha / duḥkhānvitāyās tiṣṭhantīyāḥ sā rātrir vyatyavartata // adya tad divasaṃ ceti hutvā dīptaṃ hutāśanam / yugamātroditē sūrye kṛtvā paurvāhnikīḥ kriyāḥ // tataḥ sarvān dvijān vṛddhān śvaśrūṃ śvaśuram eva ca / abhivādyaṇupūrvyeṇa prāñjalir niyatā sthitā // avaidhavyāśiṣas te tu sāvitrīyartham hitāḥ śubhāḥ / ūcus tapasvinaḥ sarve tapovanāniviśinaḥ // evaṃ astv iti sāvitrī dhyānayogaparāyaṇā / manasā tā girāḥ sarvāḥ pratyagṛhṇāt tapasvinām // taṃ kalam ca muhūrtaṃ ca pratikṣantī nṛpātmaḥ / yathoktaṃ nāradavacaś cintayantī suduḥkhitā //*

Sāvitrī's parents-in-law ask her to eat now, as the fast of three nights is over, but she replies: 'I shall eat when the sun has set and I have fulfilled my wish. This is the intention and covenant I have conceived in my heart.'³³

When Satyavat puts an axe on his shoulder and is leaving for the forest to fetch fuel and fruits (and flowers and sacred grass) for his father's sacrificial rites, Sāvitrī asks for and obtains permission to accompany him. Though weak from her fast, she has the stamina to follow Satyavat from the firmness of her intent. Most texts have here a long description of the lovely scenes of the forest, Satyavat describing in detail the trees and animals to his wife who watches everything with wonder and faking cheerfulness. Satyavat fills a basket with fruits (and sacrificial grass, while Sāvitrī collects flowers. Then Satyavat asks Sāvitrī to sit and rest under a tree that grows on the shore of a pond, while he will collect the fuel. Sāvitrī agrees, but forbids him to go out of her sight.) Satyavat starts chopping firewood with his axe. (Taking some dry pieces he makes a load of wood.) Sweating, he gets a terrible headache – as if his head was pierced with spears. (He quickly leaves the load of wood and supports himself on a branch of the banyan tree. Or: He quickly hangs the load of wood on a branch of the banyan tree under which Sāvitrī is seated.)³⁴ Then he lies down powerless, putting his head on Sāvitrī's lap.³⁵ (In a variant ver-

33 Cf. Mahābhārata 3.280.15-17: *tatas tu śvaśrūśvaśurāv ūcatus tām nṛpātmaṃjām / ekāntasthām idaṃ vākyam prītyā bhāratasattama // śvaśurāv ūcatus / vrato yathopadiṣṭo 'yam yathāvat pāritas tvayā / āhārakālah saṃprāptaḥ kriyatām yad anantaram // sāvitrī uvāca / astam gate mayāditye bhoktavyam kṛtakāmayā / eṣa me hṛdi saṃkalpaḥ samayaś ca kṛto mayā //*

34 Cf. Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.48-51 (Venkateśvara Press ed.) = Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa 4.102.40 and 44-45 (with variant readings noted in parentheses): *atha pratasthe paraśum gṛhītvā satyavān vanam / sāvitrī api ca bhartāraṃ gacchantaṃ* (BhvP: *gacchataḥ*) *prṣṭhato 'nvayāt // tato gṛhītvā tarasā phalapuṣpasamitkušān / atha* (BhvP: *yathā*) *śuṣkāni cādāya* (BhvP: *vādāya*) *kāṣṭhabhāram akalpayat // atha pāṭayataḥ kāṣṭham jātā śirasi vedanā / kāṣṭhabhāram kṣaṇāt tyaktvā vaśāśkhāvalambitaḥ* (this half verse is missing in the BhvP; Dange 1963: 260 gives a variant reading of this half verse which in the edition consulted by him is 7.166.78: *kāṣṭhabhāram kṣaṇāt kṛtvā vaśāśkhāvalambanam /*. This verse has the following continuation which is missing in the Venkateśvara ed. and in the BhvP, but found also in the Skanda-Purāṇa quotation of Śaṅkara's Vratārkakathā [cf. Allen 1901: 57f.]: *vaṭavṛkṣasya sā sādhvī upaviṣṭā mahāsati // sāvitrīm prāha śiraso vedanā māṃ prabādhathe* (this half verse is missing in the BhvP) */ tavotsaṅge kṣaṇam tāvat svaptum icchāmi sundari* (BhvP: *vyathā māṃ bādhathe bāle svaptum icchāmi sundari*) // Related to this is also the version of the Bhaviṣyottara-Purāṇa (known to me only from Hemādri's quotation in Bhaṭṭācārya & Tarkaratna 1878-79: 258-269), p. 264f.: *tato jñātvā ca sā bālā jagāmātha pativratā // sāvitrī anupadaṃ bhartur vane tasmin manorame / gatvāsau dūram adhvānam jagrahātha phalādikam // samitkušam ca kusumam bhāryayā sa vadan priyam / kāṣṭhāni śuṣkāny ādāya kāṣṭhabhāram akalpayat // kāṣṭham kuṭhāreṇa tathā pāṭayām āsa lilyā / atha pāṭayatas tasya jātā śirasi vedanā // tataḥ saṃvṛtya tat sarvaṃ vaṭacchāyām upāśritāḥ / satyavān vedanākrāntaḥ kiṃ cid varṇitumānasaḥ // vaśāśkhām avaṣṭabhya satyavān prāha gad-gadam / sāvitrī paśya śirasi vedanā māṃ prabādhathe // na ca kiṃ cit pravakṣyāmi bhramaty eva hi me manaḥ / tavotsaṅge kṣaṇam tāvat svaptum icchāmi sundari // viśramasva mahābāho sāvitrī prāha duḥkhitā / paścād api gamiṣvāvaḥ svāśramam sumanoharam //*

sion, Satyavat falls out of a tree and dies.)³⁶ Exactly at the moment predicted by Nārada, Yama comes to fetch Satyavat. (In a variant version, it is Yama's horrific servants who come first. However, being unable to bear Sāvitrī's look that would burn their bodies, they return in vain to Yama, who now departs himself, enraged.)³⁷ The god of death (riding his buffalo mount) is terrible to look at, being dazzling black (like a dark raincloud with flashes of lightning, with a hue dark blue like the petals of the night lotus), dressed in yellow clothes and with red eyes, radiant like the sun (or: looking just like the rising sun), wearing a (sun-coloured) crown on his head (and resplendent with a pair of earrings, and loaded with necklaces hanging down on his chest, ornamented with armbands) and having a noose in his hand.³⁸ Sāvitrī, startled, stands up, and, bowing down in front of the god, asks

35 Cf. Mahābhārata 3.281.1-6: *atha bhāryāsahāyaḥ sa phalāny ādāya vīryavān / kaṭhinaṃ pūrayām āsa tataḥ kāṣṭhāny apāyaya // tasya pāyayataḥ kāṣṭhaṃ svedo vai samajāyata / vyāyāmena ca tenāsya jajñe śīrasi vedanā // so 'bhigāmya priyāṃ bhāryām uvāca śrama-piḍitaḥ / [satyavān uvāca /] vyāyāmena mamānena jātā śīrasi vedanā // aṅgāni caiva sāvitri hṛdayaṃ dīyatīva ca / asvatham iva cātmanāṃ lakṣaye mitabhāṣiṇi // śūlair iva śīro viddham idaṃ saṃlakṣayāmy aham / tat svaptum icche kalyāṇi na sthātum śaktir asti me // [mārkaṇḍeya uvāca /] sā samāsādyā sāvitri bhartāram upagūhya ca / utsaṅge 'sya śīraḥ kṛtvā niśasāda mahītale // – Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa 2.37.32-37 = Matsya-Purāṇa 209.32-210.4: *mayā phaloccayaḥ subhru tvayā puṣpocayaḥ kṛtaḥ / indhanaṃ na kṛtaṃ kiñ cit (MtP: subhru) tat kariṣyāmi sāmpratam // tvam asya sarasas tīre drumacchāyām upāśritā (MtP: samāśritā) / kṣaṇamātraṃ pratikṣasva viśramasva ca bhāmini // sāvitry uvāca / evam etat kariṣyāmi mama dṛṣṭipāthāt (MtP: dṛṣṭipathas) tvayā / dūre (MtP: dūraṃ) kānta na gantavyaṃ (MtP: kartavyo) bibhemi gahane vane // puṣkara (MtP: matsya) uvāca / (MtP has here a verse not found in the VDhP: *tataḥ sa kāṣṭhāni cakāra tasmīn vane tadā rāja-sutāsamaḥkaṣam / tasyā hy adūre sarasas tadānīṃ mene ca sā taṃ mṛtam eva rājan //) tasya pāyayataḥ kāṣṭhaṃ jajñe śīrasi vedanā / sa vedanārtaḥ saṃgāmya bhāryāṃ vacanam abravīt // satyavān uvāca (MtP omits) / āyāsenā mamānena jātā śīrasi vedanā / tamaś ca praviśāmīva na ca jānāmi kiñ cana // tvadutsaṅge śīraḥ kṛtvā nidropahatalocanaḥ (MtP: svaptum icchāmi sāmpratam) / puṣkara uvāca (MtP: rājaputrīm evam uktvā tadā suṣvāpa pārthivaḥ) / tadutsaṅge śīraḥ kṛtvā suṣvāpa gatacetanāḥ (MtP: nidrayāvilalocanaḥ) //.***

36 In the Brahmavaivarta-Purāṇa (2.24.10-11), Satyavat falls out of a tree (which is not specified in the sequel either) and dies: *sa ca saṃvatsare 'ūte satyavān satyavikramaḥ / jagāma phalakāṣṭhārthaṃ praharṣaṃ pitur ājñāy // jagāma tatra sāvitri tatpāścād daivayogataḥ / nipatyā vrkṣād daivena prāṇāṃs tatyāja satyavān //.*

37 Bhaviṣyottara-Purāṇa (quoted by Hemādri): *yāvad utsaṅgagaṃ kṛtvā śīraś cāste mahītale / tāvat karālavadanāḥ śataśo 'tha sahasraśaḥ // ājagmur yamadūtās ca raudrās cāti-bhayaṅkarāḥ / na śekur dṛṣṭipāte 'syāḥ sāvitryā sthātum antike // gatvā cacakṣus tat sarvaṃ sāvitry āste tu adbhutam / dṛṣṭipātena nāsmābhiḥ śakyate 'syāḥ prabādhitum // dahatīva ca no dehaṃ dṛṣṭipātena sā satī / tat svayaṃ yāhi no 'smābhiḥ sādhyate satyavān kva cit //.*

38 In the version of the Bhaviṣyottara-Purāṇa quoted above, this happens only after Yama's dreadful-looking servants described in detail have first failed in their attempt to fetch Satyavat. In the Mahābhārata (3.281.14-15 and the verse interpolated before it in Dn D6 G3, reading *uktaḥ* for *uktvā*), Yama replying to Sāvitrī's question in this regard says that Satyavat is too virtuous to be fetched by anybody lesser than himself: *[sāvitry uvāca / śrūyate bhagavan dūtās tavāgacchanti mānavān / netum kila bhavān kasmād āgato 'si svayaṃ prabho //] mārkaṇḍeya uvāca / ity uktaḥ pitṛrājas tāṃ bhagavān svaṃ cikīrṣitam / yathāvat sarvaṃ ākhyātum tatprijārthaṃ pracakrame // [yama uvāca /] ayaṃ hi dharmasamyukto rūpavān guṇasāgaraḥ / nārho matpuruṣair netum ato 'smi svayaṃ āgataḥ // – Cf. Section 41.*

who he is and what he is going to do. Yama consents to reply to her, because Sāvitrī is so devoted to her husband, so virtuous and has acquired a lot of merit with her austerity.³⁹ Then Yama with his noose forcefully draws Satyavat's thumb-long soul-man out of his body, which then ceases to breathe, loses its glow and becomes motionless and unpleasant to look at. Binding Satyavat's soul, Yama departs southwards for his realm.⁴⁰

Sāvitrī follows, and does not heed Yama's requests to turn back and perform Satyavat's funeral rites. (In a variant version, Yama addresses Sāvitrī as the Goddess who has taken a human form, and points out that if she wants to go with her beloved husband, she must leave behind her body.)⁴¹ Sāvitrī says to Yama: '(For women, husband is the god, husband is the last resort. A good wife must follow her husband, who is the lord of her life and riches...) I too must go where my husband is taken, or where he himself goes – this is the sempiternal Law. (For when I shall

³⁹ Cf. Mahābhārata 3.281.7-13: *tataḥ sā nāradavaco vimṛśanti tapasvini / taṃ muhūrtaṃ kṣaṇaṃ velāṃ divasaṃ ca yuyoja ha // muhūrtaḥ iva cāpaśyat puruṣaṃ pītāvāsasaṃ / baddhamauliṃ vapuṣmantam ādityasamatejasam // śyāmāvādātaṃ raktākṣaṃ pāśahastaṃ bhayāvaham / sthitaṃ satyavataḥ pārśve nirikṣantaṃ tam eva ca // taṃ dr̥ṣṭvā sahasoṭhāya bhartur nyasya śanaiḥ śiraḥ / kṛtāñjalir uvācārtā hṛdayena pravapatā // [sāvitrī uvāca /] daivataṃ tvābhijānāmi vapur etad hy amānuṣam / kāmāyā brūhi me deva kas tvaṃ kiṃ ca cikīrṣasi // yama uvāca / pativratāsi sāvitrī tathaiva ca taponvitā / atas tvāṃ abhibhāṣāmi viddhi māṃ tvaṃ śubhe yamaḥ // ayaṃ te satyavān bhartā kṣīṇāyuh pārhivātmaḥ / neṣyāmy enam ahaṃ baddhvā viddhy etan me cikīrṣitam // – Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa 3.37.38-41: *pativratā mahābhāgā tatas sā rājakanyakā / dadarśa dharmarājaṃ tu svayaṃ taṃ deśam āgataṃ // nilotpālādalaśyāmaṃ pītāmaradharaṃ prabhum / vidyullatā-nibaddhāṅgaṃ satoyam iva toyadam // kirīṭenārkaavarṇena kuṇḍalābhyaṃ virājitaṃ / hāra-bhārārpitōraskaṃ tathāṅgadavibhūṣitaṃ // tathānugamyamānaṃ ca kālena saha mṛtyunā /* – Bhaviṣyottara-Purāṇa (quoted by Hemādri): *ity ākarṇya yamaḥ kopād utthāyātha varāsanāt / āruhya mahiṣaṃ raudraṃ raudraḥ prāṇaharo balī // ājagāma tvarāyukto yatrāste sā pativratā / sāvitrī api ca santrastā vikṣyamāṇā itas tataḥ // sāvadhānā kathaṃ ko 'dya bhartāraṃ mama neṣyati / tāvad dadarśa sā balā puruṣaṃ kṣṇapāṅgalam // kirīṭinaṃ pītavastraṃ sākṣāt sūryam ivoditam / tam uvācātha sāvitrī praṇamya madhurākṣaram // kas tvaṃ devo 'tha daityo vā māṃ dharṣitum upāgataḥ / na cāhaṃ kena cic chakyā svadharmād avaropitum // praṣṭuṃ vā puruṣaśreṣṭha dīptāṃ vahniśikhāṃ iva / yama uvāca / yamaḥ saṃyamanaś cāhaṃ sarvabhūtabhayaṅkaraḥ / kṣīṇāyur eṣa te bhartā sannidhau te pativrate // na śaktaḥ kiṅkarair netuṃ [ed.: jetuṃ] tato 'haṃ svayam āgataḥ /**

⁴⁰ Cf. Mahābhārata 3.281.16-18: *tataḥ satyavataḥ kāyāt pāśabaddhaṃ vaśaṃ gataṃ / aṅguṣṭhamātraṃ puruṣaṃ niścakarṣa yamo balāt // tataḥ samuddhṛtapraṇaṃ gataśvāsaṃ hataprabham / nirviceṣṭaṃ śarīraṃ tad babbhūvāpriyadarśanam // yamas tu taṃ tathā baddhvā prayāto dakṣiṇāmukhaḥ /* – Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa 3.37.41-42: *sa tu saṃprāpya taṃ deśam dehāt satyavatas tadā // aṅguṣṭhamātraṃ puruṣaṃ pāśabaddhaṃ vaśaṃ gataḥ / ākr̥ṣya dakṣiṇām āśāṃ prayayau satvaraṃ tadā //* – Brahmavaivarta-Purāṇa 2.24.12: *yamas tajjivapuruṣaṃ baddhāṅguṣṭhasamaṃ mune / gr̥hītvā gamanaṃ cakre tatpāścāt prayayau satī //* – Bhaviṣyottara-Purāṇa (quoted by Hemādri): *evam uktvā satyavataḥ śarīrāt pāśa-saṃyutam // aṅguṣṭhamātraṃ puruṣaṃ niścakarṣa yamo balāt / atha prayātum ārebhe panthānaṃ pitṛsevitam //*

⁴¹ Brahmavaivarta-Purāṇa 2.24.14: *yama uvāca / aho kva yāsi sāvitrī gr̥hītvā mānuṣiṃ tanum / yadi yāsyasi kāntena sārđhaṃ dehaṃ tadā tyaja //*

not be able to follow you, O god, after you have taken my husband, then I shall renounce my life. What sensible woman, censured for her unalterable widowhood would live even a moment, unadorned, even if she is worthy of ornaments?) By the power of my austerities, my conduct toward my elders, my love for my husband, my vow, and by thy grace my course shall be unobstructed!⁴² In the ensuing discussion, which follows the same pattern, with her wise answers that praise duty and virtue⁴³ Sāvitrī gradually wins five boons from Yama. The righteous King of Law is impressed by her knowledge of the law and duty and by her persistent devotion to her husband. Yama promises that Sāvitrī's father-in-law will regain his eyesight and lost kingdom, that Sāvitrī's father and mother will have a hundred sons, and that Sāvitrī and Satyavat too, shall have a hundred sons, and finally, that Satyavat will get his life back.⁴⁴

42 Cf. Mahābhārata 3.281.18-20: *sāvitrī cāpi duḥkhārtā yamam evānvagacchata / niyamavrata-saṃsiddhā mahābhāgā pativrataḥ // yama uvāca / nivarta gaccha sāvitrī kuruṣvāyaurdhvadehikam / kṛtaṃ bhartus tvayānṛṇyaṃ yāvad gamyam gataṃ tvayā // sāvitrī uvāca / yatra me nīyate bhartā svayaṃ vā yatra gacchati / mayāpi tatra gantavyam eṣa dharmah sanātanaḥ // – Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa 3.38.63-68: sāvitrī uvāca / patir hi daivataṃ strīṇāṃ patir eva parāyaṇam // anugamyah strīyā sādhyā patiḥ prāṇadhaneśvaraḥ // mitaṃ dadāti hi pitā mitaṃ bhrātā mitaṃ sutaḥ // amitasya hi dātaraṃ bhartāraṃ kā na pūjayet / nīyate yatra bhartā me svayaṃ vā yatra gacchati // mayāpi tatra gantavyam yathāśakti surottama / patim ādāya gacchantam anugantum ahaṃ yadā // tvāṃ deva na hi śakṣyāmi tadā tyakṣyāmi jīvitam / manasvinī tathā kā ca vaidhavyākṣaradūṣitā // muhūrtaṃ api jīvate maṇḍanārhapya amaṇḍitā // – Bhaviṣyottara-Purāṇa (quoted by Hemādri): sāvitrī api varārohā kṛtvā pādena maṅgalam / rakṣārthaṃ bhartṛkāyasya yayāv anupadaṃ tataḥ // pativratatvād aśrāntā dhyāyamānā nijaṃ patim / taccintā tadgataprāṇā tām uvāca yamas tadā // nivartya gaccha sāvitrī sudūram tvam ihāgatā / eṣa mārgo viśālākṣi na kenāpy anugamyate // sāvitrī uvāca / na śramo na ca me glāniḥ kadā cid api jāyate / bhartāram anugacchantyāḥ tava śiṣṭasya sannidhau // satāṃ santo gatiḥ nānyā strīṇāṃ bhartā sadā gatiḥ / vedā varṇāśramāṇāṃ ca śiṣyāṇāṃ ca gatiḥ guruḥ // sarveṣāṃ eva jantūnāṃ sthānam asti mahūtale / muktivā bhartāram ekaṃ tu strīṇāṃ nānyāḥ samāśrayaḥ //.*

43 In Mahābhārata 3.281.34-35, the moral rules that according to Sāvitrī are always to be followed by the virtuous include 'non-violence' and the 'golden rule': *adrohaḥ sarvabhūteṣu karmaṇā manasā girā / anugrahaś ca dānaṃ ca satāṃ dharmah sanātanaḥ // evaṃprāyaś ca loko 'yaṃ manuṣyāḥ śaktipeśalāḥ / santas tv evāpy amitreṣu dayāṃ prāpteṣu kurvate //.*

44 Yama gives his fifth boon without the exclusion of Satyavat's life that restricted the choice of the previous boons, and Sāvitrī chooses this 'incomparable' boon saying that without her husband she is as if dead and there is no pleasure for her, Mahābhārata 3.281.51-58: *varaṃ vṛṇe jīvatu satyavān ayaṃ yathā mṛtā hy evam ahaṃ vinā patim // na kāmāye bhartṛvinākṛtā sukhaṃ na kāmāye bhartṛvinākṛtā divam / na kāmāye bhartṛvinākṛtā śrīyaṃ na bhartṛhīnā vyavasāmi jīvitum // varāṅsisargaḥ śataputrāṃ mama tvayaiva datto hriyate ca me patiḥ / varaṃ vṛṇe jīvatu satyavān ayaṃ tavaiva satyaṃ vacanaṃ bhaviṣyati // mārkandeya uvāca / tathety uktvā tu tān pāśān muktivā vaivasvato yamaḥ / dharmarājaḥ prahṛṣṭātmā sāvitrīm idam abravīt // yama uvāca / eṣa bhadre mayā mukto bhartā te kulanandini / arogas tava neyaś ca siddhārthaś ca bhaviṣyati // caturvarṣaśataṃ cāyus tvayā sārddham avāpsyati / iṣṭvā yajñaiś ca dharmeṇa khyātiṃ loke gamiṣyati // tvayī putraśataṃ caiva satyavān janayiṣyati / te cāpi sarve rājānaḥ kṣatriyāḥ putrapautriṇaḥ / khyātās tvannāmadheyāś ca bhaviṣyantīha śśsvatāḥ // pituś ca te putraśataṃ bhavitā tava mātari / mālavyāṃ mālavā nāma śśsvatāḥ putrapautriṇaḥ / bhrātaraś te bhaviṣyanti kṣatriyāś tridaśopamāḥ //.*

Sāvitrī returns to the place where Satyavat's corpse is lying (under the banyan tree).⁴⁵ Satyavat is revived, but has no clear idea of what happened.⁴⁶ From now on, he is only thinking of his parents, who must be desperate with worry. Even though the night has just fallen and the forest with its beasts is terrifying,⁴⁷ the two decide to walk back to the hermitage. Sāvitrī rebinds her loose hair and hangs the carrying pole (*kaṭhina*)⁴⁸ with fruits from the branch of a tree so that Satyavat can fetch it later. Sāvitrī carries the axe for protection and at the same time supports Satyavat.⁴⁹ They get faggots from a tree burning in the forest from a lightning strike. Reaching the hermitage in the morning, Satyavat tells what happened, and Sāvitrī explains how she knew in advance of her husband's death and how she won favours from Yama. She is praised, and all the boons are fulfilled. (This story of Sāvitrī should be recounted every day in the morning, for it will destroy all sins and give women absence of widowhood, marital happiness, heaven, and liberation.)⁵⁰

45 Bhaviṣyottara-Purāṇa (quoted by Hemādri): *ājagāmātha sāvitrī nyagrodhaviṭapaṃ tathā / kṛtvotsaṅgaṃ śiras tasya pūrvavan niṣasāda sā // gātrasaṃvāhanaṃ cakre bhartuḥ śāntasya bhārata /*

46 In the text of the Mahābhārata (3.281.63b and 64b), Satyavat immediately upon waking up remembers the coming of a black man who dragged him along, and is told by Sāvitrī that it was Yama who has now gone. These two half verses, however, appear to me an interpolation which should be removed from the critical text, for in 3.281.67ff. Satyavat again reminiscences on what has happened. He finishes now saying that he saw a horrible darkness and a shining man, and asks Sāvitrī who that might have been (69b-70a), which of course makes no sense if he has already been told that it was Yama. Now Sāvitrī only points to the approaching night and promises to tell everything tomorrow.

47 Mahābhārata 3.281.71-74: *tam uvācātha sāvitrī rajanī vyavagāhate / śvas te sarvaṃ yathā-vṛttam ākhyāsyāmi nṛpātmaja // uttiṣṭhotttiṣṭha bhadrāṃ te pitarau paśya svrata / vigāḍhā rajanī ceyaṃ nivṛttaś ca divākaraḥ // naktamcarāś caranty ete hr̥ṣṭāḥ krūrābhībhāṣiṇaḥ / śrūyante parṇasabdāś ca mṛgāṇāṃ caratāṃ vane // etāḥ śivā ghoranādā diśaṃ dakṣiṇa-pāścimām / āsthāya viruvanty ugrāḥ kampayantyo mano mama //*

48 This resembles very much the hanging of a carrying pole with *apūpa* cakes on a tree in the forest in the Traiyambakahoma; in the accompanying mantra it is said to be the portion of Rudra, who is asked to go away to the Mūjavat mountain without doing harm, with his bow unstrung; cf. Hillebrandt 1897: 119.

49 Mahābhārata 3.281.100-104: *sāvitrī tata utthāya keśān saṃyamyā bhāminī / patim utthāpāyām āsa bāhubhyāṃ pariḡṛhya vai // utthāya satyavāṃś cāpi pramṛjyāṅgāni pāṇinā / diśaḥ sarvāḥ samālokya kaṭhine dṛṣṭim ādadhe // tam uvācātha sāvitrī śvaḥ phalānīha neṣyasi / yogakṣemārtham etat te neṣyāmi paraśuṃ tv aham // kṛtvā kaṭhinabhāraṃ sā vṛkṣasākhāvalambinam / gṛhītvā paraśuṃ bhartuḥ sakāśaṃ punar āgamat // vāme skandhe tu vāmorūr bhartur bāhuṃ niveśya sā / dakṣiṇena pariṣvajya jagāma mṛdugāminī //*

50 Bhaviṣyottara-Purāṇa (quoted by Hemādri): *sāvitrīākhyānakam idaṃ sarvapāpaprāṇāśanam // avaidhavyapradāṃ strīṇāṃ svargamokṣapradāyakaṃ / sukhasaubhāgyadaṃ pārtha prātar japyam idaṃ sadā //*

3. THE VAṬA-SĀVITRĪ-VRATA

(a) Ritualistic descriptions

The Sāvitrī legend forms the textual background for the *vaṭa-sāvitrī-vrata*, also called just *sāvitrī-vrata*, an annual three-day votive observance, which is one of the most important women's rituals in India even today.⁵¹ This *vrata* is performed especially by women whose husbands are living and who want to avoid widowhood and to have children (the texts promise many other things in addition)⁵² – and these are goals that loom large in the lives of most Indian women, especially in the villages.⁵³

As Anne MacKenzie Pearson (1996: 55) has noted, the present-day votaries attribute the efficacy of their votive observances to the same elements that are stressed in the epic description of Sāvitrī's *vrata*: her resolution, determination and faith.

⁵¹ For the (*vaṭa*-)*sāvitrī-vrata*, see Skanda-Purāṇa 7 (Prabhāsa-Khaṇḍa) 1.166.77ff.; Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa 4 (Uttara-Khaṇḍa) 102.66-86; Agni-Purāṇa 194.4-8; Brahmavaivarta-Purāṇa 2 (Prakṛti-Khaṇḍa) 23.42-87 (Aśvapati's manner of worshipping Goddess Sāvitrī); Padma-Purāṇa 1 (Śrīṣṭi-Khaṇḍa) 7.10-23; and 'Skanda-Purāṇa', quoted by Hemādri (c. AD 1250, cf. Allen 1901: 53) in his *Caturvarga-Cintāmaṇi*, *Vrata-Khaṇḍa* 21, Bhaṭṭācārya & Tarkaratna 1878-79, II.2: 272-279 (this passage cannot be found in our extant Skanda-Purāṇa according to Hans Bakker, whom I consulted on this point, being unable to locate it there); Viśvanātha Śarman's *Vratārāja* (composed in Varanasi in 1736): 765-778 (quoting Hemādri and the above-mentioned Purāṇas; I owe this reference to Hans Bakker); *Vratārka* (lithographed edition of Benares, AD 1875), folio 121, reverse, line 11 ff. (quoted from Allen 1901; cf. also Konow & Lanman 1901: 279, n. 5); *Nirṇayasindhu*, II, folio 11a 3 ff. (cf. Konow & Lanman 1901: 279, n. 5; not consulted here); Rājaśekhara's *Karpūramañjarī*, Act 4 (Konow & Lanman 1901: 99ff., 221f., 279ff.; cf. also Hauer 1927: 238-240); Kane 1958: 91-94; Dange 1986-90, V: 1561-62. Buitenen in his introduction (1975: 214f.) and annotations (1975: 836) to the translation of the Sāvitrī legend in the *Mahābhārata* makes no reference to the *sāvitrī-vrata*.

⁵² According to the *Vratārka* (fol. 122a 3), the woman undertaking the vow should express her intention in performing the *sāvitrī-vrata* to be: obtaining long life and absence of diseases for her husband and sons, and the absence of widowhood for herself in rebirth after rebirth (*mama bhartuḥ putrāṇaṃ ca āyurārogyaprāptaye janmajanmani avaidhavyaprāptaye ca sāvitrīvrataṃ ahaṃ kariṣya iti saṃkalpya...* (cf. Allen 1901: 60). Cf. further e.g. Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa 4.102.1-2: *yudhiṣṭhira uvāca / smarayāmi hṛṣīkeṣa yan noktaṃ bhavatā kva cit / tat sāvitrīvrataṃ brūhi mamopari dayāṃ kuru // śrīkrṣṇa uvāca / kathayāmi kulastrīṇāṃ mahābhāgyaṃ yudhiṣṭhira / yathā ciraṇaṃ vratavaraṃ sāvitrīyā rājakanyayā //* and 4.102.89-91: *etat tu vrataṃ idaṃ kathitaṃ vidhivaṃ mayā / yāś cariṣyanti loke 'smin putrapautrasamanvitāḥ / bhuktvā bhogāṃś ciraṃ bhūmau yāsyanti brahmaṇaḥ padam // etat puṇyaṃ pāpaharaṃ dhanyaṃ duḥsvapanapranāśanam / japatāṃ śṛṇvatāṃ caiva sāvitrīvrataṃ ādarāt // smṛtyarthavedajananiṃ sahaśaṃbhujāyāṃ saṃpūjayed iha tritṛtropaṅkṣā / sāvitrīvat pitṛkulaṃ ca tathā svabhartur uddhārayec ca vibhūnakti ciraṃ sukhāni // iti śrībhaviṣye mahāpurāṇe uttaraparvaṇi śrīkrṣṇayudhiṣṭhiraśaṃvāde vaṭasāvitrīvrataṃ nāma dvyadhikaśatataṃ 'dhyāyaḥ //*

⁵³ For the *vratas* as the principal religious activity of Hindu women, see especially Pearson 1996 and McGee 1991.

The truth of her (*pativrata*) behaviour, as well as her austerities (her self-sacrifice for the sake of another) performed with the right intentions, then, makes her positively powerful in this story; a story which women tell to each other each year when they perform the three-day *Vaṣ Sāvitṛī Vrat* and become temporary *tapasvinīs* (Pearson 1996: 61).

Unlike the easily accessible Sāvitṛī legend, this vow is not so well known. I am therefore translating below the most detailed description I have been able to find, quoting the Sanskrit text in the notes, following the original order.⁵⁴ This is from the Skanda-Purāṇa as it is quoted by Hemādri in his *Caturvarga-Cintāmaṇi* (Vrata-Khaṇḍa 21). The speaker is Yama, the god of death, who has just given his boons to Sāvitṛī. Sāvitṛī asks will a woman who with loving devotion to her husband performs the same vow as she ('my *vrata*') be called a 'virtuous woman' (*sādhvī*) and have a share in the fruits of the vow. Yama replies that it will be the case with any such woman, even a widow, whether she has sons or not, whether she has a husband or not, and then proceeds to tell what is to be done.⁵⁵ In the footnotes, additional details from the *Vratārka* are quoted at appropriate places.

When the full moon day of the *Jyaiṣṭha* month has arrived, the faithful wife should have a bath and become ceremonially pure. She should water a banyan tree (*vaṭa*) with plenty of water and wrap a thread around it. In the night she should circumambulate it turning towards the right (i.e. sunwise) with devotion and saying, 'Obeisance to (Yama) the son of *Vivasvat!*'. For one whole year she should worship the banyan tree in the night this way (on the night of the full moon) each month.⁵⁶

54 The mantra and other rules concerning the watering of the banyan tree are a bit misplaced, being given only at the end of the text, but I have not tampered with the order.

55 The passage quoted by Hemādri is not found in the account of the Sāvitṛī legend and the *sāvitṛī-vrata* that is given in the printed text of the Skanda-Purāṇa (Venkaṭeśvara Press ed.) at 7.1.166, nor can it be located elsewhere in the printed text of the Skanda-Purāṇa; this was kindly confirmed by Hans Bakker. (On the textual history of the Skanda-Purāṇa, see Adrian-sen, Bakker & Isaacson 1998: 3ff., and on Hemādri's quotations in particular, p. 10f.) I quote it in the following with the reference SkH = Skanda-Purāṇa as quoted by Hemādri, *Caturvarga-cintāmaṇi*, *Vrata-Khaṇḍa* 21, *Bhaṭṭācārya & Tarkaratna* 1878-79, II.2: 272-279. The beginning of the *vrata* description is as follows (p. 272.17-273.3): *skandapurāṇāt / dharmarājavaraprādānāntaraṃ sāvitṛy uvāca / madīyaṃ tu vrataṃ deva bhaktyā nārī kariṣyati / bhartuḥ sābhīhitā sādhvī samastaphalabhājanā // dharmarāja uvāca / nārī vā vidhavā vāpy aputrā pativarjitā* (v.l. of another ms. noted p. 273, n. 1: *putravarjitā*) / *sabharṭṛkā* (v.l. noted p. 273, n. 2: *saputrakā*) *saputrā vā kāryaṃ vratam idaṃ śṛṇu //*

56 SkH, p. 273.4-9: *jyaiṣṭhamāse tu saṃprāpte paurṇamāsyāṃ pativrata / snātvā caiva śucir bhūtvā vaṭaṃ sicya bahūdakaiḥ // sūtreṇa veṣṭayed bhaktyā gandhapuṣpākṣataiḥ śubhaiḥ / namo vaivasvatāyeti bhramayanī pradakṣiṇam // rātrau kurvīta naktam cābdam ekaṃ samāhitā / tathaiva vaṭavṛkṣaṃ ca pakṣe pakṣe ca pūjayet //*

When the Jyaiṣṭha month has again arrived,⁵⁷ she should eat very lightly on the first twelve days, and then clean her teeth and make her vow of restraints with this mantra:

Having passed three (days and) nights without taking food, I shall eat on the fourth day after having given a hospitable reception to the moon, after having worshipped that virtuous lady (*satī*), and after having worshipped Brahmins by offering them as much festive food as I can. O thou fair Goddess who upholdest the universe, make this achievable to me without obstacles!⁵⁸

She should then put a *prastha* measure of sand into a vessel made of cane and sow one *prastha* measure of grains of seven different kinds in the vessel. Upon the two cloths (in which she has wrapped the cane vessel with its grains) she should then place a statue of (Goddess) Sāvitrī together with (her husband) Brahmā⁵⁹ that

57 This date in the Skanda-Purāṇa as quoted by Hemādri for the *vaṭa-sāvitrī-vrata*, from the evening of the twelfth to the day of the full moon in the Jyeṣṭha month, agrees with the Rājamārtaṇḍa (fol. 81a, verse 1394), which is followed in the Deccan, and with the Vratārka, which under the heading *atha pūrṇimāvratāni* and the subheading *tatra jyeṣṭhapūrṇimāyāṃ vaṭasāvitrīvrataṃ* states (fol. 121b 14): *jyeṣṭhe māsi site pakṣe dvādaśyāṃ rajanīmukhe...* (cf. Allen 1901: 60). Other sources, however, prescribe this *vrata* is to be performed at the end of the dark (and not bright) half of the Jyeṣṭha month: thus the Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa (4.102.86: *pañcadaśyāṃ tathā jyeṣṭhe vaṭake ca mahāsatī / trirātroṣitā nārī vidhinānena pūjayet / sārđhaṃ satyavatā sādhvīm...*) and the Agni-Purāṇa (194.4-5) prescribe it to be performed after a fast of three nights on the new moon or *amāvāsya* day (*vakṣye sāvitrīyamāvāsyaṃ bhuktimuktikarīṃ śubhām / pañcadaśyāṃ vratī jyeṣṭhe vaṭamūle mahāsatīm / trirātroṣitā nārī saptaadhānyaiḥ prapūjayet*), and the Kṛtyatattva (p. 430) and the Tithitattva (p. 121) on the 14th day of the dark half of the Jyeṣṭha month. In Mithila (i.e. northern Bihar and southeastern Nepal), *baṭasāvitrī* (*balsait*) is celebrated on the 30th lunar day of the Jyeṣṭha month, in its dark half (*badi*) (cf. Ishii 1993: 64). In Bengal, the *vrata* is called *sāvitrīcaturdaśī* and celebrated on the 14th of the dark half of the Jyeṣṭha month (cf. Kane 1958: 92f.). Brahmavaivarta-Purāṇa (Prakṛti-Khaṇḍa 23.42ff.) prescribes a *sāvitrī-vrata* on the 13th and 14th of the dark half in the Jyeṣṭha month.

58 SkH, p. 273.10-16: *saṃprāpte ca punar jyaiṣṭhe laghubhug dvādaśir nayet / dantānāṃ dhāvanāṃ kṛtvā niyamaṃ kārayet tataḥ // trirātraṃ laṅghayitvā ca caturthe divase hy (VA: tv) aham / candrāyārghyaṃ pradattvā ca pūjayitvā ca (VA: tu) tāṃ satīm // miṣṭānnāni yathāśaktyā pūjayitvā dvijottamān / bhokṣe (VA: bhokṣye) 'haṃ tu jagaddhātri nirvighnaṃ kuru me mune (VA: śubhe) // niyamamantraḥ /*. The variant readings of the *niyamamantra* in the Vratārka (VA) (fol. 125a 9) are the correct ones. Cf. Allen 1901: 62f. with an independent translation. – For the declaration of intention (*saṃkalpa*) according to the Vratārka, see the note in the beginning of this section.

59 In this article I am suggesting that Goddess Sāvitrī and God Brahmā are the divine counterpart of the human couple Princess Sāvitrī and Prince Satyavat; both symbolize one and the same thing. The divine couple appears not only in the descriptions of the ritual but also in the legend. For example, the Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa (4.102.5) while speaking of Goddess Sāvitrī's manifestation to Aśvapati calls her 'the beloved of Brahmā' (*sāvitrī brahmaṇaḥ priyā*). In Brahmavaivarta-Purāṇa (Prakṛti-Khaṇḍa 26.4-9), Yama grants Sāvitrī his supreme boon by stating that she will be as happy with Satyavat as twenty other blessed couples, including Sāvitrī and Brahmā. I reproduce here this list: (1) *yathā śrīḥ śrīpateḥ kroḍe* (2) *bhavānī ca bhavorasi /* (3) *yathā rādhā ca śrīkṛṣṇe* (4) *sāvitrī brahmavakṣasi // 4 //* (5) *dharmorasi yathā mūrṭiḥ* (6) *śatarūpā manau yathā /* (7) *kardame devahūtiś ca* (8) *vasiṣṭhe 'rundhatī yathā // 5 //* (9) *aditiḥ kaśyape cāpi* (10) *yathāhalyā ca gautame /* (11) *yathā*

she has had made of gold.⁶⁰ She should stay awake fasting three nights to please these two (deities). And she should stand three days (and nights) under the banyan (*nyagrodhasya tale*).⁶¹

She should also have a golden image made of Sāvitṛī with Satya(vat). After having lifted them on a silvery couch, she should place them into a chariot. In accordance with her (financial) ability, the chariot should be a beautiful silvery one weighing half of the *pala* measure. Likewise there should be two loads of firewood, and a nice seat of grass under the banyan tree.⁶² After having thus prepared the couple, she should pay homage to it without any feelings of envy.⁶³

She should make a round circle by smearing the ground with a liquid solution of cowdung. After having had the image bathed with the 'five ambrosias', and homage done to it with incense, flowers and water, sandalwood paste, aloe and camphor, garlands, clothes and ornaments, the married lady should have Sāvitṛī placed in the circle. With either yellow flour or sandalwood paste she should draw a lotus flower and then place the Goddess sitting on the lotus upon this lotus. After Sāvitṛī has been installed in this way,⁶⁴ she should worship her with this mantra:

śacī mahendre ca / (12) yathā candre ca rohiṇī // 6 // (13) yathā ratih kāmadeve (14) yathā svāhā hutāśane / (15) yathā svadhā ca pitṛṣu (16) yathā saṃjñā divākare // 7 // (17) varuṇāni ca varuṇe (18) yajñe ca dakṣiṇā yathā / (19) yathā dharā varāhe ca (20) devasenā ca kārttike // 8 // (21) saubhāgyā supriyā tvaṃ ca bhava satyavati priye / iti tubhyaṃ varaṃ dattam aparāṃ ca yadīpsitam... The couples specifically discussed in this article are in bold face and include the most famous examples of wifely faithfulness. Sāvitṛī, of course, is often quoted as the best of the *pativrātās*; e.g. Matsya-Purāṇa 208.2 starts the Sāvitṛī legend with Manu's question: 'Tell me now who is the best among the chaste ladies? Who has conquered the death? Whose name should people constantly praise to get rid of all their sins?' (*pativrātānām kā śreṣṭhā, kayā mṛtyuḥ parājitaḥ / nāmasanīkīrtanaṃ kasyāḥ kīrtanīyaṃ sadā naraiḥ / sarvapāpakṣayakaram idānīm kathayasva me*).

- 60 The Vratārka (fol. 122a 4) gives the following verse of 'meditation' or 'mental representation' (*dhyānam*), which, as assumed by Allen (1901: 60f.), 'evidently relates to the preparation of the images for worship': *padmapatrāsanasthaś ca brahmā kāryaś caturmukhaḥ / sāvitṛī tasya kartavyā vāmotsaṅgatā tathā / ādityavarṇāṃ dharmajñāṃ sākṣamālākaraṃ tathā /*. Thus the four-faced God Brahmā should be represented as standing on a throne consisting of the lotus flower, and sun-hued Sāvitṛī as sitting on the left side in his lap, holding the rosary in her hand.
- 61 SkH, p. 273.17-21: *kṛtvā vaṃśamaye pātre vālukāprastham eva ca / saptadhānyadhṛtam pātraṃ prasthaikena dvijottama // vastradvayopari sthāpya sāvitṛīm brahmaṇā saha / haimīm kṛtvā tayoh pṛthvai trirātram upavāsayet // nyagrodhasya tale tiṣṭhed yāvac caiva dinatrayam /*. Cf. Allen 1901: 63.
- 62 According to Allen (1901: 63), apparently based on the Vratārka not cited in Sanskrit, 'also a basket and an axe of silver are to be made, and in one of the versions a bundle of faggots as well, and a "well-spread banyan tree", are prescribed, reminiscences of the visit to the forest in the story. The three-days' fast is then to be undergone under a banyan in the presence of the images.'
- 63 SkH, p. 274.1-5: *sauvarṇīm caiva sāvitṛīm satyena saha kārayet // raupyaparyāikam āropya rathopari niveśayet / palād arddham yathāśaktyā ratham raupyamayaṃ śubham // tathā ca kāṣṭhabhāre ca vaṇe caiva suviṣṭaram / evaṃ ca mithunaṃ kṛtvā pūjayed gata-matsarā //*. Cf. Allen 1901: 63.

'Obeisance to Sāvitrī!', (her) feet and knees with '(Obeisance) to her who brings forth (progeny)!', (her) hip with '(Obeisance) to her whose eyes are like petalled lotus flowers!', (her) belly with '(Obeisance) to her who carries the beings!', at her throat 'Om, Obeisance to Gāyatrī!', at her head 'The beloved wife of Brahmā'.⁶⁵

Then follows the *pūjā* of Brahmā and Satyavat. The feet should be worshipped with 'Obeisance to the Creator!', the thighs with 'Obeisance to the eldest!', the penis with 'The highest lord', the hips with '(Obeisance) to him who has the form of the fire!', the belly with '(Obeisance) to the Maker!', the heart with '(Obeisance) to the lotus-navelled one!'; the throat should be worshipped with '(Obeisance) to the Creator!', the mouth with '(Obeisance) to the golden embryo!'⁶⁶, the head should be worshipped with '(Obeisance) to Brahmā!'. At every limb she should say, 'Obeisance to Viṣṇu!'⁶⁷

After having thus paid homage to them in the correct order,⁶⁸ she should then offer the guest water with a silvery vessel for both. Sāvitrī should be offered the guest water with this mantra:

⁶⁴ The Vratārka gives a mantra for inviting the deities to come to their images (*āvāhanam*): 'I bring here Goddess Sāvitrī the Mother of the World together with Brahmā, as well as Satyavat, Sāvitrī and Yama' (*brahmaṇā sahitaṃ devīṃ sāvitrīṃ lokamātaraṃ / satyavataṃ* (thus the ms., Allen emends *satyavantaṃ*) *ca sāvitrīṃ yamaṃ cāvāhayāmy aham*), cf. Allen 1901: 61.

⁶⁵ SkH, p. 274.6-16: *vartulaṃ maṇḍalaṃ kṛtvā gomayena tapodhana / pañcāmṛtena snapanam gandhapuṣpodakena ca // candanāgurukarpūrain malyavastravibhūṣaṇaiḥ / sampūjya tatra sāvitrīṃ maṇḍale sthāpayed vadhūḥ* (ed.: *vudhaḥ*, Allen: *tataḥ*) // *pītapīṣṭhena padmaṃ ca atha vā candanena ca* (Allen: *candanenātha vā likhet*) // *nyas<y>ec* (Allen: *nyasyec*) *caiva tato devīṃ kamale kamalāsanām* (v.l. of another ms. noted p. 274, n. 2: *kamalānanā*) // *anena vidhinā sthāpya pūjayed gatamatsarā / atha sāvitrīpūjāmantraḥ / namaḥ sāvitrīyai pāḍau tu prasavitrīyai ca jānuni / kaṭiṃ kamalapatrākṣyai udaraṃ bhūtadhāriṇyai* (ed.: *-ṇī*) // *om gāyatryai namaḥ kaṅṭhe śīrasi brahmaṇaḥ priyā* /. Cf. Allen 1901: 63f. with an independent translation. – In the Vratārka (Allen 1901: 61), this *aṅgapūjā* follows only after the foot water, guest water, etc. have been offered (cf. below). The mantras for Sāvitrī's *aṅgapūjā* given here agree with those above (omitting the throat): *sāvitrīyai pāḍau pūjayāmi, prasāvitrīyai* [sic for *prasavitrīyai*] *jaṅghe, kamalapatrākṣyai kaṭiṃ, bhūtadhāriṇyai udaraṃ, brahmaṇaḥ priyāyai śīraḥ pūjayāmi*. – Such a *pūjā* of the limbs of the Goddess also takes place in the navarātri festival of Durgā, cf. Kane 1958: 169.

⁶⁶ SkH, p. 274.17- 275.2: *atha brahmasatyavatoḥ pūjā / pāḍau dhātre namaḥ pūjyau ūrū jyeṣṭhāya vai namaḥ // parameṣṭhī ca meḍhraṃ ca agnirūpāya vai kaṭiṃ / vedhase codaraṃ pūjyaṃ padmanābhāya vai ḥṛḍi // kaṅṭhaṃ tu vidhaye pūjyaṃ hiraṇyagarbhāya vai mukham / brahmaṇe vai śīraḥ pūjyaṃ sarvāṅge viṣṇave namaḥ //*

⁶⁷ This sentence looks like a later Vaiṣṇava interpolation.

⁶⁸ In the Vratārka (122a, cf. Allen 1901: 61), the *āvāhana* is followed by the offering of *pāḍya*, 'water to wash the feet' of the guest, with this mantra: 'O Sāvitrī together with Brahmā, O you beloved wife followed by Satyavat, be pleased to receive a golden seat given with devotion, O King of Righteousness, O Divine Lord, be pleased to receive, O King of Righteousness, O Sāvitrī' (*brahmaṇā saha sāvitrī satyavatsahite priye / hemāsanam gṛhyatāṃ tu dharmarāja śureśvara / bhaktyā dattaṃ dharmarāja sāvitrī pratigṛhyatām*).

O Goddess preceded by the sacred syllable *om* and holding the harp and the book in your hands, O Mother of the Vedas, Obeisance to you! Give me absence of widowhood! O you faithful wife devoted to your husband, O you highly fortunate, O you born of fire, O you brightly smiling! O you strict in vows! O you strong-minded one! O you who speak pleasant things to your husband! Give me absence of widowhood and marital happiness, O you with good vows, as well as children, grandchildren and good health! Please receive the guest water! Obeisance, obeisance (to you)!⁶⁹

Then the guest water mantra to Brahmā and Satyavat:

You have created the entire universe, with its deities, demons and human beings; O god having the shape of Brahmā, you truthfully keep your vows, Obeisance be to you!⁷⁰

Then the mantra to pay homage to Yama:

You witness the deeds of people, discriminating what is good and what is bad; O son of Vivasvat, please receive the guest water, O righteous king, Obeisance be to you! O righteous king, O lord of the deceased ancestors (ruling) among beings who have ceased to live, O you with a black shape, please receive the guest water and give me absence of widowhood!⁷¹

Then she should worship with incense and flowers,⁷² with food offerings and fruits, with red powder and with lamps,⁷³ with red cloths and with ornaments without any feelings of envy, praying to Sāvitrī with this mantra:

⁶⁹ SkH, p. 275.3-11 (with variants from the Vratārka fol. 125b 2, cf. Allen 1901: 64): *abhy-arcyaivaṃ krameṇaiva śāstrokavidhinā nṛpa / tato rajatapātreṇa arghyaṃ dadyād dvayor-āpi // sāvitrīyai arghyamantraḥ / omkārāpūrvakaṃ devī viṇāpustakadhāriṇī / vedamātar-namas tubhyam* (VA: *te 'stu*) *avaidhavyaṃ prayaccha me // pativrate mahābhāge vahnijāte śucismite / dṛḍhavrata dṛḍhamate bhartuś ca priyavādinī* (VA: *priyavādinī*) *// avidhavyaṃ tu* (VA: *ca*) *saubhāgyaṃ dehi tvaṃ mama suvrate / putrān pautrāṃś ca saukhyaṃ ca gṛhāṅgarghyaṃ* (VA: *gṛhāṅgarghyaṃ*) *namo namaḥ //* – According to the Vratārka (fol. 122a, cf. Allen 1901: 61), the guest water (*arghyaṃ*) should be offered to Sāvitrī with this mantra: 'O Sāvitrī, receive this water accompanied by fruits and flowers that I with devotion bring to you as guest water, for the success of this vow of mine' (*bhaktiyā samāhṛtaṃ toyam phala-puṣpasamanvitam / arghyaṃ gṛhāṇa sāvitrī mamāsyā vratasiddhaye //*).

⁷⁰ SkH, p. 275.12-14: *atha brahmasatyavator arghyamantraḥ / tvayā sṛṣṭam jagat sarvaṃ sadevāsurasuramānuṣam / satyavratadharo deva brahmarūpa namo 'stu te //*

⁷¹ SkH, p. 275.15-19: *atha yamasyārcanamātraḥ / tvaṃ karmasākṣī lokānāṃ śubhāśubha-vivecakaḥ / vaivasvata gṛhāṅgarghyaṃ dharmarāja namo 'stu te // dharmarāja pitṛpate śāntibhūteṣu jantuṣu / kālarūpa gṛhāṅgarghyaṃ vaidhavyaṃ ca dehi me //*

⁷² According to the Vratārka (fol. 122a, cf. Allen 1901: 61), she should then offer to Sāvitrī water for rinsing the mouth (*ācamanīyakam*) with this mantra: 'Let Sāvitrī together with her husband rinse the mouth with this cool, sweet and good smelling water offered with incense and camphor' (*sugandhaṃ sahakarpūraṃ surabhisvādūṣitalam / svapatyā saha sāvitrī kuryād ācamanīyakam*). 'Other[verse]s follow, accompanying the acts of ablution and mouthrinsing (*snānam, ācamanam*), the offering of a garment (*vastram*) to Sāvitrī, the offering of the sacred cord (*ity upavītam*), of the fragrant sandal wood, accompanied by saffron, aloes, camphor and *rocānā*, 'kuṅkumāgarukarpūrakastūrīrocanāyutam' (*candanam*), the offering of grain (*ity akṣatāḥ*) and of flowers (*puṣpam*)' (Allen 1901: 61).

⁷³ According to the Vratārka (fol. 122b, Allen 1901: 61), offerings of incense (*dhūpam*) and lamps (*dīpam*) should follow the worship of limbs (*aṅgapūjā*).

Sāvitrī, the holy Gāyatrī [or: Gāyatrī accompanied by Brahmā (=om)]⁷⁴, always speaks pleasant things: appealing to this truth, I ask you to protect me from the ocean of misery and rebirth! You are (Śiva's wife) Gaurī, you are (Indra's wife) Śacī, you are (Viṣṇu's wife) Lakṣmī, you are the light in the halo of the moon! You alone are the Mother of the World, save me, O you with a beautiful face! Give me marital happiness and growth of my family, O you steadfast in vows. Whatever bad deeds I have done even during one hundred births, let them all come to ashes, and give me absence of widowhood!⁷⁵

Then she should pray to Brahmā and Satyavat with this mantra:

O God, just as you never suffer separation as the companion of Sāvitrī, so let me never be separated (from my husband) in any birth!⁷⁶

To Yama she should pray with this mantra:

O witness of deeds, whom the whole world must worship, whom everybody must praise, be gracious to me! Let this vow of one year's duration be completely fulfilled for me!⁷⁷

(Then she should say:)

Just as you Goddess Sāvitrī did obtain a virtuous husband with a life span of four hundred years, please arrange that so for me too, O Goddess! You are forever worshipped as Sāvitrī and as (Mother) who brings forth (children), the beloved wife of Brahmā, by all twiceborn (Brahmins) as well as by women and the hosts of sages. O Goddess, the beings have to worship you on the three junctions (of every day), O you good in vows! I have given this worship (of yours), please receive it! Obeisance be to you!⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Cf. below Section 11.

⁷⁵ SkH, p. 275.20-276.8 (and Vratārka, fol 125b, cf. Allen 1901: 64): *gandhapuṣpaiḥ sanaivedyaiḥ phalaiḥ kuṅkumadīpakaiḥ* (VA: *kusumadīpakaiḥ*) / *raktavastrair alaṅkāraiḥ pūjayed gatamatsarā // atha sāvitrīprārthanamantraḥ / sāvitrī brahmagāyatrī sarvadā priyabhāṣiṇī / tena satyena mām pāhi duḥkhasaṃsārasāgarāt // tvaṃ gaurī tvaṃ śacī lakṣmī* (VA: *śucir gaurī*) *tvaṃ prabhā candramaṅdale / tvam eva jaganmātā tvam uddhara varānane / saubhāgyaṃ kulavṛddhiṃ ca dehi tvaṃ mama suvrate // yan mayā duṣkṛtaṃ sarvaṃ kṛtaṃ janmaśatair api / bhaśmībhavatu tat sarvaṃ avaidhavyaṃ ca dehi me //*. The mantra is the same in the Vratārka (fol. 122b 5, cf. Allen 1901: 61) with the exception of the variant reading noted above, and the omission of the half verse *saubhāgyam... suvrate*.

⁷⁶ SkH, p. 276.9-11 (and Vratārka fol. 125b 7, cf. Allen 1901: 64): *atha* (VA omits) *brahmasatyavatoḥ prārthanāmantraḥ / aviyoḡo yathā deva sāvitrīyā sahitas tava / aviyoḡas tathāsmākaṃ bhūyāj janmani janmani //*.

⁷⁷ SkH, p. 276.12-14 (and Vratārka fol. 125b, cf. Allen 1901: 64f.): *yamaḥprārthanāmantraḥ / karmasākṣī jagatpūjya* (VA: *jagatpūjyaḥ*) *sarvavandya* (VA: *sarvavandyaḥ*) *prasīda me / saṃvatsaravrataṃ sarvaṃ paripūrṇaṃ tad astu me //*.

⁷⁸ SkH, p. 276.15-20 (and Vratārka fol. 125b, cf. Allen 1901: 65): *sāvitrī* (VA: *sāvitrī*) *tvaṃ yathā devī* (VA: *devī*) *caturvarṣaśatāyusaṃ / patiṃ prāptāsi guṇinaṃ mama devī tathā kuru // sāvitrī prasavitrī ca sataṃ brahmaṇaḥ priyā / pūjitāsi dvijaiḥ sarvaiḥ strībhir munigaṇais tathā* (VA omits the verse, starting with *sāvitrī*) *// trisaṅdhyāṃ devī bhūtānāṃ vandaniyāsi suvrate / mayā dattaiva pūjeyaṃ tvaṃ ḡṛhāṇa namo 'stu te //*. For the 'three junctions', see at the end of Section 9.

She should arrange there a (nightly) vigil with songs, dances and other auspicious performances. Then, after each day has passed, all women (whether married or unmarried) who continue to live in their fathers' houses should be worshipped. Being without the emotions of passion and anger, she should in daytime as well as in the night give all these things to virtuous women: vermilion (for the parting of the hair), and red powder (for the forehead), betel leaves (to be chewed), together with purifiers (made of sacrificial grass), charity food, and the eight auspicious things connected with marital happiness. On all the three days, she should also arrange for the worship of the cat (as the animal of the Goddess).⁷⁹

On the fourth day, the following should be done. She should worship 24, 16, 12 or 8 couples by giving them a cow and cloths together with ornaments, cloaks and seats. Or else, she should worship (just one couple, namely) her teacher, who has advised her with regard to the rules according to which this vow is to be performed, one that is provided with all auspicious body marks and who has thoroughly mastered the meaning of all scriptural authorities, one who has taken the bath after successfully learning the Vedic knowledge and completed the vows (included in the study of the Veda), one who is calm and has subdued his senses, together with his wife. She should give them cloths and ornaments, a bed with all its furnishings, and a very stately house. But if she is unable to do that, she should, according to her (financial) ability, little by little arrange whatever she can.⁸⁰

She should gift the golden image (of Sāvitṛī) together with (her) husband, arranging it (first) with the mantra:

O Sāvitṛī, just as you, O Goddess, have been given by me after you had received Satyavat as your husband with a life-span of four hundred years, please make (things happen) in that way (for me too)!

She should donate the image with this mantra:

⁷⁹ SkH, p. 276.21-277.6: *jāgaram tatra kurvīta gītanṛtyādimaṅgalaiḥ / svavāsinyas tataḥ pūjyā divase divase gate // sindūraṃ kuṅkumaṃ caiva tāmbūlaṃ sapavitṛakam / tathā dadyāc ca sarvāṇi bhaiṣyaṃ saubhāgyam aṣṭakam // satīṣv eva divā rātrau kāmakrodhavivarjitā / dinatraye 'pi kartavyam evaṃ mārjārapūjanam //* – According to the Vratārka (fol. 125b 11, cf. Allen 1901: 65), she should stand day and night, without feelings of desire or anger; and the worship with guest water etc. should be done in the same manner on all the three days (*sā tiṣṭhec ca divā rātrau kāmakrodhavivarjitā / dinatraye 'pi kartavyam evaṃ arghādīpūjanam*).

⁸⁰ SkH, p. 277.5-13 (and Vratārka fol. 125b 12, cf. Allen 1901: 65, where the first three half verses are not quoted): *tataḥ caturthadivase yat kāryam tac chrīṇuṣva me / mithunāni caturviṃśa ṣoḍaśa dvādaśāṣṭau vā // pūjayed vastragodānair bhūṣaṇācchādanāsanaiḥ / atha vā gurum ekaṃ ca (VA: ācāryam ca tataḥ paścād) vratasya vidhikārikam // sarvalakṣaṇasaṃpannam sarvaśāstrārthapāragam / vedavidyāvratasnātam śāntam ca (VA: tu vijitendriyam // sapatnīkam samabhyarcya vastrālanikārabhūṣaṇaiḥ (VA: vastrālamkāra-kunḍalaiḥ) / śayyāṃ sopaskarām dadyād gṛham caivātīśobhanam // aśaktas tu yathāśaktyā stokam stokam ca kalpayet /*

I have given Sāvitrī the Mother of the Universe, Sāvitrī the Father of the Universe;
O Brahmin, please receive Sāvitrī!

It should then be received with the following mantra:

I have received this very beautiful Sāvitrī that has been given by you. Be happy together with your husband as long as the Sun and the Moon!⁸¹

Then she should with devotion make the teacher and his wife pardon her, saying:

Whatever imperfection has come about in the arrangements of this vow through my fault, let that all come to completion with a word from you two!⁸²

The mantra with which she should every month water the banyan tree is this:

Righteous king, Yama, Creator, Dark blue, Terminator of time, Eternal, Son of Vivasvat, Citragupta (= Yama's scribe), Dadhna (= Yama), Death, Imperishable Banyan.

With these names she should thus every month water the banyan tree. She should spend the night beneath the banyan tree, and therefore she should put much effort in watering it. Thereafter she should without any feelings of pride worship her teacher and his wife with ornaments, cloths, red powders and flowers.⁸³

Near the banyan tree, or in her house, she should have an offering of ghee to be made in a brilliant fireplace with the mantra of Sāvitrī. She should also with devotion offer into fire rice cooked in milk together with ghee, likewise some sesame, rice and barley with the mantra of the mystical utterance (of the words *bhūr bhuvah svaḥ*, personified as the daughters of Savitṛ). At the end of the fire offering, she should give a sacrificial gift (to the Brahmin who performed it) without any feelings of cheating in money matters. After worshipping the feet of this Brahmin she should make him pardon her (for any shortcomings).⁸⁴

81 SkH, p. 277.14-278.1 (and Vratārka fol. 125b, cf. Allen 1901: 65): *sauvarṇīm pratimāṃ putri patinā saha dāpayet // kalpanāmantraḥ / sāvitrī tvam yathā devi caturvarṣaśatāyusam / satyavantaṃ patim labdhvā mayā dattā tathā kuru // pratimādānāmantraḥ / sāvitrī jagato mātā sāvitrī jagataḥ pitā / mayā dattā ca sāvitrī brāhmaṇa (VA: brahmaṇā) pratigṛhyatām // atha (VA omits) pratigrahanāmantraḥ / mayā gṛhītā sāvitrī tvayā dattā suśobhanā (VA: suśobhane) / yāvac candraś ca sūryaś ca saha bhartrā sukhī bhava //*

82 SkH, p. 278.2-4 (and Vratārka fol. 125b, cf. Allen 1901: 65): *guruṃ ca gurupatnīm ca tato bhaktiā kṣamāpayet / yan mayā kṛtavaikalyaṃ vrate 'smin duradhiṣṭhitam // tat sarvaṃ pūrṇatām (VA: sarvaṃ sampūrṇatām) yātu yuvayor vacanena (VA: arcanena) tu /*

83 SkH, p. 278.5-11: *pratimāsaṃ vaṣasecanāmantraḥ / dharmarājo yamo dhātā nīlaḥ kālāntako 'vyayaḥ / vaivasvataś citragupto dadhno mṛtyur akṣayo vaṣaḥ // māsi māsi tathā hy etair nāmabhiḥ secayed vaṣam / nyagrodhādho (ed.: nyagrodhohaṃ) vaset putri tasmād yatnena secayet // tato guruṃ sapatnikam pūjayed gatavismayā / bhūṣaṇaiś ca savastraiś ca kuṅkumaiś ca manoharaiḥ //* These directions are also found in the Vratārka, cf. Allen 1901: 66.

84 SkH, p. 278.12-17: *nyagrodhasya samīpe tu gṛhe vā sthaṇḍile śubhe / sāvitrīyāś caiva manreṇa gṛhṭahomaṃ tu kārayet // pāyasam juhuyād bhaktiā gṛhṭena saha bhāvini / vyāhṛtyā caiva manreṇa tilavṛihiyavaṃ tathā // homānte dakṣiṇāṃ dadyād vittaśāṭhyavivarjitā / kṣamāpayet tato vipraṃ vandyā pādaḥ prayatnataḥ //*

At the end of the day, in the night, the lady doing penance should stay calm and eat, after having first looked at the star Arundhatī, bowed to her, and worshipped her with the following mantra:

O Arundhatī, Obeisance be to you! O beloved wife of Vasiṣṭha, O you beauty, O you to whom all gods bow, O you chaste wife devoted to your husband, Obeisance be to you! Please receive all these fruits that I have given together with flowers! Give me sons! Give me health and happiness! Please receive the guest water! Obeisance be to you!

Then, controlling herself, she should eat together with Brahmins and her friends.⁸⁵

A woman who performs this unequalled vow, brothers, fathers, sons, father-in-law and all her people will be long-lived and healthy in three hundred births, and together with her husband, she will be praised as 'virtuous' (*sādhvī*) in Brahmā's world.⁸⁶

The Agni-Purāṇa (194.4-7) has a very short description of this rite, which will be presented later (in Section 36).

(b) The *vaḍasāvittimahūsava* in Rājaśekhara's Karpūramañjarī

The drama Karpūramañjarī, written c. AD 900 in Prakrit by Rājaśekhara, the court poet at Kanauj but hailing from Vidarbha in Maharashtra, contains in its fourth act a description of the dances that conclude the 'great festival of Vaṭa-Sāvitrī' (*vaḍasāvittimahūsava*) arranged by a queen, and thus complements the ritualistic descriptions. As already noted by J. W. Hauer (1927: 233-240), there is a certain resemblance with the cultic practices prevalent in the Madra and Bāhlika country (see Section 14), which was Sāvitrī's domicile. In C. R. Lanman's translation (with the Prakrit original added at some places), the passage is as follows (4.9.14-4.18):⁸⁷

⁸⁵ SkH, p. 278.18-279.2 (and Vratārka fol. 126a, cf. Allen 1901: 66, where the first three half verses are not quoted): *bhuñjīta vāsarānte tu naktam śāntā tapasvinī / arghyam dattvā tv arundhatyā dṛṣṭvā caiva praṇamya ca // arundhati namas te 'stu vasiṣṭhasya priye śubhe / sarvadevanamaskārye pativrate namo 'stu te // sarvam ḡhāṇa (VA: argham etam) mayā dattam phalam puṣpasamanvitam (VA: phalapuṣpasamanvitam) / putrān dehi sukham dehi ḡhāṇārghyam (VA: ḡhāṇārgham) namo 'stu te // sakhibhir brāhmaṇaiḥ sārḍham bhuñjīta vijitendriyā /*

⁸⁶ SkH, p. 279.3-7 (and Vratārka fol. 126a, cf. Allen 1901: 66): *evaṃ karoti yā nārī vratam etad anuttamam // bhrātaraḥ pitarāḥ (VA: pitarau) putrāḥ śvaśuraḥ (VA: śvaśurau) svajanās tathā / cirāyuṣas tathārogāḥ (VA: tathārogyā) syuś ca janmaśatatrāyam // bhartrā ca sahitā sādhvī brahmaloke mahīyate / iti skandapurāṇoktam (VA: iti vratārke skande sodyāpanam) vaṭasāvitrīvratam //*

⁸⁷ Konow & Lanman 1901: 279-281.

JESTER. Here's the Queen's friend, Sāraṅgikā, sent with some message from her.

(Then enters Sāraṅgikā.)

SĀRANGIKĀ. Victory, victory to my lord! The Queen's message is that today the King must mount to the terrace of his pleasure-palace and inspect the preparations and accessories for the great festival of the Deity of the Banyan.⁸⁸

KING. As the Queen directs!

(Exit the attendant.)

(King and Jester step about, making as if they were ascending to the terrace. Then begins the charcharī.)

JESTER. Behold, these maidens, richly adorned with pearls, at the close of the dance but scantily attired, are sprinkling each other with water which they take with jewelled cups from the jets of showerbath. (10)

And here,

Circling around with charmingly-varied pose of hands and feet, these two and thirty dancing-girls, – they tread their mazy rounds, their steps keeping time with music. In thy court is seen the 'Staff-dance' [*daṇḍarāsa*]. (11)

With their shoulders and heads even, with their arms and hands even, other maidens, each with a clean-cut pose, and ranged in two rows each facing the other, are rendering the *challi*-dance and regulating its tempo by beaten measure. (12)

Still others, quitting the jewelled cups, throw (direct) from the showering-machine the jets of water. These – fair as Cupid's arrows, though consisting only of water – fall on the person of friends (standing by). (13)

Here, coquettish girls [*vilāsiṇīo*], their bodies anointed with blackest collyrium [*masīkajjalakālākā*], holding triple bows [*tikaṇḍacāvāu*], and adorned with tail-feathers of peacocks [*samorapicchāharaṇā*], are parading about as savage mountaineers [*pulindarūveṇa*]⁸⁹, (and so) making sport for the people [*jaṇassa hāsaṃ... kuṇanti*]. (14)

Yet others, bearing in their hands offerings of human flesh [*hatthe mahāmaṃsabalīdharāo*], and terrible with their groans and shrieks and cries [*humkāraphekkāravā rauddā*], and wearing masks of night-wandering ogresses [*ṇisāraṇaṃ paḍisīsaeḥim*], are enacting a cemetery-scene [*aṇṇā masāṇāhīnaṃ kuṇanti*]. (15)

And one fawn-eyed girl, sounding the drum that makes you shudder [*vāiakarālahuḍukkā*]⁹⁰, and with the pleasant noise of a tambour, with her creeper-like arms alternately swaying, has started to execute the performance of the *challi*. (16)

Others are performing, as might a fay, a graceful dance in tempo, with a jingling made by their bells, with the measure regulated by the tempo of vocal music, and with the clear tinkle of anklets. (17)

Still others, their garments a-flutter by reason of their eagerness, intently playing the flutes, and setting the people a-laughing by their dark dress, recede, bow, and laugh. (18)

88 Karpūramañjarī 4.9.18: *ajja vaḍasāvittimāhūsavovaraṇāim kelivimāṇaṃ āruhia deveṇa pekkhidavvāim ti*.

89 Lanman (Konow & Lanman 1901: 281, n. 2) compares *Poulindai agriophágoi* in Ptolemy's map of the world (7.1.64).

90 'S[amgīta-]R[atnākara] treats *huḍukkā* at 6.1072. Molesworth defines it as a small drum, shaped like an hourglass. It is held in the hand and rattled. – Is not this the drum formed of the tops of two human skulls cut in bowl-shape and with skin stretched across the bowls, and set crown to crown?...?' (Konow & Lanman 1901: 281, n. 3.)

In the next scene, we get information about the time of the festival and about the deities connected with the banyan tree in the royal garden, where the festival evidently takes place. In Lanman's translation:⁹¹

SĀRANGIKĀ. ...On the fourteenth day [of the bright⁹² fortnight of the Jyaiṣṭha month], just past, the Queen had Bhairavānanda make an image of Gaurī bejewelled with rubies and set it up.⁹³ And he, the master Magician, was consulted by the Queen, after she begun the observances for its consecration... The Queen has had a sanctuary to Chāmuṇḍā built at the foot of the banyan tree that stands in the middle of the pleasure-garden.⁹⁴ And Bhairavānanda is going to meet the Queen there...

(Enters the Magician.)

BHAIRAVĀNANDA. Here is the Chāmuṇḍā idol serving to screen the (new) entrance which has been opened from the root of this banyan [*vaḍatarumūle*] to the subterranean passage. (He stretches out his hand to it in worship,) (saying to Chāmuṇḍā, or rather, saying of her:)

A dissolution of the universe is her pleasure-house; the blood of the demons is her fiery draught; victorious is Kālī as she squaffs it, in presence of Kāla, from a goblet made of the skull of Parameṣṭhin. (19)⁹⁵

Gaurī⁹⁶ is the name of Śiva's spouse and here refers to her terrible manifestation Cāmuṇḍā or Kālī, in which she is worshipped at the banyan tree together with her husband (Śiva), who likewise is mentioned in his terrible aspect as Kāla, the 'black' god of death. The Goddess drinks from the skull of God Brahmā, beheaded by Śiva (cf. Section 17). It is apparently to worship Kālī and Kāla who inhabit the banyan tree, that the dancing girls masked as black-skinned tribal hunters bring the offering of human flesh (cf. sections 37 & 41).

4. THE BRAHMA-SĀVITRĪ-VRATA

P. V. Kane, in his list of the various *vratas* (1958: 253-462), correctly makes a distinction between the *vaṭa-sāvitrī-vrata* (p. 401) and the *brahma-sāvitrī-vrata* (p. 358f.). He is not right, however, in stating that the latter 'is just like the *Vaṭasāvitrī-vrata* except the date'⁹⁷ (p. 359). Kane has given a brief synopsis of the *brahma-*

⁹¹ Konow & Lanman 1901: 281-283.

⁹² Thus Lanman (Konow & Lanman 1901: 215f. and 281, n. 10). This is not certain, however; it could as well be the dark fortnight.

⁹³ Karpūramañjarī 4.18.11: *aṅantarādikkantacatuḍḍasīdivase devī pommarāmaī gorī bheravāṇaḍeṇa kadua paḍiṭṭhāvidā /*

⁹⁴ Karpūramañjarī 4.18.30: *devī kāridaṃ pamadujjāṇassa majjhaṭṭhidavaḍatarumūle cāmuṇḍādaṇaṃ /*

⁹⁵ Karpūramañjarī 4.19: *kappantakelibhavaṇe kālassa puro 'surāṇa ruhirasuraṃ / jaai pianti kālī parameṭṭhikavālacasaṇa //*

⁹⁶ On Gaurī's connection with Sāvitrī, see also below Section 13.

⁹⁷ According to the *Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa* (4.102.62-91) and Hemādri's quotation from the *Bhaviṣyottara-Purāṇa*, this '*sāvitrī-vrata*' is to be performed from the 13th tithi to the full

sāvitrī-vrata on the basis of the passage quoted from the Bhaviṣyottara-Purāṇa⁹⁸ in Hemādri's Caturvarga-Cintāmaṇi (Vrata-Khaṇḍa 21, Bhaṭṭācārya & Tarkaratna 1878-79: 268-272).

The description quoted by Hemādri from the Bhaviṣyottara-Purāṇa is actually found in the printed text of the Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa (4.102.66-85), though the readings are very corrupt. I am translating this passage below, quoting the Sanskrit texts in the notes, together with the readings of the parallel passage in the Skanda-Purāṇa (7.1.166.77ff.), also given in the notes. In the Bhaviṣyottara- and Bhaviṣya-Purāṇas, it is Kṛṣṇa who is explaining the vow to Yudhiṣṭhira, while in the Skanda-Purāṇa the rite is described by Śiva to his wife.

On the 13th day of (the bright half of) the Bhādrapada month (or the Jyeṣṭha month, according to the Skanda-Purāṇa), the lady should first clean her teeth. Thereafter, she should make a resolve to fast for three nights (and days). If she is unable to do that, she may fast just the night of the 13th day, eat on the 14th day only such food that is given to her without solicitation, and fast the day of the full moon. Every day she should take a bath in a big river, in a pool or under a waterfall, but on the day of the full moon, she should take a special bath (washing herself) with water purified with mustard seeds.⁹⁹

moon in the Bhādrapada month; the author of the Nirṇayasindhu (p. 100) quoting Hemādri says that in his time this *vrata* was no longer in vogue (*tat tu nedānīm pracarati*). The *brahma-sāvitrī-vrata* is described in Vrataprakāśa, fol. 169f. Cf. Kane 1958: 92, 358-359. In the Sāvitrī legend, too, as related in the Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa (4.102.37-39), Sāvitrī, calculating from Nārada's prediction that her husband will die on the fourth day, started a three-night fast on the evening of the 12th day of the bright half of the Proṣṭhapada month (*tataḥ kāle bahutiṭhe vyatikrānte kadā cana / sa prāptakālo mriyeta iti saṃcītya bhāminī / proṣṭhapade site pakṣe dvādaśyāṃ rajanīmukhe / gaṇayanti ca sāvitrī nāradoktaṃ vaco ḥṛdi / vrataṃ trirātram uddīśya divā rātraṃ vinābhavat / tatas trirātraṃ nirvartya snātvā saṃtarpya devatāḥ / caturthe 'hani martavyam iti saṃcītya bhāminī / ...*). However, in a short addition (verses 86-91), the same text prescribes also the fast to be performed on the 15th of the Jyeṣṭha month. Moreover, in the Skanda-Purāṇa (7.1.166.44-46) the Sāvitrī legend has almost exactly the same wording as in the Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa, but here the month is given as Jyeṣṭha (*tataḥ kāle bahutiṭhe*, etc. *...jyeṣṭhamāse site pakṣe dvādaśyāṃ rajanīmukhe / gaṇayanti ca sāvitrī nāradoktaṃ vaco ḥṛdi...*).

⁹⁸ Cf. Hemādri, p. 272.16: *iti bhaviṣyottarapurāṇoktaṃ brahmasāvitrīvrataṃ*.

⁹⁹ Cf. Bhaviṣyottara-Purāṇa as quoted by Hemādri, p. 271: *trayodaśyāṃ bhādrapade danta-dhāvanapūrvakam / trirātraṃ niyamaṃ kuryād upavāsasya bhaktitaḥ // aśaktā ca trayodaśyāṃ naktaṃ kuryāj jīteṇ dīyā / ayācītaṃ caturdaśyāṃ paurṇamāsyāṃ upoṣaṇam // nityaṃ snātvā mahānadyāṃ taḍāge nirjhare 'pi vā / viśeṣataḥ pūrṇamāsyāṃ snānaṃ sarṣapamṛjjalaih //* – Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa, 4.102.66-68: *trayodaśyāṃ bhādrapade danta-dhāvanapūrvakam / trirātraṃ niyamaḥ kārya upavāsasya bhārata // aśaktā tu trayodaśyāṃ naktaṃ kuryāj jīteṇ dīyā / ayācītaṃ caturdaśyāṃ upavāsena pūrṇimāṃ // nityaṃ snātvā mahānadyāṃ taḍāge cātha nirjhare / viśeṣaḥ paurṇamāsyāṃ tu snānaṃ sarṣapamṛjjalaih //* = Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.77-80 with the following differences (Śiva speaks to Devī): *trayodaśyāṃ tu jyeṣṭhasya... trirātraṃ niyamaṃ kuryād upavāsasya bhāminī / aśaktas tu... jīteṇ dīyā... hy upavāsena... snātvā taḍāge vā mahānadyāṃ ca nirjhare / pāṇḍukūpe tu suśroṇi sarvasnānaphalaṃ labhet / viśeṣāt pūrṇimāsyāṃ...*

In a pot she should take a *prastha* measure of sesame (or, according to the Skanda-Purāṇa, sand), or take (seven) different kinds of grain, such as barley, paddy, sesame, etc. in a vessel made of cane, and wrap them with a pair of cloths.¹⁰⁰

She should have an icon of Sāvitṛī made, beautiful in every part, either of gold, silver (or wood, according to Skanda-Purāṇa) or clay, depending on her (financial) ability. She should give a pair of red cloths to Sāvitṛī and Brahmā (or, according to the Skanda-Purāṇa, two red cloths to Sāvitṛī and a white one to Brahmā).¹⁰¹

Then she should with devotion worship Sāvitṛī together with Brahmā: with incense, good-smelling flowers, with camphor fumigations, food offerings and lamps, with full Luffa fruits, with edible (or, according to the Skanda-Purāṇa, ripe) gourds, with Cucumis fruits, with coconuts, with wild dates, with Feronia or mango fruits, with pomegranate fruits, with roseapple fruits, with citrons, with oranges, with cucumbers, with bread-fruits, with cumin, with ginger, with sugarcane molasses, with salt, with seven kinds of grains that have been planted and made to sprout in a vessel made of cane. She should also add some colour with bright silk threads, and with saffron flowers of the keśara plant.¹⁰²

Thus Sāvitṛī the beloved wife of Brahmā makes her descent (into the image); she should worship her and Brahmā with the mantra of Sāvitṛī. In this context others have quoted the following mantra as given in a Purāṇa text:

O Goddess preceded by the sacred syllable *om*, O you who hold a harp and a book (in your hands), O Mother of the Vedas, Obeisance to you, please let me not become a widow!¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Bhaviṣyottara-Purāṇa quoted by Hemādri, p. 271: *grhītvā vālukāṃ pātre prasthamātrāṃ yudhiṣṭhira / atha vā dhānyam ādāya yavaśālītīlādīkam // tato vaṃśamaye pātre vastrayugmena veṣṭite / sāvitṛipratimāṃ kṛtvā brahmaṇaś caiva śodhanam // ...* – Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa, 4.102.69-70: *grhītvā tilakān pātre prasthamātraṃ yudhiṣṭhira / atha vā dhānyam ādāya yavaśālītīlādīkam // tato vaṃśamaye pātre vastrayugmena veṣṭayet / = Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.81-82 with the following differences: grhītvā vālukāṃ... prasthamātre yavaśasvini / ...veṣṭite /*

¹⁰¹ Cf. Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa, 4.102.70-71: *sāvitṛipratimāṃ kṛtvā sarvāvayavaśobhanām // saurvarṇīm mṛnmayīm vāpi svaśaktyā raupyanirmitām / raktavastrayugaṃ dadyāt sāvitṛyai brahmaṇe tathā // = Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.82-83 with the following differences: ... sarvāvayavaśobhitām... dārunirmitām / raktavastradvayaṃ... brahmaṇaḥ sitam //*

¹⁰² Cf. Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa, 4.102.72-75: *sāvitṛīm brahmaṇā sardham evaṃ bhaktyā prapūjayet / gandhaiḥ sugandhipuṣpāiś ca dhūpanaivedyadīpakaiḥ // pūrṇaiḥ kośātakair bhakṣyaiḥ kūśmāṇḍaiḥ karkaṭāphalaiḥ / nālikeraīś ca kharjūraiḥ kapitthair dāḍimīphalaiḥ // jambū-jambīranāraṅgaiḥ karkaṭāiḥ panasaiś tathā / jīrakaiḥ kaṭukhaṇḍaiś ca guḍena lavanaṇa ca // virūḍhaiḥ saptadhānyaiś ca vaṃśapātre prakalpitaiḥ / rājanyā sūtrakaṇṭhaiś ca śubhaiḥ kuṅkumakeśaraiḥ // = Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.84-87 with the following differences: ...śaktyā prapūjayet... sugandhapuṣpāiś... pūrṇakośātakaiḥ pakvaiḥ kūśmāṇḍakarkaṭāphalaiḥ / nālikeraīḥ sakharjūraiḥ... dāḍimīaiḥ śubhaiḥ // ...nāriṅgair akṣotaiḥ... vaṃśapātraprakalpitaiḥ / rañjayet paṭtasūtraiś ca... Cf. Agni-Purāṇa 194.5: ...saptadhānyaiḥ prapūjayet /*

¹⁰³ Cf. Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa, 4.102.76-77: *avatāraatīty evaṃ sāvitṛī brahmaṇaḥ priyā / tām arcayeta mantreṇa sāvitṛīm brāhmaṇaḥ svayam // itareṣāṃ purāṇoktamantro 'tra samudāhṛtaḥ // omkārapūrvake devi vīṇāpustakadhāriṇī / vedamātar namas tubhyam avaidhavyaṃ*

After having worshipped like this according to the prescription, she should then arrange a vigil accompanied with the sound of songs and musical instruments. A multitude of men and women should spend the night dancing and laughing, and finally with the telling of stories. And along with song expressing the emotions of love and attachment, she should also arrange for the best of Brahmins to narrate the Sāvitrī legend until it is the moment when it starts to become light.¹⁰⁴

(In the Skanda-Purāṇa, there is a passage missing in the Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa, which states: Having thus performed the marriage of Sāvitrī and Brahmā, she should have seven married couples enveloped in white cloths and make a donation of a fully furnished house.)

'Then, when it starts becoming light and the immaculate time of the dawn is at hand',¹⁰⁵ the image of Sāvitrī (along with the other icons and offerings) is to be donated to a Brahmin learned in the Vedas and to his wife. Alternatively, the icon can be given to a person who publicly recounts the Sāvitrī legend and is acquainted with the associated ritual (*sāvitra-kalpa*)¹⁰⁶, or to one who lives by gathering (different) grains and knows the fate (from their sprouting), or to an impoverished Agnihotrin (who performs the Vedic *śrauta* ritual of agnihotra regularly at every sunrise and sunset).¹⁰⁷ The image of Sāvitrī and all other offerings are to be given and received with special mantras, pronounced by the donor after she has made a bow and stands in front of the Brahmin, after darbha grass mixed with uncrushed rice grains and sesame has been thrown on her with best wishes.

prayaccha me // = Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.88-90 with the following differences: avatāraṃ karoty evaṃ... arcayīta mantreṇa sāvitrīyā brahmaṇā samam / ...purāṇokto mantrō 'yam... vedāmbike...

104 Cf. Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa, 4.102.78-79: *evaṃ saṃpūjya vidhivaj jāgaram kārayet tataḥ / gītavaditraśabdena hyaṣṭatārikadambakaiḥ // nṛtyahāsair nayed rātriṃ pṛṣṭhataś ca kathānakaiḥ / sāvitrīyākhyānakam vāpi vācayed dvijasattamam / yāvat prabhātasamayaṃ gītyā bhāvarasaiḥ samam // = Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.91-92 with the following differences: ...tatra kārayet / ...naranārikadambakam // nṛtyad dhasan nayed rātriṃ nṛtyaśāstraviśāradaiḥ // ...cāpi vācayīta dvijottamān / ...gītabhāvarasaiḥ saha //.*

105 Cf. Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa, 4.102.80: *tataḥ prabhāte vimala uṣaḥkāle hy upasthite / brāhmaṇe vedaviduṣi sāvitrīṃ vinivedayet //*. See Section 15 on the first light of the day. Here Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.93-94 has the following: *vivāham evaṃ kṛtvā tu sāvitrīyā brahmaṇā saha / paridhāpya sitair vastrair dampatīnāṃ tu saptakam // gṛhadānam pradātavyaṃ sarvopas-karasaṃyutaṃ / brāhmaṇe vedaviduṣe sāvitrīṃ vinivedayet //*. The first half verse occurs later in Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166, but in a different context.

106 According to Sörensen (1904-25: 635b), *sāvitrām* (scil. *upākhyānam*) is included in the enumeration of the chapters of its fifth book (where it is not found) in the Mahābhārata (1.2.332 in the Bombay ed.); however, I could not find this in the critical edition, which mentions the Sāvitrī legend as expected in the enumeration of the contents of the third book (1.2.126: *sāvitrīyauddālakīyaṃ ca vainyopākhyānam eva ca...*; variant reading: *sāvitrīyāś cāpy upākhyānam atraiva parikīrtyate*).

107 Cf. Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa, 4.102.81: *yathā sāvitrakalpajñe sāvitrīyākhyānavācike / daivajñe uñchavṛttau ca daridre cāgnihotriṇi // = Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.95 with the following differences: atha sāvitrīkalpajñe... / daivajñe hy uñchavṛttisthe daridre... See chapters 15-16 on the agnihotra.*

This great lady Sāvitrī is given by me together with gold; may a Brahmin receive it, so that (God) Brahmā (Sāvitrī's husband) will be pleased.¹⁰⁸

Then the lady performing the *vrata* should take the Brahmin (to whom the donation was made) to her home. She herself should first take ten steps (outside), then re-enter her house, and take a meal together with Brahmins and her relatives. Finally she should send the Brahmins off with the mantra: 'May Sāvitrī be pleased'.¹⁰⁹

Both the Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa and the Skanda-Purāṇa have this description embedded in the context of the well-known Sāvitrī legend, and this is so also in Hemādri's Caturvarga-Cintāmaṇi (cf. also Kane 1958: 359). However, we note that any reference to the banyan tree that is so prominent in the *vaṭa-sāvitrī-vrata* is missing. There is, moreover, a particular detail, which in my view reveals the original context of this *vrata*, namely the long list of various fruits to be offered.

5. BRAHMĀ'S SACRIFICE AND HIS TWO WIVES SĀVITRĪ AND GĀYATRĪ

In the Skanda-Purāṇa, the well-known Sāvitrī legend (which contains the above description of the *brahma-sāvitrī-vrata*) in 7.1.166 is preceded (in chapter 165) by another long myth relating to Goddess Sāvitrī and her husband Brahmā, where most of the many fruits listed as offerings in the *brahma-sāvitrī-vrata* are also enumerated.¹¹⁰ This myth, called 'Sāvitrī's greatness' (*sāvitrī-māhātmyam*) in the colophon of Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.165, is also found in Skanda-Purāṇa 6.179-194, as well as in Padma-Purāṇa 1.16-44.¹¹¹ It narrates the Vedic Soma sacrifice performed by Brahmā at Hātakeśvara near his abode in Puṣkara. In the course of the sacrifice,

Sāvitrī, his beautiful wife, who was well honoured, was invited by the adhvaryu (priest): 'Madam, come quickly, all the fires have risen (i.e. are well-kindled), the time

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa, 4.102.82-83: *manreṇānena kaunteya praṇamya vidhipūrvakam / darbhākṣatātilair miśrā pūrvāśābhimukhā sthitā / sudhī vipravaro vipra oṅkārasvastī-pūrvake // sāvitrīyaṃ mayā dattā sahiranya mahāsati / brahmaṇaḥ prīṇanārthāya brāhmaṇa pratigṛhyatām //*. From this passage onwards, Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166 differs radically, having a long passage on various recommended donations and on many details of the feast to be given.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa, 4.102.84-85: *evaṃ dattvā dvijendrāya sāvitrīm tāṃ yudhiṣṭhira / nai-vedyādi ca tat sarvaṃ brāhmaṇaṃ svagrhaṃ nayet / svayaṃ daśapadaṃ gacchet svaveśma punar āvišet // tatra bhuktvā haviṣyānnaṃ brāhmaṇair bāndhavaiḥ saha / visarjayet tato viprān sāvitrī prīyatām iti //*.

¹¹⁰ This, together with the absence of the banyan tree, seems rather decisive for the original context of this *vrata*. Of course Sāvitrī and Satyavat do collect fruits in the forest, and there is a possibility that originally these fruits were also enumerated in the Sāvitrī legend, but none of the available versions has such a list.

¹¹¹ Cf. Dange 1986-90, II: 604-615.

for initiation has approached.' She, engrossed in doing some work, did not come promptly, as usually happens with females. 'I have not made any decoration here, at the door; I have not drawn pictures on the wall; I have not drawn the Svastika in the courtyard. The cleansing of the pots has not at all been done here. Lakṣmī, who is the wife of Nārāyaṇa has not yet arrived. So also Svāhā, the wife of Agni; and Dhūmroṇā, Yama's wife; Gaurī, the wife of Varuṇa; Ṛddhi, the wife of Kubera; Gaurī, Śambhu's wife, dear to the world. So also Medhā, Śraddhā, Vibhūti, Anasūyā, Dhṛti, Kṣamā, and the rivers Gaṅgā and Sarasvatī have not as yet come. Indrāṇī, and the Moon's wife Rohiṇī, dear to the Moon. Similarly Arundhatī, Vasiṣṭha's wife; so also the wives of the seven sages, and Anasūyā, Atri's wife and other ladies, daughters-in-law, daughters, friends, sisters have not as yet come. I alone have remained here (waiting for them) for a long time. I shall not go alone until those ladies come. Go and tell Brahmā to wait for a while. I shall hurriedly come with all (those ladies); O you of high intellect, you surrounded by gods, will attain great grace; so also shall I; there is no doubt about it.' Leaving her talking like that the Adhvaryu came to Brahmā.

'O god, Sāvitrī is busy; she is engaged in domestic work. I shall not come till my friends arrive – Thus she has told me. O lord, time is passing away. O grandsire, do today whatever you like.'

Brahmā, thus addressed (got) a little angry and said to Indra: 'O Śakra, get here quickly another wife for me. Do that quickly by which the sacrifice proceeds (properly) and is not delayed; bring some woman for me till the sacrifice is over; I am soliciting you; make up your mind for me; I shall again free her after the sacrifice is over.' (Padma-Purāṇa 1.16.112-130, transl. Deshpande 1988: 193-194.)

Indra finds a beautiful daughter of a cowherd (*gopa-kanyā, ābhīrī*), Gāyatrī. She is of low descent but is purified by making her enter the mouth of a cow and come out of the cow's anus. Brahmā marries her in the fashion of the Gandharvas (which requires only the mutual consent of the couple). In the end, Sāvitrī's female friends arrive, and they all come to Brahmā's sacrifice at Puṣkara. In this context the different fruits are mentioned:

The chaste lady viz. Brahmā's wife (Sāvitrī), having a lotus as her residence, was surrounded by them. Some beautiful lady had taken sweets in her hand, someone with a winnowing basket filled with fruits approached Brahmā. Similarly others taking measures of winnowed grain; so also a beautiful lady carried various kinds of pomegranates, citrons; another took bamboo-shoots, so also lotuses, and saffron, cumin-seeds, dates; another took coconuts; (another) took a vessel full of grape(-juice); so also the śrīngātaka plant, variegated camphor-flowers and auspicious roseapples; so also someone else took walnuts, emblic myrobalan and citrons; a beautiful lady took bilva-fruits and flattened rice; someone else took cotton-wicks and saffron-coloured garment. All the auspicious and beautiful ladies having put these and other things in winnowing baskets, reached there with Sāvitrī. (Padma-Purāṇa 1.17.111-118, transl. Deshpande 1988: 206.)¹¹²

¹¹² Padma-Purāṇa 1.17.111-118 (= Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.165.44-51, whose variant readings are noted in parentheses): *tābhiḥ parivṛtā sādhvī (sārdham) brahmāṇi kamalālayā // kā (kās) cin modakam ādāya kā cic chūrpaṃ varānanā (kās cit pūpaṃ varānane) / phalapūritam ādāya (phalāni tu samādāya) prayātā brahmaṇo 'ntikam // āḍhakiḥ saha niṣpāvā gṛhītvānyās (āḍhakīś caiva niṣpāvān rājamāśāms) tathāparā / dāḍimāni vicitrāṇi mātulingāni śobhanā (śobhane) // karīrāṇi tathā cānyā gṛhītvā kamalāni ca (karamardakān) / kausuṃbhakaṃ (kausuṃbham) jīrakam ca (caiva) kharjūram aparās (cāparās) tathā // uttamāny aparādāya (utatīś cāparā grhya) nālikerāṇi sarvaśaḥ (cāparāḥ) / drākṣayā pūritam kā cit (cāmraḥ)*

When Sāvitrī learns about Brahmā's marriage with Gāyatrī, she gets very angry and curses the gods and also their wives, who have now abandoned her. In the end, Śiva blesses Gāyatrī, calling her the Mother of the Vedas (Padma-Purāṇa 1.17.303):

You will be a very fortunate one, the granter of boons and of an excellent complexion. The pilgrimage to Puṣkara will be fruitful on seeing you. You will receive the first adoration on the full-moon day of the month of Jyeṣṭha; and those men who knowing your prowess, will worship you, have nothing wanting as far as sons and wealth are concerned... You cause the absence of widowhood to (married) ladies, and always give wealth and grains. When worshipped, you put an end to disease, death and fear... (Padma-Purāṇa 1.17.313-315, 328-329, transl. Deshpande 1988: 219-220).

Gāyatrī and Sāvitrī are usually considered synonymous (cf. Section 8), though in this myth they are made into two separate wives of the creator god Brahmā (we shall return to this theme in Section 34). From Padma-Purāṇa's identification of the full moon of the Jyeṣṭha month as the time when Gāyatrī is to be worshipped, from the absence of widowhood being mentioned as the fruit of this worship, and from the name *brahma-sāvitrī-vrata*, it is clear that this *vrata* has often been confused with *vaṭa-sāvitrī-vrata*. Yet it is important to the interpretation of the latter and the Sāvitrī legend, as it deals with the divine couple worshipped in the *vaṭa-sāvitrī-vrata*, Goddess Sāvitrī and her husband Brahmā.

6. THE THEME OF DEATH AND RESURRECTION AND THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

The Sāvitrī legend and the associated rituals have interesting historical and symbolic dimensions. Although quite a lot of work has already been done in this field,¹¹³ I trust that further study will be rewarding. In the following, I will focus on the theme of death and resurrection, which is quite central to the Sāvitrī legend and vow. But before I start analysing them in detail, I want to say a few words about the Near Eastern parallels so that the reader has a little clearer idea of them and can keep an eye out for relevant parallels while I am marshalling the evidence in support of the claim that I made almost twenty years ago. I suggested that the Sāvitrī legend and the *sāvitrī-vrata* are likely to be as ancient in South Asia as the Indus Civiliza-

pātraṃ śṛṅgātakaṃ tathā (śṛṅgārāya yathā purā) // karpūrāṇi (karburāṇi) vicitrāṇi jambūkāni śubhāni ca / akṣotāmalakān (akṣoḍāmalakān) gṛhya jambīrāṇi tathāparā // bilvāni paripakvāni cipiṭāni varānanā (cirbhaṭāni varānane) / (SkP inserts: annapānādhikārāṇi bahūni vividhāni ca /) kārpaśatūlikās (śarkarāpattulīṃ) cānyā vastraṃ kausuṃbhakaṃ (vastre kausuṃbhake) tathā // evamādyāni (evamādīni) cānyāni kṛtvā śūrpe varānanāḥ (gṛhya pūrpe varānane) / sāvitrīyā sahītāḥ sarvāḥ saṃprāptāḥ sahasā (saṃprāptās tu tadā) śubhāḥ //

¹¹³ Cf. especially Allen 1901; Gupte 1906; 1919: 238-245; Croke 1926: 407; Hauer 1927: 238-240; Lommel 1955-58; Kane 1958: 91-94; Dange 1963; 1986-90, IV: 1260-62; 1987: 59-66; Parpola 1980; 1994a: Chapter 14; Tewari 1991: 40-43; Pearson 1996: 54-61.

tion, and that they may go even further back, to the religions of the ancient Near East.¹¹⁴

The iconography of the Indus seals bears clear evidence of the influence of Mesopotamian and Elamite glyptics,¹¹⁵ and the presence of Harappan people in the Near East is proved by the discovery of about 40 Indus-related seals there.¹¹⁶ While full urbanisation with literacy was reached in the Indus Valley around the 26th century BC, the Proto-Literate Period in Mesopotamia falls into the last quarter of the fourth millennium. The Indus people, then, had a lot to learn from Mesopotamia, including fertility cults, considered so important for agriculture which was also their main basis of economy. In view of the contents of this article, I should also like to stress that the heavenly bodies, especially the sun and the moon, but also the calendrical marking stars, must have started playing as important a role in the Indus Valley as they did in ancient Mesopotamia because their newly acquired urban culture forced the Harappan priests to create a fairly exact method of luni-solar time reckoning.

One of the most central motifs in the religions of ancient Mesopotamia and the neighbouring countries, and in the Hellenistic mystery cults derived from them, is precisely the death, lamentation for and resurrection of the newly married husband of the Goddess, ceremoniously enacted in the temple each new year in a 'sacred marriage' of the ruling king with a priestess personifying the Goddess.¹¹⁷ The purpose seems to have been to ensure the longevity of the king and the fertility and welfare of his country. The bride is a goddess typified by Sumerian Inanna and Akkadian Ishtar, the Mistress of Love and War, while the groom is typified by Sumerian Dumuzi and Akkadian Tammuz, a youthful shepherd personifying fertility, and the later Syrian Adonis. In some forms of this cult, like in the worship of

¹¹⁴ Cf. Parpola 1980. J. W. Hauer (1927: 238) also interprets the Sāvitrī legend as a resurrection myth, but his comparisons imply a typological similarity rather than a historical connection: 'Die aus dem Mahābhārata bekannte Legende von Sāvitrī und Satyavat ist nichts anderes als der uralte Mythos von Nana-Balder, Kybele-Attis, Isis-Osiris, Ishtar-Thamus ins Irdische übertragen, wie auch der Mythos von Nana-Balder und Isis-Osiris zum Märchen oder zur Sage wird.' Similarly Lommel (1955-58: 99-103): 'In anderen Kulturbereichen gibt es Mythen, die – weitgehend oder wenigstens in gewissen Punkten – Ähnlichkeiten aufweisen mit dem hier besprochenen altindischen Mythenkomplex...'

¹¹⁵ Cf. Parpola 1994a: Chapter 14 with further literature in the notes.

¹¹⁶ Parpola 1994b.

¹¹⁷ On the sacred marriage cult in the ancient Near East, see Kramer 1969 (pp. 107-133 and 154-161: 'The sacred marriage: Death and resurrection'); Jacobsen 1970; 1976; 1987; Cooper 1972-75; Renger 1972-75; Alster 1985; Bruschweiler 1987; and especially Sefati 1998 and (also on resurrection) Simo Parpola 1997. It should be noted, however, that by no means all Assyriologists believe that a belief in resurrection existed in ancient Mesopotamia (cf. Renger 1972-75: 254). I thank Simo Parpola and Kazuya Maekawa for keeping me up-to-date with literature in this field. At the same time I must confess that I know the Near Eastern material only very superficially. A thorough comparative examination will undoubtedly lead to a better understanding of both the Indian and the Near Eastern religion.

the Anatolian goddess Kubaba/Cybele, which later spread to Rome, the personifiers of the groom castrated themselves.¹¹⁸ The theme of Sāvitrī's following the god of death towards his realm is also paralleled by the Sumerian myth of Inanna's descent to the netherworld with the same motivation as that of Sāvitrī's, to save her dead husband. This happens, however, only after she has herself caused the death of her husband, angered by his nonchalant behaviour during her first descent to the netherworld.¹¹⁹

My conviction of the antiquity of the resurrection theme in South Asia differs from the opinion of Gananath Obeyesekere, who in 1984 published a monumental study of the resurrection dramas of contemporary Sri Lanka and South India. Obeyesekere also thought it likely that this tradition is derived from the Near Eastern mystery cults, but preferred to date its importation to South Asia to the Hellenistic period or even later. I continue by briefly describing Obeyesekere's evidence and argument.

7. CILAPPATIKĀRAM AND THE CULT OF GODDESS PATTINĪ '(FAITHFUL) WIFE'

The epic of Cilappatikāram, one of the greatest monuments of Old Tamil literature, possibly composed in the sixth century AD, has as its central theme the cult of the goddess of marital faithfulness and the legend of its origins.¹²⁰ Very briefly, the story is as follows. In the coastal city of Pukār in the Cōḷa kingdom, the young merchant Kōvalaṅ squanders his fortunes upon a courtesan, but is forgiven by his faithful wife Kaṇṇaki. Kaṇṇaki offers her bejewelled anklets (*cilampu*) – which have given the epic its name – as the basis of new capital that would enable her husband to restart his business. The couple leaves for the city of Madurai in order to sell this treasure there. As it happens, very similar anklets of the queen have been stolen by the royal jeweller shortly before, and he frames Kōvalaṅ as the thief when he is selling one of his wife's anklets. The angered king rashly has Kōvalaṅ put to death without a proper investigation. Kaṇṇaki on learning what had happened dashes to the court, proves the innocence of her husband by showing the remaining pair of the anklet, tears off one of her breasts and throws it on the floor in front of the king, cursing him for his injustice. The capital of the Pāṇḍya kingdom then goes up in flames. The final episode is set in the third major kingdom of ancient Tamil Nadu, the realm of the Cēra king, and describes how the cult of Kaṇṇaki was estab-

¹¹⁸ See Vermaseren 1977.

¹¹⁹ Cf. e.g. Kramer 1969: 107-133.

¹²⁰ On Cilappatikāram, see Dikshitar 1939 and Zvelebil 1973; 1974; 1975; 1992; 1995 (indexes s.v.).

lished: she came to be worshipped as the goddess of marital faithfulness, *Pattini* (from Sanskrit *patnī* 'wife').

In his field research in Sri Lanka, Obeyesekere found out that

the central feature of the Sinhala rituals for *Pattini* is the killing and death of [her husband] *Pālaṅga*, *Pattini*'s search for him, her role as *mater dolorosa* weeping over *Pālaṅga*'s corpse, and her resurrection of him (Obeyesekere 1984: 530).

Obeyesekere (1984: 530) was aware that 'it is not difficult to establish West Asian contact with India as early as Mohenjodaro and Harappa', but 'since such resurrection dramas are performed nowhere else in South Asia' except in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Sri Lanka, he opted for thinking that they

might have diffused from Western Asia and the Mediterranean region, where such cults were dominant... [and] would have come via well-known trade routes by merchants and taken root among the merchant groups belonging to the Buddhist, Jaina, and Ājīvika faith and living in port cities in southern India (Obeyesekere 1984: 603).

In principle it would seem possible that the death and resurrection theme was borrowed from the Near East by South Asia on two separate occasions, but there are elements in the early southern tradition (such as *vaṭa-mīn* 'north star' as the symbol of the faithful wife in the *Cilappatikāram*) which strongly suggest that it is actually a survival from the Indus Civilization (see sections 28 & 30).

Obeyesekere (1984: 530) did point out that 'the theme of the wife resurrecting her husband is found in... the well-known myth of *Savitri*', but he obviously considered the *Sāvitṛī* legend to be a relatively late element in the *Mahābhārata*, which is generally thought to have come into being between 400 BC and AD 400.¹²¹ Obeyesekere apparently was not aware of the Vedic antecedents of the *Sāvitṛī* legend, to which I will turn soon. Before that, I would just like to point out that Obeyesekere's (1984: 530) claim that 'the drama of "death and resurrection" is alien to Hinduism' is not accepted by Hildebeitel (1991: 367), according to whom it is 'not alien to Hindu ritual', and who finds that the 'the rest of this argument is also very shaky'.¹²²

¹²¹ P. V. Kane (1958: 92f.) noted that 'the *Vaṭasāvitṛīvrata* that is now in vogue must also have been performed long before the 10th century AD. The *Agnipurāṇa* (194.5-8) briefly describes a *vrata* that in essentials is the same as the modern *Vaṭasāvitṛīvrata*.' Nevertheless, Kane is very sceptical about A. B. Gupte's (1906) characterization of the *Sāvitṛī* legend as 'based on a Nature Myth' in accordance with the theories of Frazer's *Golden Bough*, because the sources are so recent: 'What mainly vitiates all his imaginative explanations is that the *Sāvitṛīvrata* is not mentioned anywhere in any work that can be said to be even two thousand years old.'

¹²² See Hildebeitel's detailed criticism (1991: 366-380), in many ways complementary to what follows in this paper. Hildebeitel (1991: 378) comes to the conclusion that 'there is every reason to suspect that there is indeed a continuity from the mysterious revival of the Vedic sacrificial animal, and its symbolism, to the ideology of resuscitation that one finds expressed in so many later Hindu rituals, myths and icons'; he further quotes Stuart Black-

8. SĀVITRĪ VERSE AS THE 'MOTHER' OF THE 'TWICE-BORN' VEDIC STUDENT

I would like to begin the analysis of the Sāvitrī legend and vow with the central figure, Sāvitrī. *Sāvitrī* as a noun of the feminine gender in Sanskrit is a substantivized adjective originally qualifying the feminine word ऋ- 'verse, stanza'. Monier Monier-Williams' *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (1899: 1211b) gives the adjective *sāvitra-* the basic meanings 'relating or belonging to the sun, derived or descended from the sun': it is derived from *savitṛ-* 'instigator, propeller' (from the verbal root *su-/sū-* 'to urge, impel, incite, instigate'), which is the name of the (rising) sun as the divine 'instigator' (cf. Section 15).

For the noun *sāvitrī* itself Monier-Williams records the following main meanings:

- (a) meanings occurring from the Vedic texts onwards:
- 'a verse or prayer addressed to Savitṛ or the sun (especially the celebrated verse ṚV. 3.62.10; also called *gāyatrī*)';
 - 'Name of Sūryā or a daughter of Savitṛ';
- (b) meanings occurring from the epic period onwards:
- 'initiation as a member of the three twice-born classes by reciting the above verse and investing with the sacred thread';
 - 'Name of the wife of Brahmā (sometimes regarded as the above verse deified or as the mystical mother of the three twice-born classes, or as the daughter of Savitṛ by his wife Pṛṣṇi)¹²³
 - 'Name of the wife of Satyavat (king of Śālva; she was daughter of Aśvapati, king of Madra, and is regarded as a type of conjugal love; her story is the subject of a fine episode of the Mahābhārata)'.

One of the most important 'domestic' rituals of the Veda is the initiation (*upanayana*) of a youth into the study of the Veda. The most central act of this ritual is the teaching of the Sāvitrī verse, generally considered to be the holiest stanza of the Vedic literature. Some Gṛhyasūtras prescribe only the following stanza to be taught to all students at initiation as the Sāvitrī verse: *tat savitur vareṇyaṃ bhargo devasya dhīmahi dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt* (Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā 3.62.10), approximately: 'We will receive that best brilliance of the divine Instigator so that he may enliven our thoughts'.

burn (1989: 22, n. 13) also finding Obeyesekere's argument 'difficult to accept'. – One can add that resuscitation of the dead is a relatively frequently occurring motif in ancient Indian narrative literature, cf. e.g. Losch 1935.

¹²³ Pṛṣṇi, 'dappled cow', is used of the mother cow that has calved, and that gives milk for the agnihotra (it is not to be milked for ten days after the birth of the calf). It was the custom to bring the calf near the mother cow to make the milk flow. Pṛṣṇi was the cow which provided the milk for the hot-milk offering (*gharma = pravargya*) for the Aṅgirasas in their long sacrificial session. Cf. Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa 2.1.1.1-3; Bodewitz 1976: 55f., 101.

Several Gṛhyasūtras, however, ordain that different Ṛgvedic verses addressed to Savitṛ should be taught as the Sāvitrī verse to boys coming from different social classes. Similar differences for the three upper social classes (who alone are entitled to initiation) prevail also in other aspects of the initiation, as noted below.¹²⁴ Pāras-kara-Gṛhyasūtra (2.3) allows an option between the two alternatives,¹²⁵ and even in the case of the other variations, that of the Brahmins is often allowed for all the three social classes.¹²⁶

(1) For a Brahmin boy (belonging to the priestly class), the Sāvitrī verse should be one composed in the *gāyatrī* metre (3 x 8 = 24 syllables), namely the one cited above, or in the *anuṣṭubh* metre (4 x 8 = 32 syllables).¹²⁷ The proper age of initiation is 8 (from conception or birth), or 5 if spiritual eminence is desired, the latest possible 16. The auspicious time for initiation is spring (*vasanta*). The student is vested with the skin of a black antelope (*kṛṣṇamṛga*) [= a manifestation of *brahman*], or a garment (*vāsas*) of hemp; with a girdle (*mekhalā*) [sacred to Savitṛ] of muñja grass or kuśa grass; with a staff (*daṇḍa*) of palāśa or bilva wood. The boy should beg with the words *bhavati bhikṣāṃ dehi*.

(2) For a Kṣatriya (= Rājanya) boy (belonging to the nobility or warrior class), the Sāvitrī verse should be composed in the *triṣṭubh* metre (4 x 11 = 44 syllables).¹²⁸ The proper age of initiation is 11, or 6 if military power or long life is desired, the latest possible 22. The auspicious time for initiation is summer (*grīṣma*). The student is vested with the skin of a spotted deer (*ruru*) [or a tiger], or a garment of flax (cotton); with a girdle of the *mūrvā* grass (used for making bowstrings) or *āsmantaka* grass; with a staff made of a branch of the banyan tree (*nyagrodha*, *vaṭa*), or of *aśvattha* wood, or *khadira* wood [or of *udumbara* wood]. The boy should beg with the words *bhikṣāṃ bhavati dehi*.

¹²⁴ Here I am relying on Kane 1941: 268-312 and Gonda 1980: 377-384.

¹²⁵ Pāras-kara-Gṛhyasūtra 2.3: *gāyatrīm brāhmaṇyānubrūyād āgneyo vai brāhmaṇa iti śrutes triṣṭubhaṃ rājanyāya jagatīm vaiśyasya, sarveṣāṃ vā gāyatrīm*.

¹²⁶ Gonda (1980: 379) notes that 'from the symbolical significance of some of the requisites (skin, girdle) it may be inferred that this ritual [of initiation, *upanayana*] was in the first place intended for brahmins (cf. ŚB 11.3.3.2f.), who are the only ones who according to all authorities have to learn the genuine Sāvitrī (RV. 3.62.10).' I agree with this judgment, and think that the differentiation made in regard to the three *varṇas* results from the massive Brahmanical 'brainwashing' launched at the beginning of the Brāhmaṇa period, perhaps c. 1000 BC (cf. Smith 1994 and below sections 12-13).

¹²⁷ An *anuṣṭubh* Sāvitrī is mentioned as being taught by some teachers in Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 11.5.4.13, but this alternative is refuted.

¹²⁸ As a *triṣṭubh* Sāvitrī for a kṣatriya, the following verses are mentioned: Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā 1.35.2: *ā kṛṣṇena rajasā vartamānaḥ* (commentary on Śāṅkhāyana-Gṛhyasūtra 2.5.4-6; Medhātithi on Manu 2.38); *devo yāti savitā* (Vārāha-Gṛhyasūtra 5); Kāṭhaka-Saṃhitā 4.10 (= Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā 6.71.3): *adabdhebhiḥ savitaḥ pāyubhiḥ tvam* (commentator on Kāṭhaka-Gṛhyasūtra 41.20); or Taittirīya-Saṃhitā 1.7.7.1, etc.: *deva savitaḥ prasuva yajñam prasuva yajñapatim bhagāya* (Śātātapa quoted in the Madanapārijāta, p. 23). Cf. Kane 1941: 302.

(3) For a Vaiśya boy (belonging to the class of 'common people'), the Sāvitrī verse should be composed in the *jagatī* metre (4 x 12 = 48 syllables).¹²⁹ The proper age of initiation is 12, or 8 if accumulation of wealth is desired, the latest possible 24. The auspicious time for initiation is autumn (*śarad*). The student is vested with the skin of a cow or a goat [or a spotted deer], or a garment of wool; with a girdle of woollen thread or of hemp or of balvaja grass or of tāmala bark, or yoke-string; with a staff of udumbara or badara or pīlu wood [or of bilva or nyagrodha wood]. The boy should beg with the words *bhikṣāṃ dehi bhavati*.

According to the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa,

formerly [*purā*], indeed, they taught this [Sāvitrī] verse at the end of a year [from his initiation], thinking, 'children, indeed, are born after being fashioned for a year (literally, made equal, or corresponding, to a year): thus we lay speech (voice [*vāc*]) into this one as soon as he has been born';¹³⁰ (7) or after six months, thinking, 'There are six seasons in the year...'; (8) or after twenty-four days, thinking, 'There are twenty-four half-months in the year...'; (9) or after twelve days, thinking, 'There are twelve months in the year...'; (10) or after six days, thinking, 'There are six seasons in the year...'; (11) or after three days, thinking, 'There are three seasons in the year...'. (12) Concerning this they also sing the verse, – 'By laying his right hand¹³¹ on (the pupil), the teacher becomes pregnant (with him): in the third (night) he is born as a Brāhmaṇa with the Sāvitrī.'¹³² Let him, however, teach a Brāhmaṇa (the Sāvitrī) at once [*sadyas*, on the same day as he is initiated], for the Brāhmaṇa belongs to Agni, and Agni is born at once: therefore, he should teach the Brāhmaṇa at once. (Transl. Eggeling 1882-1900, V: 87f.)

In passing we may note that the Sāvitrī verse is here equated with voice or speech, *Vāc*, who elsewhere in Vedic texts appears as an important goddess, including the role of a goddess of victory compared to a lioness (*siṃhī*), rather like Goddess Durgā of classical Hinduism.¹³³ Another noteworthy point here is that the

¹²⁹ As a *jagatī* Sāvitrī for a vaiśya the following verses are mentioned: Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā 1.35.9: *hiraṇyapāṇiḥ savitā vicarṣaṇiḥ*, or Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā 4.40.5: *haṃsaḥ śuciṣad vasur antarikṣasat* (commentary on Śāṅkhāyana-Gṛhyasūtra 2.5.4-6); or Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā 5.81.1: *yuñjate mana uta yuñjate dhiyaḥ* (Vārāha-Gṛhyasūtra 5; according to Āśvalāyana-Gṛhyasūtra 1.22.24ff., this verse is the Sāvitrī in a 'renewed initiation', cf. Gonda 1980: 383); Kāṭhaka-Saṃhitā 16.8 (= Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā 5.81.2): *viśvā rūpāṇi prati muñcate kavīḥ* (commentator on Kāṭhaka-Gṛhyasūtra 41.20; Medhātithi on Manu 2.38). Cf. Kane 1941: 302.

¹³⁰ Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 11.5.4.6: *athāsmāi sāvitrīm anvāha / tāṃ ha smaitāṃ purā saṃvatsare 'nvāhuḥ saṃvatsarasammitā vai garbhāḥ prajāyante jāta evāsmimḥ tad vācaṃ dadhma iti*.

¹³¹ Gonda (1980: 65) finds the significance here attached to the imposition of the right hand 'curious'. The hand has a sexual meaning in the bloody offerings to the Goddess, where the right foreleg of the sacrificial victim is cut off and placed in the mouth of the beheaded victim: this practice, prevalent even today, is based on a myth in which the angry goddess, upon the discovery of her lover's deceit, is said to have castrated him (as well as beheaded him) and then to have thrust the severed sexual organ into the victim's own mouth (cf. Beck 1981: 121f. citing Hildebeitel; see below Section 32 with note 314).

¹³² Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 11.5.4.12: *tad api ślokaṃ gāyanti / ācārya garbhī bhavati hastam ādhāya dakṣiṇām tṛtīyasyāṃ sa jāyate sāvitrī saha brāhmaṇa iti...*; cf. Horsch 1966: 136f.

¹³³ Cf. e.g. Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 3.5.1.22-23 and 3.5.2.9ff., and Parpola 1992: 283f.

Brāhmaṇa, who is here said to be born with Sāvitrī after three days, may be compared (a) to God Brahmā who in later Hinduism is the husband of Goddess Sāvitrī and is resurrected by her, and (b) to Soma, the moon, who in the Veda is both the husband of Goddess Sāvitrī and one who is reborn (after three days) (cf. Section 20).

The Gāyatrī Sāvitrī verse (Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā 3.62.10) is taught first by reciting it foot by foot (there being three octosyllabic feet):

there being three breathings, the out-breathing, the up-breathing and the through-breathing; it is these he thus lays into him; – then by half-verses [the first consisting of two feet and the second of one foot]: there being these two (principal) breathings, the out-breathing [of the mouth] and the up-breathing [of the nostrils], it is the out-breathing and the up-breathing he thus lays into him; – then the whole (verse): there being one vital air (in man), he thus lays the whole vital air into the whole of him. (Transl. Eggeling 1882-1900, V: 89f.)

This can be compared to the ritual of the birth rite, where the father breathes three times on the child to impart the vital breath to him. Interestingly, the five cardinal directions (including the zenith) are said to have breathed vital breaths into the dead sacrificial victim in Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 11.8.3.6.¹³⁴

According to the legend, Sāvitrī's father was blessed with a daughter after he had recited the Sāvitrī verse a hundred thousand times. It is this holy verse, 'the Mother of the Vedas',¹³⁵ that makes the boy 'twice-born'.¹³⁶ In other words, it gives new life to the boy,¹³⁷ who in the initiation ceremony first goes through a symbolic death. Thus Sāvitrī is an appropriate name for the faithful wife who in the legend restores life to Satyavat. S. A. Dange (1963; 1987: 60-62) has offered this plausible explanation as an interpretation of the Sāvitrī legend. This, however, is by no means the whole story. There are, as we shall see, also many other explanations for the Sāvitrī legend, to my mind at least equally important and compelling. But let us continue with the Sāvitrī verse.

¹³⁴ The Sāvitrī verse, i.e. Goddess Sāvitrī, may thus be expected to have such a power to impart vital breaths to a dead sacrificial victim (such as her husband Prajāpati).

¹³⁵ Cf. *vedamātā* in Atharvaveda-Saṃhitā 19.71.1 addressed to Gāyatrī.

¹³⁶ Cf. also Gonda 1980: 378.

¹³⁷ In Vaikhānasa-Gṛhyasūtra 6.7, Sāvitrī is the student's second mother.

9. SĀVITRĪ AND THE TWILIGHT ADORATION

Once taught, the Sāvitrī verse is to be pronounced by every 'twice-born' every day; this is one of the most important religious daily duties.¹³⁸ This is to be done twice a day, at sunset (from when the disc of the sun has half set until the stars become visible) sitting and facing the northwest,¹³⁹ and at sunrise (from before sunrise until the disc of sun is visible) standing and facing the east.¹⁴⁰ These junctions of the day are called *sandhyā* 'juncture (of day and night), twilight'. The ritual in which the repetition of the Sāvitrī verse forms the most important part, is called *sandhyā*, *sandhyāvandana* or *sandhyopāsana* 'praising or adoration at the juncture (of the day)'. To do this, one should go outside the village, either to the east or the north, to a pure place. Normally one should first bathe. Then one should

- (1) sip water and purify the mouth and other orifices of the head (*ācamana*)
- (2) restrain and regulate breath (*prāṇāyāma*)
- (3) cleanse oneself by sprinkling water with mantras three times (*mārjaṇa*)
- (4) drive out sin by breathing out from one's nose upon water (*aghamarṣaṇa*)
- (5) offer water to the sun in the way of receiving a guest (*arghya*)
- (6) mutter the Sāvitrī verse (with *om* and the 'mystical utterances') (*japa*)
- (7) and (this is not mentioned in the early texts) worship with other mantras the sun/day/Mitra in the morning,¹⁴¹ and the fire/night/Varuṇa in the evening¹⁴² (*upasthāna*).¹⁴³

The above enumeration represents a later, rather elaborate codification found e.g. in the Baudhāyana-Dharmasūtra (2.4). The Gṛhyasūtras of Āśvalāyana (3.7.3-6) and Śāṅkhāyana (2.9.1-3) mention only the muttering of the Sāvitrī verse at twilight, while the Mānava-Gṛhyasūtra (1.2.1-5) in addition only prescribes offering guest water (*arghya*) to the sun.¹⁴⁴ This is in agreement with the Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka

¹³⁸ Cf. Manu 2.101; Yājñavalkya-Smṛti 1.99; Śāṅkhāyana-Gṛhyasūtra 2.9.1-3; Āśvalāyana-Gṛhyasūtra 3.7.4ff. There are, of course, many other rituals in which the Sāvitrī verse is used, cf. e.g. Gonda 1980: 226, 292, 368 (*garbhādhāna*). According to Ṛgvidhāna 1.15.1, 'the rite of the *sāvitrī* stanza is to avert evil influences, to obtain prosperity, etc.' (Gonda 1980: 286f.).

¹³⁹ ĀśvGS 3.7.4: *sāyam uttarāparābhimukho 'nvaṣtamadeśaṃ sāvitrīm japed ardhāstamite maṇḍala ā nakṣatradarśanāt.*

¹⁴⁰ ĀśvGS 3.7.5-6: *evam prātaḥ prāṇmukhas tiṣṭhann ā maṇḍaladarśanāt.*

¹⁴¹ Baudhāyana-Dharmasūtra 2.4.13-14 prescribes ṚS 3.59.6 and 1 addressed to Mitra; Gobhila-Smṛti 2.11 ṚS 1.50.1 (*ud u tyam*). Cf. Kane 1941: 315, n. 748, and p. 318 (with further references).

¹⁴² Baudhāyana-Dharmasūtra 2.4.11-12 prescribes ṚS 1.25.19 and 1.24.11 addressed to Varuṇa; Gobhila-Smṛti 2.12 ṚS 1.115.1 (*citraṃ devānām*). 'In modern times the usages vary, many recite... Ṛg. 1.25.1-10 (addressed to Varuṇa) in the evening' (Kane 1941: 315, n. 748; see also p. 318 with further references).

¹⁴³ For the *sandhyāvandana*, see Kane 1941: 312-321, 685-689; Gonda 1980: 228; 458, 460.

(2.2), one the oldest texts dealing with the twilight worship, which explains the rite as follows:

when expounders of sacred texts (*brahma-vādinah*) facing the east at twilight throw upwards water sanctified by muttering the *Sāvitrī* verse, then that water becomes a thunderbolt which throws the demons which fight with the [rising] sun [trying the devour it] onto an island called Mandeha Aruṇa.¹⁴⁵

In addition, a Brahmin should contemplate upon the rising and setting sun and do obeisance to it by turning around sunwise; he will then attain bliss, for that sun is Brahman.¹⁴⁶ The purifying quality of the *Sāvitrī* mantra is also emphasized. *Vasiṣṭha-Dharmasūtra* 26.15 prescribes that if a man wants to purify himself of sin, he should repeat the divine *Gāyatrī* verse daily one thousand times, or 100 times, or at least 10 times.

Later texts mention also a third *sandhyāvandana* at midday, performed in a standing position, with sipping, sprinkling and addressing the sun.¹⁴⁷ *Yoga-Yājñavalkya* associates these three *sandhyās* with the goddesses *Gāyatrī* (morning), *Sāvitrī* (noon) and *Sarasvatī* (evening).¹⁴⁸ Such a 'third twilight' appears to be a quite artificial later addition, and we shall shortly return to the reason for adding it when discussing the 'mystical utterances' *bhūr bhuvahḥ svaḥ* connected with the *Sāvitrī* stanza (sections 11-12).

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Kane 1941: 314f.

¹⁴⁵ TĀ 2.2: *tāni ha vā etāni rakṣāṃsi gāyatriyābhimantritenāmbhasā śāmyanti / tad u ha vā ete brahmavādinah pūrvābhimukhāḥ saṃdhyāyāṇi gāyatriyābhimantritā apa ūrdhvaṃ vi-kṣipanti tā etā āpo vajrībhūtvā tāni rakṣāṃsi mandehāruṇe dvīpe prakṣipanti*. Cf. also *Mānava-Gṛhyasūtra* 1.2.1ff.; *Vaikhānasa-Gṛhyasūtra* 1.3: 4.9; *Āgniveśya-Gṛhyasūtra* 2.6.8: 104.22. The explanations added in square brackets come from later texts including *Vāyupurāṇa* 1.50.163-165. Cf. Kane 1941: 314; Gonda 1980: 126. – Elsewhere it is the Agni (Fire) as Death who tries to eat the rising sun. Cf. 'Prajāpati alone was here (in the beginning)... The Prajāpati created the creatures among whom Agni was the first. Now Agni is Death. He pursued Prajāpati in the form of someone who would eat him...' (*Vādūlasūtra* 3.19, transl. Bodewitz 1976: 18). 'When Prajāpati created (emitted) the gods, he created Agni as the first of them. Failing to find something else to seize he returned to Prajāpati. He (Prajāpati) became afraid of death. He shaped yonder sun out of himself. Having offered this he fled. Then he overcame death...' (*Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa* 2.1.6.4-5, transl. Bodewitz 1976: 17f.).

¹⁴⁶ TĀ 2.2: *udyantam astaṃ yantam ādityam abhidhyāyan kurvan brāhmaṇo vidvān sakalaṃ bhadrām aśnute / sāv ādityo brahmeti /* (the commentator explains *kurvan* = *pradakṣiṇam kurvan*). Cf. Kane 1941: 318.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. *Vaikhānasa-Gṛhyasūtra* 1.3 and Gonda 1980: 460.

¹⁴⁸ *Yoga-Yājñavalkya* quoted in *Aparārka*, p. 49: *pūrvā sandhyā tu gāyatrī sāvitrī madhyamā smṛtā / yā bhavet paścimā sandhyā sāvijñeyā sarasvatī //* (quoted from Kane 1941: 312, n. 741).

10. SACRIFICE TO BRAHMAN AT SUNRISE

One's own daily repetition of the Veda (to keep it in mind) is called *brahma-yajña*, 'sacrifice to the Brahman', and it belongs to the 'five great sacrifices' enjoined for the householder.¹⁴⁹

An imperishable world does he gain, whosoever, knowing this, studies day by day his lesson (of the Veda): therefore let him study his daily lesson... and verily he is freed from recurring death, and attains to community of nature (or, being) with the Brahman (Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 11.5.6.3 and 9, transl. Eggeling 1882-1900, V: 96, 99).¹⁵⁰

As can immediately be seen from the description of the *brahma-yajña*, it is supposed to take place immediately after the twilight adoration.

Outside the village, to the east, north or northeast of it,¹⁵¹ after purifying oneself, sitting on sacred grass, holding purifying kuśa grass between the joined hands, looking at the horizon, one should at sunrise start the Veda recitation with the sacred syllable *om*, the three 'mystical utterances' and the Sāvitrī verse;¹⁵² then utter at least one other verse of the Veda; and conclude by saying, 'homage to Brahman' (*namo brahmaṇe*). The next day he should continue with the verses following that last recited on the preceding day, and so on until the entire Veda has been gone through, then starting again from the beginning. Later manuals make a provision for those who know only the Sāvitrī verse: they may repeat just the sacred syllable *om* as their *brahma-yajña*.¹⁵³

Thus the Sāvitrī verse and Brahman as the Veda are intimately connected together, being personified as the divine couple Sāvitrī and Brahmā. Brahmā's connection with the sunrise is natural, as he created the universe 'in the cosmic dawn'.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 11.5.6.1: 'There are five great sacrifices, ...to wit, the sacrifice to beings, the sacrifice to men, the sacrifice to the fathers [ancestors], the sacrifice to the gods, and the sacrifice to the Brahman' (transl. Eggeling 1882-1900, V: 95). Each of these should be performed day by day (Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 11.5.6.2-3).

¹⁵⁰ On the *brahma-yajña*, see Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 11.5.6-8; Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka 2.10-13; Āśvalāyana-Gṛhyasūtra 3.2-3; etc.; Kane 1941: 700-704; Gonda 1980: 469.

¹⁵¹ It is pointed out in Section 25 that northeast is the direction of the morning star and victory.

¹⁵² The Āgniveśya-Gṛhyasūtra 2.6.2 calls *om*, *bhūḥ bhuvah s(u)vaḥ* and the Sāvitrī 'the fivefold *brahma-yajña*'; they purify the performer of sin (Gonda 1980: 469).

¹⁵³ Āhnikaprakāśa, p. 329: *sāvitrīmātrādhyāyinā praṇavapāṭhena nityam brahmayajñah kartavyaḥ*; cf. Kane 1941: 703, n. 1683.

¹⁵⁴ This phrase is used by A. L. Basham in his foreword to Bailey 1983: v.

11. SĀVITRĪ VERSE, THE SACRED SYLLABLE *OM*, AND THE 'MYSTICAL UTTERANCES'

In addition to the actual stanza of the Ṛgveda, the Sāvitrī verse should contain at the beginning (also of its parts) the sacred syllable *om* and the 'mystical utterances' (*vyāhṛti*) *bhūr bhuvah s(u)vaḥ*, and all these additional elements are to be combined with the Sāvitrī verse so that it comes to be repeated three times as taught at the initiation, first by feet, then by hemistichs, and finally the whole verse without stopping.¹⁵⁵ The three 'mystical utterances', called 'the truth of the speech' (*vācaḥ satyam*),¹⁵⁶ refer to the 'three worlds', the earth (*bhūḥ*), atmosphere (*bhuvah*, literally 'earths') and sky (*s[u]vaḥ*), but which the Brāhmaṇa texts (e.g. Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa 5.32) also equate with many other things, including the three Vedas (Ṛgveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda).¹⁵⁷

According to Manu (2.76), Prajāpati distilled the three sounds *a + u + m*¹⁵⁸ and the three 'mystical utterances' as their essence from the three Vedas. According to the Taittirīya-Upaniṣad (1.8), 'Om is Brahman, *om* is all this (the whole universe); ...a Brāhmaṇa should utter *om*, wishing to reach near to Brahman, and he will reach Brahman.'¹⁵⁹ According to Āpastamba-Dharmasūtra 1.4.13.6, 'the syllable *om* is the door to heaven; therefore one who is about to recite the Veda should

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka 2.11: *trīn eva prāyuṅkta bhūr bhuvah suvar ity āhaitad vai vācaḥ satyaṃ yad eva vācaḥ satyaṃ tat prāyuṅkta / atha sāvitrīm gāyatrīm trīr anvāha paccho 'rdharcaśo 'navānaṃ savitā śriyaḥ prasavitā*. The mystical utterances may be combined with the Sāvitrī verse in two different ways, by putting them either always in front or always at the end of each portion, thus:

(1) *om bhūs tat savitur vareṇyam / om bhuvah bhargo devasya dhīmahi / om s(u)vaḥ dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt // om bhūs tat savitur vareṇyam bhargo devasya dhīmahi / om bhuvah dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt / om suvaḥ tat savitur vareṇyam bhargo devasya dhīmahi dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt //* (thus Baudhāyana-Gṛhyasūtra 2.5.40; Āpastamba-Gṛhyasūtra 11.11).

(2) *om tat savitur vareṇyam bhūḥ / om bhargo devasya dhīmahi bhuvah / om dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt s(u)vaḥ // om tat savitur vareṇyam bhargo devasya dhīmahi bhūḥ / om dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt bhuvah // om tat savitur vareṇyam bhargo devasya dhīmahi dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt s(u)vaḥ //* (thus Bhāradvāja-Gṛhyasūtra 1.9). Cf. Kane 1941: 301, 303; Gonda 1980: 382, 467.

¹⁵⁶ In Jaiminīya-Upaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa 1.10, however, it is the syllable *om* that is equated with *satyam*, and elsewhere *puruṣa*, the 'cosmic man'; cf. Buitenen 1955-56: 207f.

¹⁵⁷ On the *vyāhṛtis*, see also Gonda 1980: 226. In later texts the number of the 'mystical utterances' (also to be included in the Sāvitrī) increases to four (with the addition of *mahaḥ*) or five (with the addition of *satyaṃ puruṣaḥ*, or *puruṣaḥ satyaṃ*), or to seven (with the addition of *mahaḥ, janaḥ, tapaḥ, satyam*), cf. Kane 1941: 301, n. 713.

¹⁵⁸ The sacred syllable *om* is analyzed to contain *alā*, *u* and *m*, since *a/ā + u* yield *o* in sandhi.

¹⁵⁹ Taittirīya-Upaniṣad 1.8 (ed. Limaye & Vadekar 1958: 52): *om iti brahma / om itīdam sarvaṃ / ...om iti brāhmaṇaḥ pravakṣyann āha / brahmopāpnāvanīti / brahmaivāpnoti*. Cf. Kane 1941: 301 and further e.g. Baudhāyana-Dharmasūtra 4.1.26; Baudhāyana-Gṛhyasūtra 3.1; Āgniveśya-Gṛhyasūtra 2.4.12; Gonda 1980: 226.

start by pronouncing first *om*'.¹⁶⁰ Manu (2.74), too prescribes *om* to be pronounced at the beginning and at the end of the daily recitation of the Veda.¹⁶¹ The sacred syllable *om* (considered to be male)¹⁶² represents Brahmā, the husband of Goddess Sāvitṛī, who is represented by the Sāvitṛī verse (*ṛk*, of feminine gender).

The three 'mystical utterances' and the Sāvitṛī verse are in Sanskrit. So is the sacred syllable *om*, but Sanskrit has received it from the Dravidian language family. Briefly, the evidence for this is as follows.¹⁶³ The sacred syllable *om* is not attested in the Ṛgveda, although its latest layers seem to contain an indirect reference to it (cf. below). Its earliest attested usage is in the ritual formulae of the Brahman priest, who is generally silent in the Vedic ritual (silence and mental acts are sacred to the creator god Prajāpati, whom he represents), but gives his commands called *prasava* by pronouncing first *om*. (The term *prasava* associates the Brahman priest with God Savitṛ, the 'instigator', the father of Sāvitṛī, who gives his (*pra*)*sava* at sunrise.) In this usage, as well as in profane dialogues of the Vedic prose, *om* means 'yes', and it is explicitly stated to be a syllable of granting permission or agreement.¹⁶⁴ *Om* is also said to be the divine (i.e. sacral) counterpart of the human (i.e. profane) *tathā (astu)!* '(Be it) so!', the former being a response to a Vedic stanza, the latter to an epic stanza.¹⁶⁵ Etymologically it comes, through labialization of the vowel caused by the following labial nasal, from Dravidian *ām* < *ākum* 'it is; it is becoming, fitting, agreeable; yes', the non-past form of the very basic verbal root *ālāku-* 'to be, become', much used as an auxiliary in all Dravidian languages.¹⁶⁶ Such a labialization has taken place independently in Jaffna Tamil *ōm* 'yes' from Old Tamil *ām* 'yes', and the original form has also been borrowed into Sanskrit (*ām* 'yes') and survives e.g. in Hindi (*jī*) *hām* 'yes'.

The sacred syllable *om* appears to be referred to in the Ṛgveda, although it is not explicitly mentioned. At least the word *akṣara* 'syllable' (also 'imperishable') occurring in Ṛgveda 1.164.41-42 was understood to denote *om* by the author of Jaiminīya-Upaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa 1.10.1-2 (cf. Buitenen 1955-56: 206f.). The hymn 1.164, where the word *akṣara* occurs several times, is addressed to Goddess Vāc, 'Voice, Speech', who is the spouse of the creator god Prajāpati alias Vācaspati 'husband of Vāc'. Buitenen (1955-56: 209f.) translates ṚS 1.164.41-42 as follows:

¹⁶⁰ Āpastamba-Dharmasūtra 1.4.13.6: *omkāraḥ svargadvāraṃ tasmād brahmādhyeṣyamāṇa etadādi pratipadyeta.*

¹⁶¹ Cf. Kane 1941: 301f.

¹⁶² Cf. Dange 1986-90, II: 611, n. 11.

¹⁶³ The following is a brief summary of Parpola 1981.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Chāndogya-Upaniṣad 1.1.8: *tad vā etad anujñākṣaram / yadd hi kiṃ cānujñānty om ity eva tad āha.*

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa 7.18 and Śāṅkhāyana-Śrautasūtra 15.27: *om ity ṛcaḥ pratigara evaṃ tatheti gāthāyāḥ.*

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Burrow & Emeneau 1984: 31, no. 333.

The buffalo cow has lowed [*gaurir mimāya*], building lakes, having become one-footed, two-footed, four-footed, eight-footed, nine-footed – with a thousand syllables in the highest heaven: on the seas that flow out from her do all four world-quarters live: therefrom flows the Syllable: on it lives everything.

This syllable is associated with the dawn in Ṛgveda 13.55.1: ‘When the ancient dawns first dawned the great Syllable was born in the footstep of the cow’ (Buitenen 1955-56: 211; for dawn as a red cow, cf. below Section 34). The equation of *om* with the lowing of the bison cow at dawn also connects the bison cow with Sāvitrī. Bison cow is *gaurī* in Sanskrit, and this is also the name of Śiva’s spouse (cf. Section 3b).¹⁶⁷

12. THE ‘UTTERANCES’ *bhūr bhuvaḥ svaḥ* AND THE BEGINNINGS OF BRAHMANISM

The oldest references to the Sāvitrī verse do not connect it with the ‘mystical utterances’ *bhūr bhuvaḥ svaḥ*. An opposite development seems to have taken place in the expiatory usage of these ‘utterances’, which are first used alone, when some error has been made in the ritual, but are later connected with the sacred syllable *om* in this function, too.¹⁶⁸

A very instructive third case¹⁶⁹ can be cited from the oldest Brāhmaṇa text, the Kāthaka-Saṃhitā, and next oldest, the Maitrāyaṇī-Saṃhitā. In the systematic description of the agnihotra ritual in KS 6.5, the agnihotra formulae are simply *agnau jyotir jyotir agnau* and *sūryo jyotir jyotiḥ sūryaḥ*. The corresponding passage MS 1.8.5 briefly prescribes that *bhūḥ bhuvaḥ svaḥ* should be said before those formulae. In the later added chapter 6.7, the KS extensively discusses the symbolism of *bhūḥ bhuvaḥ svaḥ*.¹⁷⁰

Brian K. Smith (1994) has recently described in detail the classification system of the Brāhmaṇa texts and proposed that the Brahmins have developed this massive and encompassing world view to propagate and establish the position of the Brāhmaṇa class at the top of the society. I am quite convinced that Brian Smith’s hypothesis of this ‘Brahmin conspiracy’ is correct, and in my view the process can

¹⁶⁷ Sāvitrī is also the ‘elder sister’ (*jyeṣṭhā*) of Gāyatrī (cf. Section 5) or Śraddhā (cf. Section 34) and the senior spouse of Brahmā or Agni (cf. Section 34) and as such comparable to the most senior queen, *mahiṣī*, literally ‘buffalo cow’. *Mahiṣī* represents Goddess Durgā as the spouse of the Buffalo Demon, *Mahiṣa Asura* (see Section 34).

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Parpola 1981: 202f.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Bodewitz 1976: 80f., who already notes that *bhūḥ bhuvaḥ svaḥ* is a later addition to the scheme of the agnihotra and the here mentioned passages.

¹⁷⁰ The Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa goes on adding the sacred syllable *om*: ‘He offers in the evening with “*bhūḥ, bhuvaḥ, svar, Om*. The light is Agni, Agni is the light” and in the morning with “*bhūḥ, bhuvaḥ, svar, Om*. The light is Sūrya, Sūrya is the light”.’ (AB 5.30, transl. Bodewitz 1976: 43.)

be seen taking place within the recorded history of our texts. As will soon be evident, the daily agnihotra originally had just two deities, Agni and Sūrya, connected with the sunset/night and sunrise/day. When the Brahmins took over this ritual, they added a third divinity, Vāyu, and connected these three gods Agni, Vāyu and Sūrya with the three worlds expressed through the 'mystical utterances' *bhūr bhuvah svaḥ*. While both Agni and Sūrya in the old pattern represented the king, in the new Brahmanical system Agni, Fire, who comes first (as the first-born of Prajāpati's creatures) was identified with the Brahmins who sacrifice in the fire (cf. KS 6.6, a passage criticizing the nobility, Bodewitz 1976: 116).

It seems to me that immediately before the coming of the Brahmanical conquerors from the north (through Swat) with their gods called Deva, the earlier population residing in the Panjab and worshipping gods called Asura had basically a twofold division of the society, the nobility (*rājanya*) versus the subjects. Such a dualism is reflected in the old pattern of the agnihotra ritual, which was taken over from the 'Asuras', for they too practised it, but in a 'diminishing way' (cf. Taittirīya-Bṛāhmaṇa 2.1.4.1, Bodewitz 1976: 93). In the propagation of the (initially) threefold classification of the society introduced by the Brahmins, the 'mystical utterances' seem to have played a central role.

13. FORMATION OF THE MIDDLE VEDIC CULTURE OF THE BRĀHMAṆA TEXTS AND RITUALS

Before continuing I would like to say a few more words about the beginnings of Brahmanism as I see it historically. The speakers of Aryan languages did not come to South Asia all at once, but in several waves and through different routes. Although the epic Sanskrit is attested later than the Vedic Sanskrit, it represents in certain respects a more archaic dialect than the Vedic Sanskrit. For example, it has preserved the Indo-European lateral *l, e.g. in the name of the epic metre *śloka* from the root *ślu- 'to hear', which corresponds to Greek *klu-*, Slavonic *shlu-*, and so on, while in the Ṛgvedic dialect Indo-European *l had merged with *r, so that the corresponding root is *śru-*. The epic word cannot be derived from the Ṛgvedic dialect, and proves that epic Sanskrit has entered South Asia independently from the Ṛgvedic group. The Ṛgveda enumerates with great detail the rivers in Afghanistan and northernmost Pakistan, including the Swat Valley, and some forms peculiar to the Ṛgvedic dialect have counterparts only in the Dardic group of languages spoken nowadays around this area. The epic traditions, on the other hand, are spread in the plains of North India, the Mahābhārata (c. 400 BC to AD 400) in the western and central parts, the Rāmāyaṇa (c. 400 BC – AD 100) in the eastern parts. Our historical

epics, of course, are late creations and largely reflect later historical events,¹⁷¹ but they continue an earlier tradition, fragments of which survive in the *gāthās* and *ślokas* of the Brāhmaṇa texts (c. 800-600 BC)¹⁷² and in later versions incorporated in the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas and elsewhere.

The Ṛgveda tells of Indra and other Devas, who were worshipped by singing hymns and offering them a drink called Soma, and of kings who under their protection fought battles in the plains of the Panjab. From the Panjab the Vedic culture then moved eastwards. The Kuru and Pañcāla tribes of the upper Gangetic Valley formed the centre of the Vedic culture in the period of the Brāhmaṇa texts. While this Vedic culture submerged a large part of the plains area in their middle, the pre-Vedic traditions of the plains continued outside the Vedic area both in the west, in the Greater Indus Valley (which comprises also Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra), and in the east, where the Indo-Aryan developed into Māgadhī Prakrit.

The Ṛgvedic Aryans coming from the north with their relatively simple Soma cult were probably not too numerous. They quickly fused thoroughly with the elite of the earlier population, whose ritual specialists now became Brahmins and not only adopted the Soma cult but also continued the old local rituals, yet developing them in new directions. Oversimplifying the matter in order to make the point clearer, and to prepare the reader for what is to follow, I would assert that the pre-Vedic cults of the plains were largely 'Proto-Śākta-Tantric'. They were basically royal cults, in which the goddesses Durgā and Kālī with their human and animal sacrifices and sexual orgies played a major role.

The Ṛgvedic Brahmins disliked both the bloodshed and the open sexuality, and they changed the local rituals to some extent by substituting the real acts with

¹⁷¹ I have suggested that the Pāṇḍavas and their fight against the Kauravas might reflect the arrival of a new wave of Aryan speakers (in this case originally belonging to the 'Iranian' branch), who brought the 'Megalithic' culture to South Asia c. 800 BC and who had a relatively fair complexion and were for this reason called 'whitish' (*pāṇḍu*) by the earlier inhabitants of India (see Parpola 1984; cf. also the critical assessment of this hypothesis in Karttunen 1989: 203-207). – Vālmīki, on the other hand, was naturally influenced by the historical circumstances in which he wrote. The theme of Sītā's abduction to distant Lañkā by Rāvaṇa, and Rāma's crossing the ocean with an army of monkeys to liberate her, may well echo some influence exerted by the Greek epic Iliad. (For a new possibility to explain Sītā's connection with Sri Lanka, see Section 24.) The Iliad was the favourite book of Alexander, and was certainly current in the Indo-Greek cities established by him. Greeks had visited Pāṭalīputra, the capital of Magadha as early as 300 BC. This was long before Vālmīki's time, around the beginning of the Christian era, when Greek astronomical and astrological literature started being translated into Sanskrit. The Mahābhārata, at any rate, was influenced by the Iliad, for the fate of Achilles is too similar to that of Kṛṣṇa in the Mausala-Parvan to be accidental: Sage Durvāsas asked Kṛṣṇa to smear his limbs with the remnants of his rice gruel cooked in milk, which Kṛṣṇa did, but incompletely; Durvāsas blessed him, saying: 'though wilt have no fear of death through such parts of thy body as have been smeared [with the rice-milk]; thou ought to have smeared also the soles of thy feet' (Sörensen 1904-25: 275); and indeed Kṛṣṇa died after having been pierced at the heel by a hunter (cf. Sörensen 1904-25: 420f.)

¹⁷² See the important study by Horsch (1966).

symbolic acts or mere ritual or verbal symbols. The method of killing animal victims changed from decapitation to suffocation, and human sacrifice as well as *satī* practice were abolished. Jan Heesterman has done much to elucidate this 'purification' process. The many adopted local rites were combined with the Soma sacrifice or at least provided with Vedic mantras (Ṛgvedic hymns instead of the local prose formulae) to give them a 'Vedic' stamp. Especially in the beginning, the Brahmins could not change everything overnight, and for reasons of popular pressure they had to adopt some major rites with relatively little change. Among such rites are the horse sacrifice, the mahāvratā, the vrātyastomas, and some others. At the same time they started a massive ideological campaign to secure the position of Brahmins at the top of the society. Prajāpati, the predecessor of Hindu Brahmā, the divine counterpart of the Brahmins, rises to the highest rank of Vedic deities.¹⁷³

The change started taking place in the late Ṛgvedic period (c. 1300-1000 BC). Words with the epic lateral sound *l* and new ideologies including that of the sacrificed primeval man (*puruṣa*) and ritual practices like the very complex 'fire altar' (*agnicayana*) make their entrance in the Vedic tradition. With the Brāhmaṇa texts of the Yajurveda, composed partly in prose, which is a completely new medium, the fusion has already been completed.

The Ṛgvedic arrival from the Swat Valley in the north to the plains of the Panjab seems to represent the second encounter between Deva worshippers (calling themselves Ārya) and Asura worshippers (calling themselves Dāsa).¹⁷⁴ The first encounter took place earlier (c. 1700 BC), in Afghanistan, before the Ṛgvedic Āryans entered South Asia, and resulted in the adoption of the principal Asura, i.e. Varuṇa, into the Vedic pantheon of the Devas.¹⁷⁵ Both Asura traditions, in north Afghanistan (the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex, c. 2200-1700 BC) as well as in the Indus Valley (the Jhukar culture in Sind and the Cemetery H culture in the Panjab, c. 1900-1300 BC), had by that time absorbed the earlier local traditions inherited from the Indus Civilization.

14. THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND OF THE SĀVITRĪ LEGEND

The Sāvitrī legend found in the Mahābhārata may well be, historically speaking, the oldest variant, as the Mahābhārata is generally supposed to have come into being between 400 BC and AD 400, and the oldest Purāṇas are supposed to date from the Gupta period starting in the fourth century AD. Of course the Purāṇa variants go

¹⁷³ See Gonda 1986 (with further literature).

¹⁷⁴ In Kāṭhaka-Saṃhitā 6.3 and Maitrāyaṇī-Saṃhitā 1.8.3, the Devas are connected with pottery made (by hand, not on the wheel) by an Aryan and having a raised border (*ūrdhvakapāla*), while the Asuras are connected with wheel-made pottery; cf. Bodewitz 1976: 55.

¹⁷⁵ For a detailed argumentation, see Parpola 1988; 1995; 1999.

back to older prototypes and they have in fact preserved some very ancient material not found in the Mahābhārata, especially the references to the banyan tree. It seems safe to say that the Sāvitrī legend as we know it in all probability existed at least at the time Vālmīki wrote his Rāmāyaṇa, around the beginning of the Christian era. In Rāmāyaṇa 2.27.6, Sītā says to Rāma that she would follow him as Sāvitrī followed her husband Satyavat.¹⁷⁶ If Aśvapati, Dyumatsena and Satyavat are historical persons, which is open to serious doubt, they must in any case predate Greek rule: Sāvitrī's hometown Śākala was the capital of King Menandros, the eponym of the Buddhist text Milindapañha.

The Sāvitrī legend is localized partly in Rajasthan, as Sāvitrī's mother was a daughter of the king of Mālavā (present-day Malwa), and Satyavat was the son of a Śālva king (who ruled around present-day Alwar). According to the Skanda-Purāṇa, Sāvitrī's father and mother undertook the *sāvitrī-vrata* when they came to the temple of Sāvitrī on their pilgrimage tour to Prabhāsa (in the Kathiawar peninsula of Gujarat).¹⁷⁷ Puškara near Ajmer in northeastern Rajasthan, in the past and still today the most important place of Brahmā worship in India,¹⁷⁸ was the scene of Brahmā's Vedic sacrifice, which, as we have seen, is connected with the vow called (*brahma*-)*sāvitrī-vrata*. Moreover, according to the Brahmavaivarta-Purāṇa, Sāvitrī's father Aśvapati actually went to Puškara to worship Goddess Sāvitrī and performed there penance for a hundred years, after his wife's devotion at home was of no avail.¹⁷⁹ Historical studies confirm that the cult of Brahmā prevailed in western India from Gujarat and Rajasthan up to Gayā¹⁸⁰ in the east, between c. 500 BC and AD 1600.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ Rāmāyaṇa 2.27.6: 'Do you not know, my mighty husband, that I bow to your will, that I am as faithful to you as Sāvitrī was to Satyavat, Dyumatsena's son?' (Transl. Pollock 1986: 140.) (*dyumatsenasutaṃ vīra satyavantam anuvratām / sāvitrīm iva māṃ viddhi tvam ātmavaśavartinīm*). Cf. also Dange 1963: 263, n. 2 (quoting the southern version where the stanza is 2.30.6).

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.5-6: *prabhāsakṣetrayātrāyām ājagāma sa bhūpatiḥ / yātrāṃ kurvan vidhānena sāvitrīsthalam āgataḥ // sa sabhāryo vratam idam tatra cakre nṛpaḥ svayam / sāvitrīti prasiddham yat sarvakāmaphalapradam //*. In the largely parallel text of the Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa, the verse referring to the pilgrimage to Prabhāsa is missing.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Bailey 1983: 21.

¹⁷⁹ Brahmavaivarta-Purāṇa 2.23.10-11: *rājā... sāvitrīyās tapase bhaktyā jagāma puškaram tadā // tapaś cacāra tatraiva śaṃyataḥ śatavatsaram I*.

¹⁸⁰ At Gayā, 'the tīrtha at Brahmayoni is actually a spring issuing from a hill... On the summit of the Brahmayoni hill there is a small temple about two hundred years old. In the garbhagrha of this temple there are images of Sarasvatī, Gāyatrī, Sāvitrī and Pārvatī, the first three being consorts of Brahmā. At the base of the hill there is a kuṇḍa dedicated to Sāvitrī. In another part of Gayā, at the foot of Pretasilā hill, there is a Brahmakuṇḍa which probably corresponds to the Brahmātīrtha of the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas. When Francis Buchanan visited this spot in the early nineteenth century he found that the only object of worship there was the Brahmāpad, the feet of Brahmā depicted as impressions of two feet cut in a square stone.' (Bailey 1983: 28.)

¹⁸¹ Cf. Bailey 1983: 24-35; Malik 1993: 15-20.

Sāvitrī was also worshipped in the Indus Valley in ancient times, including the heartland of the Indus Civilization. Satyavat's mother's name Śaibyā connects her with Śibi-deśa (with people called Siboi in Greek sources), approximately the modern District of Jhang in the Pakistani Panjab.¹⁸² According to the Skanda-Purāṇa, the city of Mūlasthāna (modern Multān) was established by the creator god Brahmā (who is the basis [*mūla*] of the gods) together with a pool called Brahmakuṇḍa frequented by pilgrims, and a temple with the icons of 'thousand-rayed'¹⁸³ Brahmā and his wife Sāvitrī. Mūlasthāna also had another pool made by the moon, and called after him. The yearly festival of the Brahmā temple was on the seventh of the bright half of the Māgha month. The worship of Goddess Sāvitrī at Mūlasthāna will fulfil all wishes, especially absence of widowhood, as well as long life, health, power and sons.¹⁸⁴

According to most versions of the legend, Sāvitrī was born in the Madra country around the city of Śākala, modern Sialkot in northern Pakistan, where her father and mother (as well as she herself later) were devotees of Goddess Sāvitrī; this suggests that Sāvitrī was the principal deity worshipped there, at least by the royal family.

¹⁸² Cf. Awasthi 1992: 107.

¹⁸³ *Sahasrakiraṇa* 'thousand-rayed' is in Mahābhārata 13.428.7357 the epithet of God Savitr (= the rising sun), cf. Sörensen 1904-25: 636b; in Vedic texts (e.g. Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa 1.6: *savitā vai prajāpatiḥ*), Savitr is identified with Prajāpati, who is the Vedic predecessor of Brahmā. With the considerable reinforcement it received from the arrival of the Iranian sun worshippers, Multan was one of the foremost centres of the sun cult in South Asia (cf. Stietencron 1966: 226ff.; Karttunen 1989: 220).

¹⁸⁴ Skanda-Purāṇa 7.4.14.5-20: *vedhās cakre tadā tīrthaṃ svanāmnā kīrtitaṃ bhūvi // brahma-kuṇḍam iti khyātaṃ sarvapāpaharaṃ śubham / tattīre sthāpayām āsa sahasrakiraṇaṃ prabhum // mūlaṃ surānāṃ hi kila brahmā lokapitāmahaḥ / tena saṃsthāpitaṃ yasmān mūlasthānam iti smṛtam // brahmaīrthaṃ tu tad dṛṣtvā candraś cakre tataḥ saraḥ / tadāgaṃ candranāmnā vai sarvapāpapranaśanam // taṃ dṛṣtvā tejasā yuktaṃ saṃhṛṣṭāḥ surasattamāḥ / ūcus te lokasraṣṭāraṃ śṛṇuṣva vacanaṃ hi naḥ // yo 'tra snānaṃ prakurute pitṛṇ saṃtarpayīṣyati / pūjayīṣyati deveṣaṃ mūlasthānaṃ surarṣabha // sarvapāpavinirmukto dhanadhānyasamanvitaḥ / saptamyāṃ māghamāsasya śuklapakṣe dvijaṣabhāḥ // yo 'tra snānaṃ prakurute mānavo bhaktisaṃnyutaḥ / mūlasthānaṃ ca deveṣaṃ saṃsnāpya pravilepayet / pūjayīṣyati vastrādyaiḥ svaśaktyā bhūṣaṇais tathā // puṣpadhūpādibhiś caiva naivedyena ca mānavah / sarvān kāmān avāpnoti brahmalokaṃ sa gacchati // sāvitrīṃ ca tato dṛṣtvā brahmaṇā sthāpitāṃ ca vai / kṛtvā cāyatanaṃ divyaṃ svāṃ mūrtiṃ sanniveśya ca / nāma cakre tadā devyāḥ svayaṃ tasyāḥ pitāmahaḥ // yaḥ paśyati svayaṃ bhaktyā kṛṣṇaṃ dṛṣtvā jagatpatim / sāvitrīṃ sa sukhī bhūtvā sarvān kāmān avāpnuyāt // āyur ārogyam aiśvaryaṃ putrasantānam eva ca / na daurbhāgyaṃ bhavet tasya na dāridryaṃ na mūrkhataḥ / na ca vyādhibhayaṃ tasya yaḥ paśyati vidhiṃ naraḥ // gatvā saṃsnāpayed devīṃ kuṅkumena susumbhakaiḥ / saṃchādya vastraiḥ saṃpūjya puṣpair nānāvidhais tathā // naivedyaphalātāmbūlagrīvāsūtrakadīpakaiḥ / saṃpūjya parayā bhaktyā yātrāṃ ca saphalāṃ labhet // na vaidhavyaṃ na daurbhāgyaṃ na vandhyā na mṛtaprajā / vidhir dṛṣṭo narair yais tu kule teṣāṃ prajāyate // tasmāt sarvaprayatnena vidhiṃ paśyet subhāvataḥ / parituṣṭo bhavet kṛṣṇo yātrā ca saphalā bhavet // – On the 'throat ropes' (*grīvā-sūtraka*) here prescribed for the worship of Sāvitrī at Mūlasthāna, cf. below Section 36.*

The Madra country figures in the Mahābhārata to some extent, as Pāṇḍu, the father of the five Pāṇḍava heroes, married Mādri, daughter of the Madra king, who became the mother of Nakula and Sahadeva. The mythical fathers of these two Pāṇḍava brothers are the Aśvins, the twin horseman deities connected with the goddess of dawn, Uṣas, who in her turn can be linked with Sāvitrī as both are associated with sunrise. Mādri is considered to be the incarnation of Goddess Dhṛti 'resolution', a quality most characteristic of Sāvitrī. She ascends the funeral pyre together with Pāṇḍu, i.e. commits suicide as a *satī*.¹⁸⁵ (This is rather significant for the interpretation of the Sāvitrī legend, cf. below Section 35.)

Mādri's brother Śalya, King of Madra, became the leader of the Kaurava army after the death of Karṇa. He is one of the great heroes of the Mahābhārata, and has its ninth book in his name (Śalya-Parvan). He has a big mace-fight with Bhīma and finally a fatal fight with Yudhiṣṭhira, who slays him with a celestial dart.¹⁸⁶ Śalya's name means 'thorn, pike, dart, arrow, spear'.¹⁸⁷ Another name of Śalya's is Ārtāyani, derived from the word *ṛta* 'cosmic order, truth', and explained by the fact that his ancestors (always) spoke (nothing but) truth¹⁸⁸, rather as in the case of Sāvitrī's husband Satyavat; and certainly related to the fact that, in the legend,¹⁸⁹ Sāvitrī makes use of the powers that she has by always speaking nothing but the truth.¹⁹⁰ Śalya is also called 'the manly bull of the Bāhlika (= the Panjab)', and is considered to be the incarnation of Asura Saṃhrāda.¹⁹¹ 'On Śalya's standard-top was a plough-furrow (*sītām*) of gold looking like the presiding goddess of corn (*Sītā*) producing every seed'.¹⁹² (This again is very significant for the interpretation

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Mahābhārata 1.95.65: *tatrainam citāgnistham mādri samanvāroha*; 1.125.29: *rājñāḥ śarīreṇa saha mamāpīdam kalevaram / dagdhavyam supratichannam etad ārye priyam kuru //*; Kane 1941: 626 and on Mādri in general, Sørensen 1904-25: 451f.

¹⁸⁶ This celestial dart was 'created by Tvaṣṭr for the use of Īśāna, and always worshipped by the Pāṇḍavas with perfumes and garlands and excellent seats and the best kinds of viands and drinks' (Sørensen 1904-25: 191).

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Mahābhārata 8.23.45: *śalyabhūtaś ca śatrūṇām yasmāt tvam bhuvi mānada / tasmāc chalyeti te nāma kathyate pṛthivītale*; and Appendix I, 5.42-43 (after 8.25.2): *tvam śalyabhūtaḥ śatrūṇām aviśahyaḥ parākrame / tatas tvam ucyase rājañ śalya ity arisūdana*; cf. Sørensen 1904-25: 189.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Mahābhārata 8.198.1380: *ṛtam eva hi pūrvās te vadanti puruṣottamāḥ / tasmād ārtāyaniḥ prokto bhavān*; quoted from Sørensen 1904-25: 189.

¹⁸⁹ In the Sāvitrī legend, Sāvitrī makes wishes with the formula *tena satyena*, referring to her habit of always speaking the truth; cf. e.g. Mahābhārata 3.381.97: *na smarāmy uktapūrvām vai svairesv apy anṛtām giram / tena satyena tāvad adya dhriyetām śvaśurau mama*.

¹⁹⁰ On *satyavrata*, cf. Krick 1972: 503f.

¹⁹¹ The word *saṃhrāda* or *saṃhlāda* means 'loud noise, loud sound, tumult', and in the epic and the Purāṇas, Saṃhrāda is the son of the Demon Hiraṇyakaśipu 'golden pillow'. Hiraṇyakaśipu, his brother Hiraṇyākṣa 'golden-eyed' and his sister Siṃhikā 'lioness' were children of the creator god Kaśyapa 'turtle' and his wife Diti. Saṃhrāda had three brothers, Anuhrāda, Hrāda and Prahlāda, and three sons called Āyusmat 'long-lived', Śibi (eponym of a kingdom in the Panjab) and Bāṣkala. Cf. Mani 1975: 679.

¹⁹² Mahābhārata 7.105.3943, quoted in Sørensen 1904-25: 189.

of the Sāvitrī legend, as the Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa speaks about a 'Sītā Sāvitrī'; cf. below, sections 21 & 33.) He has no equal in the knowledge of horses, and Karṇa wants Śalya as his charioteer. Śalya had horses from Sindhu, the lower Indus Valley,¹⁹³ and a heroic son called Rukmaratha 'having a golden chariot', perhaps a reference to the chariot of the sun.

In the epic the people of Madra are often mentioned together with Kaikayas or Kekayas, Gāndhāras, Saindhavas and Sauvīras.¹⁹⁴ This shows that they had close relations within the Indus Valley, not only in the north but also in the south. Śalya's horses are also from Sindhu; and Sauvīra or Suvīra, the country of 'good heroes', is supposed to be the upper Sindh.¹⁹⁵ All this agrees with the testimony of the Sāvitrī legend. Kaikeyas or Kekayas (from western Panjab)¹⁹⁶ in the epic mainly refer to five brothers, sons of the Kekaya king, who joined the Pāṇḍava army, while the rest of the Kaikayas fought in the Kaurava army. They were considered to be 'five Asuras reborn' and resembled 'the insects called *indragopakas*, with red coats of mail, red weapons, and red banners'.¹⁹⁷

Madra country and the Panjab in general, called Bāhlika, was the area in the plains where the Ṛgvedic people first arrived from the north, and it was also the place where Brahmanism started. The earliest Brāhmaṇa text, the Kāṭhaka-Saṃhitā, was composed here, in the country of the Kaṭhas or Kāṭhakas, known as Kathaioi by the historians of Alexander the Great. In the Upaniṣadic period, the Madra country was still an integral part of the Vedic culture, and several Vedic ritualist-philosophers visited Madra, among them Uddālaka Āruṇi, who himself was a Kuru-Pāñcāla Brahmin.¹⁹⁸ However, by the time of the Mahābhārata, the Madra country was already considered to be outside the Āryāvarta, the area of orthodox Vedic Brahmanism, and the habits and religion prevailing there, as among the other countries of the Indus Valley, are criticized on many occasions in the epic. It is evident that the number of Brahmins residing there was not very great, and that they could not curb the ancient religion of their country which was favoured both by the king and the people at large. In fact, they themselves seem to have been much

¹⁹³ Mahābhārata 9.8; cf. Sørensen 1904-25: 190.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Sørensen 1904-25: 451.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Awasthi 1992: 104: 'Sauvīra represents the upper part of Sindh... called Ati-Sindhu, a country of 10 thousand villages (Sk. I.ii.39.146). It included Multan and Jahrawar...' In the epic, the Sauvīras or Suvīras are usually connected with Vasātis or Vaśātis (cf. Sørensen 1904-25: 713), Sindhus and Śibis, but also with Madras, Gāndhāras and Kekayas. Cf. Sørensen 1904-25: 635. The Vasātis are the Ossadioi, whom Alexander met on his expedition near the junction of the tributaries of the Indus in the Panjab (cf. Awasthi 1992: 117).

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Awasthi 1992: 86: 'Kekaya... comprised the modern Districts of Jhelum, Shahpur and Gujrat (Western Punjab).'

¹⁹⁷ Mahābhārata 6.10.360, quoted from Sørensen 1904-25: 370.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Witzel 1987: 402.

influenced by it, as the epic says that 'the lowest of Brahmans are residing there from very remote times, *tulyakālāḥ prajāpateḥ*, not possessing the Vedas, etc.'¹⁹⁹

In a discussion between the Madra king Śalya and Karṇa in the eighth book of the Mahābhārata, Karṇa relates both his own experiences in the Madra country and stories of revile he has heard from others. This longer passage (Section 30) deserves a more careful study than can be undertaken here, but is too important for the interpretation of the Sāvitrī legend to be passed over.²⁰⁰

In the capital city of Śākala, at the gate of the royal palace, there is a banyan tree (*vaṭa*) called Govardhana²⁰¹ and a square (*catvaram*)²⁰² called Subhāṇḍa 'well provided with merchandise'. These Bāhlika people, called Jartikas,²⁰³ have the despicable habit of eating cow's meat together with garlic and of drinking a spirit distilled from barley and molasses.²⁰⁴ Without any decency, they eat cakes, meat and fried barley, laugh, sing and dance together with women, drunk and without clothes, outdoors in the marketplaces of the city, decorated with garlands and paintings made with oily paste, with various obscene and reviling songs and ruttish cries resembling those of the donkey and the camel they address each other, and excited by drink they proclaim discourses. Screaming such phrases as 'Ha!²⁰⁵ O you whose (husband) has been slain (*hate*)!', 'Ha! This woman's (husband) has been slain (*hatā*)!' 'Ha! This woman's lord and husband has been slain (*svāmibharṭṛhatā*)!', they dance gesticulating and miserable and without restraint on new and full moon days.²⁰⁶ – This clearly suggests a religious festival in which people bewail the fate

199 Sörensen 1904-25: 104.

200 The text is badly transmitted and corrupt, and my translations and paraphrases must be taken as tentative for other reasons also. For this chapter, cf. also Hauer 1927: 233-237; Karttunen 1989: 216-219.

201 *Go* means 'cow', and *vardhana* means either 'increasing' or 'slaughtering'. The commentator Nīlakaṇṭha opts for the latter meaning, glossing *gocchedanasthānam* (cf. Sörensen 1904-25: 312), which seems plausible as the Madras are in this same passage said to be consumers of cow's meat.

202 *Catvara* means 'a rectangular place, place in which many ways meet, cross-way', according to lexicographers also 'a levelled spot of ground prepared for sacrifice', which meaning also seems relevant here, for it is evident that the banyan tree grows in this square; cf. also *catvara-taru* 'a tree growing on a cross-way'. *Catvara-vāsini* 'living at a crossway' is the name of one of the 'mothers' attending on the war-god Skanda. (Cf. Monier-Williams 1899: 386.)

203 The modern caste of Panjabi peasants called Jaṭṭ descends from these Jartikas.

204 'Intoxicants and *āsavas* (spirits distilled from molasses, flowers or herbs) are like (animal) victims, and gratification (to the Devī) is the same as by the offering of a goat', declares the Kālikā-Purāṇa (71.23-24) as quoted by Kane 1958: 167f.

205 Exclamation of pain.

206 Mahābhārata 8.30.9-18: *tatra vṛddhaḥ purāvṛttāḥ kathāḥ kās cid dvijottamaḥ / bāhlika-deśaṃ madrās ca kutsayan vākyam abravīt // bahiṣkṛtā himavatā gaṅgayā ca tiraskṛtāḥ / sarasvatyā yamunayā kurukṣetreṇa cāpi ye // pañcānāṃ sindhuṣaṣṭhānāṃ nadināṃ ye 'ntar-āśritāḥ / tān dharmabāhyān aśucīn bāhlikān parivarjayet // govardhano nāma vaṭaḥ subhāṇḍaṃ nāma catvaram / etadrājakuladvāram ākumāraḥ smarāmy aham // kāryeṇāty-*

of a woman whose husband has died, just like Sāvitrī. On the other hand, the carnival character of the festival suggests that the agony of death is transitory and changes into the joy of resurrection.

The second description gives some complementary information. Among the indecent Bāhlikas, a demoness (*rākṣasī*) always sings on the 14th night of the dark half month in the prosperous city of Śākala, hitting a drum at night. Or how could one live among them, when they again sing noisy songs (*gāthā*) in Śākala, and satiated with cow's meat with which they drink the strong liquor distilled from molasses, richly decorated together with their fair-skinned and tall women, devour also many (bits) of sheep meat (roasted on spit?) with onions, sing songs like this: 'They have been born in vain who do not eat the meat of boar, fowl, cow, donkey, camel and sheep!',²⁰⁷ and everybody including children and old people, jump around?²⁰⁸ – The various kinds of meat suggest that all these animals have been sacrificed; this and the dancing and singing really most reminds one of the Durgā festival and its *śabara* celebration.²⁰⁹ This festival is in memory of Durgā's victory over the buffalo demon, but its Madra variant seems to have preserved its other aspect which is not so prominent in the 'normal' Durgā festival, namely that the slain (and revived) victim is also the husband of the Goddess.

A third passage which seems important for the Sāvitrī legend is the charge that the Bāhlika women have (incestuous) sexual relationships within their (noble) families.²¹⁰

arthagādhenā bāhlikeṣūṣitam mayā / tata eṣāṃ samācāraḥ saṃvāsād vidito mama // śākalam nāma nagaram āpagā nāma nimnagā / jartikā nāma bāhlikās teṣāṃ vṛttam suninditam // dhānāgauḍāsave pītvā gomāṃsam laṣunaiḥ saha / apūpāmāṃsavātyānām āśinaḥ śilavarjitāḥ // hasanti gānti nṛtyanti strībhir mattā vivāsasaḥ / nagarāgāravapreṣu (I choose the variant reading nagarāpaṇadeṣeṣu) bahir mālyānulepanāḥ // mattāvagītair vivīdhaiḥ kharoṣṭraninadopamaiḥ / āhur anyo'nyam uktāni prabruvāṇā madotkatāḥ // hā hate hā hatety eva svāmibhartṛhateti ca / ākrośantyaḥ pranṛtyanti mandāḥ parvasv asaṃyatāḥ //

207 Cf. the animal lists in the Durgā-pūjā: see Kane 1958: 164ff.; Hildebeitel 1988: 321; Parpola 1992.

208 Mahābhārata 8.30.28-33: *bāhlikeṣv avinīteṣu procyamānaṃ nibodhata // tatra sma rākṣasī gāti sadā kṛṣṇacaturdaśim / nagare śākale sphīte āhatya niśi dundubhim // kadā vā ghoṣikā gāthāḥ punar gāsyanti śākale / gavyasya tṛptā māṃsasya pītvā gauḍam mahāsavam // gaurībhiḥ saha nārībhir brhatībhiḥ svalaṃkṛtāḥ / palāṇḍugaṇḍūṣayutān khādante caidakān bahūn // vārāhaṃ kaukkuṭam māṃsam gavyam gārdabham auṣṭrakam / aidaṃ ca ye na khādanti teṣāṃ janma nirarthakam // iti gāyanti ye mattāḥ śidhunā śākalāvataḥ / sabāla-vṛddhāḥ kūrđantas teṣu vṛttam katham bhavet //*

209 Cf. Kane 1958: 164f., 176. The *śabarotsava* can be connected with such Vedic rituals as the mahāvratā, the vrātyastomas and the aśvamedha (cf. e.g. Parpola 1992).

210 Cf. Mahābhārata 8.30.57-59: *uta śalya vijānāhi hanta bhūyo bravīmi te / yad apy anyo 'bravīd vākyam bāhlikānām vikutsitam // satī purā hṛtā kā cid āraṭṭā kila dasyubhiḥ / adharmataś copayātā sā tān abhyaśapat tataḥ // bālāṃ bandhumatīm yan mām adharmeṇopagacchatha / tasmān nāryo bhaviṣyanti bandhakyo vai kuleṣu vaḥ / na caivāsmāt pramokṣyadhvam ghorāt pāpān narādhamāḥ //* With regard to *bandhumatīm* 'having relatives, surrounded by relatives', I would choose the variant reading *bandhukyo* for *bandhakyo*.

Goddess Sāvitrī as the principal divinity of the royal family in the Madra country seems to have been a variant of Durgā, the goddess of victory.²¹¹ Similar local variants of Durgā are still worshipped in the nearby regions. In Kashmir, Durgā has been worshipped as Śāradā, the 'autumnal'.²¹² But particularly relevant in this context is Durgā as Vaiṣṇo Devī, worshipped in northwest India (Erndl 1993). Among the many later sectarian variants of the Sāvitrī verse, there is also a Vaiṣṇava Gāyatrī.²¹³ In Nepal, a northern mountain region less 'contaminated' by Brahmanism, Durgā is worshipped as Durgā.²¹⁴

15. INANNA-ISHTAR AND SĀVITRĪ/ROHIṆĪ AS THE LIGHT OF EARLY MORNING

Why should the Madra Brahmins have identified Durgā, the goddess of victory, with Sāvitrī? To understand this, it may be useful to consider the Near Eastern evidence.

One of the most important deities of the Sumerian pantheon is Goddess Inanna, the mistress of love and war, whose foremost symbols are the morning star, the planet Venus, and the lion. In the post-Sumerian period she retains her position, functions and attributes as the Akkadian goddess Ishtar, whose name and characteristics connect her with the Canaanite goddess Astarte, known from the Bible. In a recent comprehensive study of Inanna's epithets, Bruschweiler (1987: 160ff. and 187ff.) underlines the importance of the morning light (difficult though it may be for modern people to understand) as the foremost symbol for the supreme force in the universe, at once vanquishing and creative. This is brought out in phrases like 'the shine of your torch that illuminates the entire sky and transforms the darkness into light'; 'the luminous Inanna, as brilliant as the sun'; 'the pure goddess, whose light does not cease to shine'; 'the celestial light which flames like the fire', and 'she who fills the sky with her pure radiance'.

²¹¹ One of the earliest occurrences of Durgā as a name of the Goddess is Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka 10.2.3: *durgā devī*, who is also the deity of the following variant of the Sāvitrī stanza in this same text (Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka 10.1.7: *kātyāyanāya vidmahe kanyakumārī dhīmahi tan no durgīḥ pracodayāt*, corresponding to Mahā-Nārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad 3.12: *kātyāyanai vidmahe kanyakumārī dhīmahi tan no durgā pracodayāt*). On these and other variants of the Sāvitrī stanza found here, cf. Varenne 1960: 30-33.

²¹² The principal festival of Goddess Durgā is in the autumn (*śarad*). In Kashmir, these festivals are celebrated especially at the fortress (cf. *durga* 'fortress') of Śardi (< Śāradī). I have suggested that also the 'autumnal forts' (*śāradī pur*) that the Ṛgveda assigns to the Dāsa enemies of the Aryans are associated with the cult of Durgā (cf. Parpola 1988: 259f.).

²¹³ According to Līṅga-Purāṇa 2.48, this Vaiṣṇavī Gāyatrī is worded thus: *nārāyaṇāya vidmahe, vāsudevāya dhīmahi / tan no viṣṇuḥ pracodayāt //*. Cf. Dange 1986-90, II: 606 and 613f., n. 24 (12).

²¹⁴ Cf. Parpola 1988: 255 and 248ff.; 1992.

The enlivening radiance of the Sumerian goddess Inanna compares well with the principal characteristics of Sāvitrī (and the star Rohiṇī with which she is equated) as discussed in this article. It is through her purity and radiance that the goddess has her almighty power to smash the forces of darkness and to create the world.

For the Sumerians, a torch bringing light to darkness was also a symbol of Inanna. In the legend, Sāvitrī and Satyavat find their way back to the hermitage with the help of torches lit by lightning (in Indian poetry, lightning bolts are likened to creepers that symbolize the loving and faithful wife). Miniature torches are also prescribed for the Vaṭa-Sāvitrī vow.

Millions of Hindu women still light a lamp at twilight. Worship of Sāvitrī with a lamp having red wicks and melted butter as fuel will bring them countless blessings, i.e. not becoming a widow and having sons and grandsons.²¹⁵ A lamp is lighted and placed on the head of a sacrificed buffalo when worshipping Durgā, the goddess of victory: this victory of the concentrated forces of light over darkness takes place at the dawn (on 'the tenth day of victory').²¹⁶ For Sāvitrī as the goddess of victory, cf. also the epic image: 'But the sun also slays. The warrior kills with arrows, "like Savitr" and "like Āditya" (6.48.34f.; 106.78; R. 5.47.9, and 15f.)' (Hopkins 1915: 85).

One should also not forget that feeding the sacred fire with sticks of fuel at sunrise and sunset ever since being initiated (with the Sāvitrī mantra) belongs to the essential daily duties of a 'twice-born' man. From the point of view of the (lunar) resurrection symbolism involved in the Sāvitrī legend, it is interesting to note that

the fire kindled at the time of the *upanayana* was to be kept up for three days and the fuel sticks were offered in that fire. Afterwards *samidh* was to be offered in the ordinary fire (vide Baudhāyana-Gṛhyasūtra 2.5.55-57, Āpastamba-Gṛhyasūtra 11.22). (Kane 1941: 307.)

Satyavat went out to the forest to collect fuel just as the student was required to do (it was prohibited to go to the forest after sunset).²¹⁷

²¹⁵ Cf. Skanda-Purāṇa 6.192.90-94: *evaṃ tatra sthitā devī sāvitrī parvatāśrayā / ... // yas tām arcayate samyak paurṇamāsyāṃ viśeṣataḥ / sarvān kāmān avāpnoti sa manovāñchitāṃs tadā // yā nārī kurute bhaktyā dīpadānaṃ tadagrataḥ / raktatantubhir ājyena śrūyatām tasya yat phalam // yāvan tantavas tasya dahyante dīpasambhavāḥ / muhūrtāni ca yāvanti ghṛtadīpaś ca tiṣṭhati / tāvajjanmasahasrāṇi sā syāt saubhāgyabhāginī // putrapautra-samopetā dhaninī śīlamanḍanā / na durbhagā na vandhyā ca na kāṇā virūpikā //*. Dange (1986-90, II: 605 with n. 4) connects the red colour of the wicks with the fact that Sāvitrī has a red garment.

²¹⁶ Cf. Kane 1958: 175 with n. 452a on Durgā-pūjā: 'Lamps should be waved before the Devī (*nīrājana*) from her head down to her feet. This *nīrājana* is mentioned in Kālikā-Purāṇa "śaratkāle mahāṣṭamyāṃ durgāyāḥ paripūjanam / nīrājanam daśamyāṃ tu kuryād vai bala-ṽddhaye" 88.9.'

²¹⁷ Cf. Āpastamba-Dharmasūtra 1.1.4.14-15: *sadāraṇyād edhān āhṛtyādho nidadyāt / nāstam-ite samiddhāro gacchet*; cf. Kane 1941: 307.

The Vedic ritual of milk oblation into the fire (*agnihotra*) at sunset and sunrise is expressly mentioned in the Sāvitrī legend in connection with Sāvitrī's birth. Sāvitrī was born as a result of her father's *agnihotra* offerings, and Goddess Sāvitrī appears to him from the *agnihotra* fire. An impoverished performer of *agnihotra* is also specifically mentioned as a particularly suitable person to receive the images of Sāvitrī and Brahmā in the Purāṇic descriptions of the *brahma-sāvitrī-vrata*. Therefore, this particular sacrifice has specific significance for the understanding of this legend and Goddess Sāvitrī, and I believe that the following passages are among the most important ones for understanding the deepest meaning of her nature.

According to Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa 1.6,

the light at these (moments, i.e. daybreak and sunset) is Savitar and Savitar is Prajāpati²¹⁸ and Prajāpati (is identical with) all the gods... That is why the *agnihotra* is sacred to Prajāpati. When here at daybreak the light appears, in this very appearance of light Prajāpati created the creatures.²¹⁹

Jan Gonda (1986: 99) observes: 'The association of a high or great god... with light and that of creativity with (the light of) the early morning are too well known to be in need of comment.'

Some declare afterwards: 'The world named Prajāpati's Shining [*vi-bhāt-*], in that I place thee together with the sacrificer.' They say: 'What is this world named Prajāpati's Shining?' They offer immediately after the sunset in the evening, and before sunrise in the morning. That (moment) is the world named Prajāpati's Shining. He who, knowing thus, offers the *agnihotra*, wins the world named Prajāpati's Shining. (Vādhūla-sūtra 3.27, transl. Bodewitz 1976: 43.)²²⁰

If one is desirous of heaven (one should offer the *agnihotra* bearing in mind the following verse:) 'Two impassable, wide, large oceans come and withdraw in a revolving, alternating way like two footprints on a path.' Night and day are the two impassable oceans. Those who offer by night enter the ocean of night and those who

²¹⁸ This identification of Savitr with Prajāpati may be compared to the Brāhmaṇa versions of the Ṛgvedic marriage hymn 10.85 (where Savitr gives Sūryā away to King Soma, see Section 20): Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa 18.1: 'When Savitr gave Sūryā away to King Soma, or, if she was the daughter of Prajāpati, he gave to his daughter when she was married off, a thousand...'; Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa 4.7.1: 'Prajāpati gave his daughter Sūryā Sāvitrī to King Soma...'

²¹⁹ Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa 1.6: *atho haiṣu savitaiva dyumnaḥ / savitā vai prajāpatiḥ... tad etat prajāpatyaṃ yad agnihotram // atha yad etat prātaḥ prabhāti – etasminn vai dyumne prajāpatiḥ prajāḥ prajanayāṃ cakāra / savitā vai prajāpatiḥ...* (transl. Bodewitz 1976: 45; cf. Gonda 1986: 98-99).

²²⁰ The verb *vi-bhā-* means 'to begin to shine': the feminine present participle *vibhātī* is used in the Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā often of Uṣas, the goddess of dawn (cf. Gonda 1986: 99). In Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa 1.2.1.27, (the constellation) Rohiṇī (under which Prajāpati established his fires) is called 'the womb (birth place, *yonī*) and firm standing-place of Agni' which 'rose up (*arohat*) (to the sky)'; in the same stanza she is also Virāj, created (*sṛṣṭā*) by Prajāpati. 'The idea of *virāj*... being created out of the creator reaches back to ṚV. 10.90.5: "from him (Puruṣa who coalesced with Prajāpati) Virāj was born"' (Gonda 1986: 132).

offer after sunrise the ocean of day. There is a crossing of these two just as if there were a ford (?) or a connecting causeway, (viz. the moment) when the sun has set, but before darkness, (and the moment) when the light appears, but before sunrise. (Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa 1.5-6, transl. Bodewitz 1976: 45.)²²¹

Now night and day also are death. These two do not reach that deity, the Sun.²²² That deity rises over these two, while separating them; separating them he sets afterwards. And death does not reach him who, knowing thus, offers (the agnihotra). (Vādhūlasūtra 3.27, transl. Bodewitz 1976: 157.)

16. AGNIHOTRA AT SUNSET AND SUNRISE: FIRE AND NIGHT, SUN AND DAY

The agnihotra ritual also contains other concepts that help us to understand myths and rituals connected with Sāvitrī and Durgā. In the following I cite only some central passages from early Brāhmaṇa texts.²²³ These underline the ever recurring death and birth of the sun, which is considered as a prototype for human death and birth. The sun dies in the evening because it has done something evil during the day. The fire dies in the morning because it has done something evil during the night. But these deaths coincide with impregnation: the dying sun or fire emits his seed and thereby escapes death, being reborn through his seed.

(With the formula) 'In Agni (be) light, light in Agni' he should offer the agnihotra in the evening. With a speech which has something [i.e. the word *jyotis* 'light'] in the interior [*garbhin*] he produces an embryo [*garbha*]; with a speech which consists of a pair he impregnates. (With the formula) 'Sūrya is the light, the light is Sūrya' (he offers) in the morning. With a speech which has something in the interior and consists of a pair he engenders it (the embryo). The expressed and the unexpressed form a pair.²²⁴ That which is (recited) with a formula and that which is (recited) in thought [i.e. the latter half of the formula accompanying the second libation made silently] form a pair. Of the two oblations there is this variation: the evening oblation is sacred to Agni, the morning oblation to Sūrya. Agni is the one who inseminates, Sūrya the one who brings forth. After the sun has just set, he should offer the agnihotra in the evening, just before the sunrise in the morning. Agni, having poured out the sun as seed, impregnates the night. He engenders him in the morning with a speech which has something in the interior and consists of a pair. Along with and as a consequence of his being born offspring are born. He for whom the agnihotra is offered thus becomes prolific with offspring and cattle. (Kāthaka-Saṃhitā 6.5, transl. Bodewitz 1976: 80f.)²²⁵

²²¹ Cf. also Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa 2.9: 'He should offer at twilight. Night and day are an ocean (with low and high tide) which carries away everything. The two twilights are the fords where one may cross the water. Even as a stretch of water may be crossed along two fordable places, so it is when one offers at twilight.' (Transl. Bodewitz 1976: 44.)

²²² Cf. Sāvitrī as the sun at the moment of his rising in Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa 1.5-6.

²²³ For the agnihotra, see especially Bodewitz 1976.

²²⁴ Cf. Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 2.3.1: '23. Now the second libation is made in order to produce a couple. For a pair is a couple which produces offspring... 29. The second (libation) is offered for the sake of progeny. He offers it silently. For that which is silently (done) is something uncertain, and something uncertain is progeny' (Transl. Bodewitz 1976: 151.)

And when he (the sun) sets, then he becomes an embryo and enters Agni (the fire) as his womb. Along with and as a consequence of his becoming an embryo all creatures become embryos. For having come to rest they lie down without consciousness. The reason why the night conceals (everything) here, is that embryos are also concealed as it were. When he offers in the evening after sunset, he offers for the sake of him who is an embryo at that moment; he acts on behalf of him (the sun) who is in the embryo state. Because he offers for the sake of him who is in the embryo state, therefore these embryos live without taking food. And when he offers in the morning before sunrise, then he brings him forth at that moment... Therefore he performs this offering. (Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 2.3.1.3-5, transl. Bodewitz 1976: 151.)²²⁶

The evil that is done in the day time, of that the sun is the cause; what is done at night, of that fire... When the sun sets, it offers itself in the fire. Whatever evil the sun commits in the day time, is driven away for it by the fire at night. When the sun rises, the fire rises after it. It offers itself in the sun. Whatever evil the fire commits at night, is driven away for it by the sun at day. As a snake frees itself from its skin, as one pulls a rush out of its sheath, so he frees himself from all evil (sin) who, knowing thus offers the agnihotra... (Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa 1.9-10, transl. Bodewitz 1976: 146, 153f.)²²⁷

17. DECAPITATION OF GOD BRAHMĀ AND HIS RESURRECTION THROUGH SĀVITRĪ

In Vedic texts, 'evil' is equated with 'death'; an evil deed causes the death of its doer.²²⁸ This eternal law can also be detected in the myths related to the Sāvitrī legend.

The Purāṇic and medieval descriptions of the *sāvitrī-vrata* also mention, in addition to the human couple figuring in the legend (Princess Sāvitrī and Prince Satyavat), the divine couple consisting of Goddess Sāvitrī and her husband God Brahmā; the females of both couples have the same name. Besides, the rite descriptions mention a third couple, a Brahmin and his wife, to whom the icons represent-

²²⁵ Bodewitz (1976: 86, n. 3) comments: 'The theme of night as pregnancy and daybreak as delivery is well-known in connection with the agnihotra. In the present passage, the role of the sun as the one who brings forth (*prajanayitr*; masculine) is rather strange in view of the fact that Agni has poured him out as seed according to the same passage (below). Most often the sun is regarded as being born at the daybreak...' However, the rising sun is also Savitr and in this capacity identified with Prajāpati, the creator, generator; cf. note 479.

²²⁶ Cf. also Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 2.3.1.3 and 5: 'When he sets, then he enters his womb, the fire, as an embryo... When he offers in the morning before sunrise, then he generates that (child) and it becomes a light and rises shining' (Transl. Bodewitz 1976: 145.)

²²⁷ Cf. also Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa 2.8: 'This fire offers itself in the rising sun. Yonder sun, when it sets, offers itself in the fire at night. The night offers (itself) in the day, the day in the night. The exhalation offers (itself) in the inhalation, the inhalation in the exhalation.' (Transl. Bodewitz 1976: 143.) As this extract shows, the agnihotra ritual is associated with concepts concerning breathing. The *sandhyā* rituals at sunrise and sunset also require the regulation of breath. For this important theme, which falls outside the present paper, see especially Bodewitz 1973.

²²⁸ See Rodhe 1946.

ing the human and the divine couple are to be donated, and this Brahmin appears to be a human counterpart of God Brahmā. This parallelism in the cult suggests that Goddess Sāvitrī and her husband Brahmā are likely to be the divine prototype for the human couple of the legend.²²⁹ If this is so, is there a myth in which God Brahmā dies and is resurrected by the efforts of his wife, Goddess Sāvitrī?

We do indeed find such a myth in the Purāṇas. Savitri Kumar summarizes as follows the story concerning the origin of the Gāyatrī and Sarasvatī tīrthas in Skanda-Purāṇa 3.1.40:²³⁰

Prajāpati was once attracted towards his own daughter named Vāk. His daughter, seeing her father in that state felt ashamed, took the form of a female deer and tried to escape.²³¹ Brahmā too transformed himself into a deer and chased her. Seeing this, all the gods talked ill of Brahmā for doing that contemptuous deed. Śiva got wild with anger at Brahmā's misdeed and he took the form of a hunter. He took a bow and discharged an arrow at Brahmā who consequently fell down upon the earth. A bright light came out of Brahmā's body, went up in the sky and became the constellation called Mṛgaśīrṣa. Lord Śiva too followed him as a constellation named Ārdrā... When Brahmā was thus killed by Śiva, Brahmā's wives Gāyatrī and Sarasvatī wished to bring their husband back to life. So they went to the Gandhamādāna mountain to practise penance to please Śiva. There they constructed two ponds by their own names. (The ponds were later blessed by Śiva and they became popular tīrthas.) Śiva was pleased with their austere penance and united Brahmā's body with his head. (Kumar 1983: 31f.)

This myth is clearly derived from the Veda, the creator god Prajāpati being the Vedic predecessor of the Purāṇic creator god Brahmā. The theme of Prajāpati's incest can be traced back to the Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā,²³² but the closest parallel to this Purāṇic variant is offered by the Aitareya-Brahmaṇa (3.33). Here Prajāpati lusts after his own daughter; she changes herself into a red female deer (*rohī*), while he pursues her as a male deer or antelope (*ṛśya*), to be shot by God Rudra; and the constellations Mṛgaśīrṣa (=Prajāpati), Ārdrā (=Rudra) and Rohiṇī (= the daughter) are identified with the divinities involved in this myth. The equation of Prajāpati's daughter/wife with Rohiṇī (= the bright red star Aldebaran) is an important point, to which we shall return later on. (In astral terms, Prajāpati appears to represent the

229 Cf. also Hauer 1927: 238: 'Über die mythologische Grundlage der Sāvitrī-Satyavat-Sage kann gar kein Zweifel bestehen angesichts der Tatsache, dass das Fest *vaśasāvitrīvrata*, das ja der *Göttin* Sāvitrī gilt, aufs engste mit der Sāvitrī-Sage verknüpft ist.'

230 For a full translation of this chapter, see Tagare 1995: 261-266.

231 The Sanskrit text of the myth begins (Skanda-Purāṇa 3.1.40.6ff.): *prajāpatiḥ purā viprāḥ svām vai duhitaraṃ mudā / vānāmnī kāmuko bhūtvā sprhayām āsa mohanaḥ // atha prajāpateḥ putrī svasmin vai tasya kāmītām / vilokya lajjitā bhūtvā rohidrūpaṃ dadhāra sā // brahmāpi hariṇo bhūtvā tayā rantumanās tadā / gacchantīm anuyāti sma hariṇīrūpa-dhāriṇīm // taṃ dṛṣtvā devatāḥ sarvāḥ putrīm amanasādaram / karoty akāryaṃ brahmāyaṃ putrīgamanalakṣaṇam // ...*

232 Cf. Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā 1.71.5; 5.42.13. A detailed study of the Vedic variants of this pivotal myth is provided by Deppert 1977.

night and its lord, the 'horned' moon, who unites with the calendrical star rising in the morning, when the rising sun kills the night/moon.)²³³

At the end of the above-quoted Purāṇic myth, God Śiva revives Brahmā by uniting his head with his body,²³⁴ although the foregoing story narrates that he was killed not by decapitation but by being shot. Yet the fact that Prajāpati/Brahmā is identified with the constellation called 'a deer's head' (*mṛgaśīrṣa*) suggests that his head was severed from the body on this occasion.²³⁵ Besides, in a well-known and much repeated Purāṇic myth, Śiva as Bhairava cuts off Brahmā's fifth head, which then sticks to Śiva's hand in punishment for his murder of a Brahmin (and is carried as the begging bowl made of a human skull by the Śaiva mendicants in imitation of their lord).²³⁶ The motif of Śiva's cutting off Brahmā's fifth head is clearly relevant to the legend of Brahmā's death and revival, for the origin of the fifth head is mentioned in the variant which the Matsya-Purāṇa (3.30-44) offers of the Brahmā-Sāvitrī incest myth, even though no decapitation or revival is mentioned here.²³⁷

²³³ Cf. below Section 41. In the earliest version of the Skanda-Purāṇa (5.37-45), Śiva appeared in the form of a disc resembling that of the sun (5.37: *ādityamaṇḍalākāram adṛśyata ca maṇḍalam*) to chop off the fifth head of Brahmā (which resembled the Mare's Head, 5.42: *vaḍavāmukhasaṁnibham*) with the nail of his left thumb; cf. Adriansen, Bakker & Isaacson 1998: 69f., 137f. The nail seems to be the nail-like tip of the raising sun.

²³⁴ Cf. Tagare 1995: 264: '36-42. O lord, ...kindly resuscitate our husband, the Four-faced Lord... save us by giving back to us our husband... Śambhu said to Gāyatrī and Sarasvatī, "It will be so". He was eager to unite the same body of Brahmā with his head... Śambhu got the body of Brahmā along with his heads there itself through the Bhūtas... In a moment in the presence of Vāṇī (Sarasvatī) and Gāyatrī, Śaṅkara united those many heads with his body. Thus joined by Hara, the Four-faced Lord of the universe got up immediately, ...as though he was getting up from his sleep...'

²³⁵ Cf. also Hildebeitel 1988: 373f.

²³⁶ For the *brahmaśiraścheda* myth, see O'Flaherty 1973: 123-130 and Hildebeitel 1988: 373-382 (with further references). In the Mahābhārata this myth itself is not told, but 'Brahmā's head' (*brahmaśiras*) figures prominently in the epic as a fatal weapon (cf. Hildebeitel 1988: 425-429 and below Section 43).

²³⁷ I have translated the passage anew as both the old translation reprinted by Singh (1983, I: 14-16) and the summary by Kumar (1983: 32-34) that I have at hand are too inaccurate. The Sanskrit text (in Singh 1983, I: 14-16) is as follows: *sāvitrīm lokasṛṣṭyartham hṛdī kṛtvā samāsthitaḥ / tataḥ sañjapatas tasya bhūtvā deham akalmaṣam // strīrūpam ardhm akarod ardhmaṁ puruṣarūpavat / śatarūpā ca sā khyātā sāvitṛī ca nigadyate // sarasvaty atha gāyatrī brāhmaṇī ca parantapa / tataḥ svadehasambhūtām āmajām ity akalpayat // dṛṣṭvā tāṁ vyathitas tāvat kāmabāñārdito vibhuḥ / aho rūpam aho rūpam iti cāha prajāpatiḥ // tato vaśiṣṭhapramukhāḥ bhaginīm iti cukruṣuḥ / brahmā na kiñ cid dadṛṣe tanmukhā-lokanād rte // aho rūpam aho rūpam iti prāha punaḥ punaḥ / tataḥ prañāmanamrān tāṁ punar evābhyalokayat // atha pradakṣiṇaṁ cakre sā pitur varavarṇinī / putrebhyo lajjitasyāsya tadrūpālokanecchayā // āvir bhūtaṁ tato vaktraṁ dakṣiṇaṁ pāṇḍugaṇḍavat / vismayasphuradoṣṭhaṇ ca pāścātyam udagāt tataḥ // caturtham abhavat paścād vamaṁ kāmaśarātūram / tato 'nyad abhavat tasya kāmāturyā tathā // utpatantyās tadākārā ālokanakutūhalāt / sṛṣṭyartham yat kṛtaṁ tena tapaḥ param adāruṇam // tat sarvaṁ nāśam agamat svasutopagameccayā / tenordhvaṁ vaktraṁ abhavat pañcamaṁ tasya dhimataḥ / āvirbhavajajābhīś ca tad vaktrañ cāvṛṇot prabhuḥ // tatas tān abravīd brahmā putrān ātmasamudbhavān / prajāḥ sṛjadhvam abhitaḥ sadevāsura mānuṣiḥ // evam uktās tataḥ*

(Brahmā had created mental sons, but was not quite satisfied with his work.) For the sake of creating the world, he made Sāvitrī in his heart. While intensely invoking her, he split his body into two and made it into a spotless half with a woman's shape and into another half with a man's shape. She is also known as Śatarūpā, and is called as well Sāvitrī, Sarasvatī, Gāyatrī, and Brāhmaṇī. As she was born of his own body, he considered her to be his daughter. Seeing her, the lord became pained as he was wounded by the arrow of Love. Prajāpati said, 'O what a beauty, O what a beauty!'. Then his mental sons, headed by Vasiṣṭha, scolded him, pointing out that she was their sister, but Brahmā heeded nothing else but looking at her face. He kept repeating, 'O what a beauty, O what a beauty!' When he was again looking at her while she was bowing in obeisance, the woman of the best complexion circumambulated her father sunwise. He felt shamed by his sons, but wanted to look at her, and therefore a pale-cheeked (extra) face appeared on the right side of his (head). Then a (face) with lips quivering with wonderment came up on the back side (of his head), then a fourth (face) pained by Love's arrow (appeared) on the left side. Then something else also happened on account of his love affliction, as she flew up and he wanted to look at her beautiful shape. Therefore a fifth face that was directed upwards appeared on him. All the frightful and supreme power of asceticism that he had acquired for the sake of creation was lost because of his desire to approach his own daughter.²³⁸ The Lord (being ashamed) covered that (fifth) face with tangled locks of hair which also made their appearance, and then Brahmā said to his sons born of his body: 'Create beings everywhere, including gods, demons and human beings!' After they had been told so, they all created the different kinds of beings. After his sons had departed for the sake of creation, that Soul of the Universe approached that blameless Śatarūpā who was bent in obeisance. The Lord, overpained by Love, united with her. In his dwelling-place inside the lotus (flower), the god made love to that shy girl as long as one hundred divine years like any other ordinary man. Then after a long time, a son was born to her, called Manu Svāyambhuva ('man the son of self-born')...

18. VEDIC CREATOR GOD PRAJĀPATI AS THE DYING AND REVIVED PRIMEVAL MAN

The beheading and revival of Brahmā/Prajāpati in the above-cited Purāṇic myth recalls the central role of Prajāpati in the religion of the Vedic Brāhmaṇa texts as the dying and revived creator. This topic has recently been discussed by Brian K. Smith in an important study (1989).²³⁹

The transcendent prototype of the universe ('this all', *idaṃ sarvaṃ*: the principle of unity and uniformity) is Puruṣa or Prajāpati, the primeval cosmic being, who is all-encompassing, comprizing both space (the universe) and time (the year) in their entirety. Being transcendent means that this prototype is unlimited (*apari-*

sarve saṣṭjur vividhāḥ prajāḥ / gateṣu teṣu sṛṣṭyartham praṇāmāvanatām imām // upayeme sa viśvātmā śatarūpām aninditām / sambabhūva tayā sārḍham atikāmāturo vibhuḥ / salajjān cakame devaḥ kamalodaramandire / yāvad abdaśataṃ divyaṃ yathānyāḥ prākṛto janaḥ / tataḥ kālena mahatā tasyāḥ putro 'bhuvan manuḥ // svāyambhuva iti khyātaḥ...

238 I have moved this sentence behind the preceding one.

239 I have elsewhere (Parpola, in press 1) summarized the main points made by Smith, and reproduce here some passages from my review article that are relevant in the present context.

mita) and unexpressed or undefined (*anirukta*), an undifferentiated unity. (Smith 1989: 54-57.)

The creation of the world or a being is a twofold process. The first stage in creation takes place through emission (*sr̥ṣṭi*: this term is used of the emission of seed): the cosmic being emanates the creatures from himself. Therewith the unmanifested cosmic being becomes the manifest universe: the unified one becomes the dispersed many (*bahu*). But this procreative emanation does not result in a 'cosmos', that is, an ordered and orderly whole, but rather in a chaotic and problematic condition, which is symbolized in myths by the sickness that takes hold of the creator or the created. The creatures may be indistinct or undifferentiated (i.e. overly similar), or they may be overly diverse and become totally dispersed: the verb expressing the cosmic emission often has the prefix *vi-* expressing dispersion (*vi-sr̥j-*). In the creation myths the created sometimes 'run away' from their creator: they resist the superiority of Prajāpati, and there is no (hierarchical) order. After the creative emission, Prajāpati is 'drained', 'exhausted', 'milked out', 'diseased', 'dis-jointed', or 'fallen into pieces'. He is about to die. The universe has no firm foundation, Prajāpati as time is 'out of joint', and the year is about to be discontinued. Prajāpati is the year, and the joints of his body are the junctures of day and night, the waxing and waning half-month, and the seasons. (Smith 1989: 57-62.)

Cosmogony, the production of an ordered universe, follows only through the sacrifice which is performed by Prajāpati or by the gods after the initial creative act. This is the second stage in creation. The sacrifice repairs the created universe by putting it together (*sam-s-kr̥-*, *sam-pad-*, *sam-yuj-*), by constructing a unified whole of it. This is done by putting the parts of the whole into a hierarchical order. Prajāpati 'saw that agniṣṭoma soma sacrifice and performed it. Thereupon the creatures yielded to his superiority' (Pañcaviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa 6.3.9). Or: 'The gods said: "There is no other firm foundation apart from Prajāpati. Let us restore father Prajāpati; he will be a firm foundation for us"' (Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 7.1.2.2). The ritual reunites the dispersed creation into a unity: Prajāpati becomes whole and complete (*sarva*) and thereby healthy (Latin *salvus*). Humpty-dumpty is put together again. (Smith 1989: 62-66.)

Thus the sacrifice/sacrificer is equated with Prajāpati, and the individual parts of the sacrifice are equated with the parts of Prajāpati's (or the sacrificer's) body, which is put together (*sam-s-kr̥-*) or 're-made'. The domestic rites of passage (*samskāra*), such as the birth-rite (*jāta-karma*) performed on the new-born baby, construct a proper body for a person, making him or her into an integrated being. (Smith 1989: 82-94.)

19. 'ASURA' ORIGIN OF BEHEADING AND REVIVAL

Prajāpati goes back to the primeval man (*puruṣa*) praised in hymn 10.90 of the Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā, who is said to have been sacrificed in the beginning by the gods and whose dismembered body became this universe.

Agnicayana, or the 'piling' of an altar of fire, is an impressive and complicated ritual, where the body of the exhausted Prajāpati as the year is put together again by means of 10,800 bricks, representing the $30 \times 360 = 10,800$ moments of the year.²⁴⁰

In building the great fireplace one restores and reintegrates Prajāpati, whose dismemberment had been the creation of the universe, and makes him whole and complete. At the same time and by means of the same ritual acts the sacrificer, who is identified with Prajāpati (cf. [Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa] 7.4.1.15), constructs himself a new sacral personality and secures the continuance of his existence (*amṛtam*). (Gonda 1986: 16f.)

Thus Prajāpati... ensures the sacrificer who knows and performs these rites safety from death, enables him to defeat Mṛtyu (Gonda 1986: 16).²⁴¹

According to Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 14.1.1.6ff., the head the sacrifice (identified with Viṣṇu and with Āditya, the sun god, and called 'great hero', *mahāvīra*) was cut off and on falling it became the sun. In the pravargya ritual, the headless trunk of the sacrifice is rejoined with its head, symbolized by a heated clay pot in which hot milk is boiled.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ On the technicalities of the agnicayana ritual, see Weber 1873 and Staal 1983; on the agnicayana and Prajāpati, cf. Gonda 1984; 1986: 16, 166-175, 193f.

²⁴¹ When Naciketas asks Yama about the mystery of death, the secret which the god of death reveals to the youth in reply is to build an altar of fire. The story of Naciketas told in the Kaṭha-Upaniṣad is in some ways parallel to the Sāvitrī legend, for like Sāvitrī, Naciketas is a human being who receives boons from Yama and is allowed to return from his realm to life. In this case Naciketas had come to Yama's house because he had been given to Yama by his father when he renounced all his possessions; but because Yama happened to be away and Naciketas therefore was not received with the rites of hospitality for three days, Yama made this good for him with boons. The three days also remind us of Sāvitrī's three-day fast, and of her connection with the moon, who is revived after a three days' 'death' (invisibility). This parallelism between the two stories is likely to be more than a resemblance, for besides a special 'fire-altar of Naciketas' there is also a *sāvitra agnicayana* (cf. Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa 3.10).

²⁴² The Vedic texts identify the sun-charm of Pravargya with the agnihotra-offering of heated milk at sunset and sunrise: 'The agnihotra pot is identical with the kettle of milk which is put on the fire in the suncharm of the Pravargya ritual' (Kāṭhaka-Saṃhitā 6.3, transl. Bodewitz 1976: 65). 'An indomitable Pravargya milk-offering is put on the fire every day in the form of the agnihotra milk' (Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa 2.1.3.2, transl. Bodewitz 1976: 66). Offering milk in a heated clay pot as a solar ritual could be of Dravidian origin. The Vedic pravargya can be compared to Tamil *ponkal*, the cooking of milk-rice in a new pot until it 'boils over' (*ponku*, cf. Burrow & Emeneau 1984: 395, no. 4469) thereby indicating what the coming year will be like. This is the main ritual of the festival celebrated on the first day of the Tamil year (cf. Kane 1958: 222) and is therefore connected with the sun. The Indus

On several other occasions, too, the Vedic texts refer to the 'head of the sacrifice', which is severed and restored. Jan Heesterman comments:

At first sight... one would be inclined to think of the head of the sacrificial victim. But... there cannot be any question of the victim's head; the victim is explicitly not beheaded; it is even forbidden to make offerings of the victim's head. Thus we find that standard elements and acts of the ritual are referred to as the head of the sacrifice, their installation or performance signifying the severing and/or restoration of the head. The sacrificial cake is called the head... (Heesterman 1967: 23.)

The Vedic texts make it clear, however, that beheading is exactly what the Asuras (the 'demoniac' enemies of the Vedic Aryans) did. In Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 3.8.3.28-29 it is said:

Now the Asuras, in the beginning, seized a victim. The gods, from fear, did not go near it... The Asuras then made portions of the head, the shoulders, the neck, and the hind-thighs... (Transl. Eggeling 1882-1900, II: 207.)

Severing and restoring the head of the sacrificial victim, then, must have had so central a place in the ritual of the Asuras that its symbolism could not be avoided even in its 'purified' variant, the Vedic *śrauta* ritual. We shall come back to this question (in Section 43) after we have first pursued some other clues to the Sāvitrī legend.

20. SĀVITRĪ, THE VEDIC MARRIAGE HYMN, AND RESURRECTION OF THE MOON

In the Sāvitrī legend, the heroine is the archetype of what a good married woman should be: entirely devoted to her husband. The legend, moreover, underlines Sāvitrī's solar character by stressing her radiant beauty. A solar goddess Sūryā appears as the prototypal bride in the famous marriage hymn of the Ṛgveda (ṚS 10.85), which is still recited as an integral part of high caste weddings in India. She is here called Sūryā, which is the feminine form corresponding to Sūrya 'the sun'. In the Mahābhārata, Sāvitrī is called 'the daughter of the sun' (*sūryasya duhitā*).²⁴³ Sūryā's identification with Sāvitrī is plain from the fact that her father is called Savitr in the verse that speaks of his giving the bride away to her husband Soma.²⁴⁴ Lommel (1955-58: 98), who has already suggested that this marriage

people, however, almost certainly celebrated the new year at the vernal equinox, while the Tamil celebration of the *poṅkal* festival at the sun's entrance in the zodiacal sign of Capricorn (*makara-saṅkrānti*, Kane 1958: 211ff.) cannot be older than the introduction of the system of zodiacal signs (*rāśi*) in the Hellenistic period.

²⁴³ Mahābhārata 12.265.9449, quoted from Sörensen 1904-25: 636a.

²⁴⁴ ṚS 10.85.9: *somo vadhūyur abhavad aśvināstām ubhā varā / sūryāṃ yat patye śaṃsantīm manasā savitādadāt //*

hymn is closely connected with the Sāvitrī legend, points out that it recurs in the Atharvaveda-Saṃhitā with additions, including a verse that expressly mentions Sūryā Sāvitrī (AS 14.2.30).²⁴⁵

Soma in the Ṛgveda is usually the divine Soma plant and the drink offered to the gods that is made of that plant. This marriage hymn is the earliest text place where Soma in addition denotes the moon, which is a common meaning of the Sanskrit word *soma* in later texts. In this marriage hymn, the meaning 'moon' is made certain by verse 2, which speaks of Soma as set 'in the lap of these [calendrical] stars',²⁴⁶ and from verse 19, according to which

he becomes new and again new as he is born, going in front of the dawns as the banner of the days... The moon stretches out the long span of life. (Transl. O'Flaherty 1981: 269.)

Every month the moon seems to be born, to grow into an adult, and then wane away and die, to be reborn after being invisible for three nights. The moon, the husband of Goddess Sūryā/Sāvitrī, is an archetype of the dying and resurrected god.²⁴⁷ According to Ṛgvidhāna (1.21.2ff.; cf. 1.31.2), worship of the new moon every month with the recitation of the Ṛgvedic hymn 1.91 destroys death (cf. Gonda 1980: 459). The votary of *sāvitrī-vrata* should eat the fourth day after completing a three-day fast and wake, and after having given the ceremony of guest reception to the moon (see Section 3).²⁴⁸ According to the majority of the texts, the *sāvitrī-vrata* fast should coincide with the new moon.²⁴⁹ The new moon day also marks the union of the sun and the moon,²⁵⁰ the consummation of their marriage. In the Vedic

²⁴⁵ AS 14.2.30: *rukmaprastaraṇaṃ vahaṃ viśvā rūpāṇi bibhratam / ārohat sūryā sāvitrī bṛhate saubhagāya kam //*. 'The gold-cushioned (?-prastaraṇa) vehicle, bearing all forms, did Sūryā, Savitar's daughter, mount, in order to great good fortune' (transl. Whitney 1905, II: 759). This verse is used when the bride mounts the bridal car (Kauśikasūtra 76.25).

²⁴⁶ This marriage hymn (ṚS 10.85) is the most ancient text to make explicit mention of the stellar calendar which is extensively used in later Vedic texts.

²⁴⁷ This too has already been pointed out by Lommel (1955-58: 99), who quotes several ethnographic parallels (pp. 99-101), especially a most instructive one from southern Rhodesia, but also the Isis/Osiris myth from Egypt and the Tammuz/Ishtar myth from Mesopotamia. One could add that in the Bible, too, we have the resurrection of Jesus on the third day after his death.

²⁴⁸ Skanda-Purāna quoted by Hemādri: *trirātraṃ laṅghayitvā ca caturthe divase hy aham / candrāyārghyaṃ pradattvā... bhokṣye...*

²⁴⁹ Cf. Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 11.1.1.4: one should fast on the day on which the moon is not visible.

²⁵⁰ In the Tamil Draupadī cult, for example, this is spelled out. One of Kṛṣṇa's tricks is to move the new moon day up by a day or so. 'First he asks the Brahman purohitas, or chaplains, to come and consult their almanacs. With little trouble he convinces them that the Amāvāsyā is today, not tomorrow, and encourages them to publicize this and to perform the ancestral offerings (*tarppanam*) that are called for on that day. When the sun and moon (the gods Sūrya and Candra) see the Brahmans performing their offerings a day early, they come together, amid great celestial fanfare, to find out why. Kṛṣṇa tells them that as the definition

sacrifice of man (*puruṣamedha*) or horse (*aśvamedha*) involving a sham-consummation of the victim's 'sacred marriage' with the chief queen of the sacrificing king, the priests ask and solve cosmogonic riddles (*brahmodya*), including the following:

'Who is it that is born again?' – it is the moon, doubtless, that is born again (and again). (*Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* 13.2.6.9-11, transl. Eggeling 1882-1900, V: 314-315.)²⁵¹

21. SĪTĀ SĀVITRĪ, THE MOON, AND THE FOREHEAD MARK OF MARRIED WOMEN

In the *sāvitrī-vrata*, the icon of the Goddess Sāvitrī and her husband Brahmā are to be dressed in red and white cloths respectively. In the prayer addressed to Goddess Sāvitrī in this ritual, she is, moreover, said to be the halo around the circle of the moon.²⁵² When a Brahmin receives the images as a gift, he blesses the donor woman that she will be happy together with her husband as long as the sun and the moon.²⁵³ All this seems to emphasize the solar and lunar character of Sāvitrī and Brahmā. The *Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa* (2.3.10) is in fact quite explicit in telling that Sītā Sāvitrī, daughter of the creator god Prajāpati, won Soma the moon as her husband.²⁵⁴ Interestingly, this myth also associates her with one of the principal symbols of the married Hindu woman, the ornament made on the forehead:²⁵⁵

of the Amāvāsya is the 'coming together' of the sun and the moon, their joint appearance settles the question... Sūrya and Candra laugh appreciatively and return to their stations.' (Hiltebeitel 1988: 323f.)

251 *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* 13.2.6.11: *ka u svij jāyate punar iti / candramā vai jāyate punar...*

252 Skanda-Purāṇa quoted by Hemādri (p. 276.1-4): *atha sāvitrīprārthanamantraḥ / sāvitrī brahmagāyatrī sarvadā priyabhāṣiṇī / ... tvaṃ prabhā candramaṇḍale / ...*

253 Skanda-Purāṇa quoted by Hemādri (p. 277.21-278.1): *atha pratigrahanmantraḥ / mayā gṛhītā sāvitrī tvayā dattā suśobhanā / yāvac candraś ca sūryaś ca saha bhartrā sukhī bhava //*

254 This myth has already been connected with the Sāvitrī legend by Lommel (1955-58: 102).

255 *Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa* 2.3.10: *prajāpatiḥ somaṃ rājānam asṛjata / taṃ trayo vedā anvasṛjyanta / tān haste 'kuruta / atha ha sītā sāvitrī / somaṃ rājānaṃ cakame / śraddhām u sa cakame / sā ha pitarāṃ prajāpatim upasasāra. taṃ hovāca / namas te astu bhagavaḥ / upa tvāyāni / pra tvā padye / somaṃ vai rājānaṃ kāmaya / śraddhām u sa kāmayata iti / tasyā u ha sthāgaram alaṃkāraṃ kalpayitvā / daśahotāraṃ purastād vyākhyāya / caturhotāraṃ dakṣiṇataḥ / pañcahotāraṃ paścāt / ṣaḍdhotāraṃ uttaraḥ / saptahotāraṃ upariṣṭāt / sambhāraiś ca patnibhiś ca mukhe 'laṃkṛtya / āsyārdhaṃ vavrāja / tāṃ hodīkṣyovāca / upa mā vartasveti / taṃ hovāca / bhogaṃ tu ma ācaḥṣva / etan ma ācaḥṣva / yat te pāṇāv iti / tasyā u ha trīn vedān pradadau / tasmād u ha striyo bhogaṃ aiva hārayante / sa yaḥ kāmayeta priyaḥ syām iti / yaṃ vā kāmayeta priyaḥ syād iti / tasmā etaṃ sthāgaram alaṃkāraṃ kalpayitvā / daśahotāraṃ purastād vyākhyāya / caturhotāraṃ dakṣiṇataḥ / pañcahotāraṃ paścāt / ṣaḍdhotāraṃ uttaraḥ / saptahotāraṃ upariṣṭāt / sambhāraiś ca patnibhiś ca mukhe 'laṃkṛtya / āsyārdhaṃ vrajat / priyo haiva bhavati // – Cf. also *Āpastamba-Śrautasūtra* 14.15.2 and *Hiraṇyakeśi-Śrautasūtra* 10.7.24.*

(The creator god) Prajāpati created King Soma (the moon). The three Vedas were created after him. He (Soma) took them in his hand (i.e. he took possession of them by learning them by heart). Then Sītā Sāvitrī (was created by Prajāpati). She desired King Soma. But he desired Śraddhā (Faith, another daughter of Prajāpati). She approached her father Prajāpati, saying: 'Homage be to you, Sir. I would like to apply to you. I resort to you. I love King Soma. But he loves Śraddhā.' He (Prajāpati) prepared an adornment (for the forehead) with the fragrant powder of the scented sthagara wood²⁵⁶; he recited the ten-hotar formulae on (her) eastern side, the four-hotar formulae on (her) southern side, the five-hotar formulae on (her) western side, the six-hotar formulae on (her) northern side, the seven-hotar formulae above (her); with the materials formulae and the formulae relating to the wives (of the gods), he put this (forehead) adornment on (her) face; then she went to his (Soma's) place. Having seen her, he said: Come to me (as my wife). She said to him: 'Acquaint me with an object of enjoyment; acquaint me with what (you are holding) in your hand!' He handed over to her the three Vedas. Therefore women cause objects of enjoyment to be given to them. He who wants to be dear (to a woman) or whom one wants to be dear (to a woman), for him he should prepare this adornment (for the forehead) with the fragrant powder of the scented sthagara wood; he should recite the ten-hotar formula on (his) eastern side... he should go to his place. He indeed becomes dear (to her).²⁵⁷

In chapter 1.7.1 of the relatively late Āgniveśya-Gṛhyasūtra closely related to the archaic Vādhūla school of the Taittirīya branch of the Black Yajurveda, this procedure (sthāgara adornment) is part of the marriage ceremony.²⁵⁸ After the new-

²⁵⁶ Sanskrit *sthagara*, *sthakara* or *tagara(ka)*, *tagara-vallī*, *tagaḍa-vallī* (whence Pali *tagara*, *takara*, Prakrit *tagara*, *ṭayara*, Sinhalese *tuvara*, *tōra*, *tuvaralā*) denotes the shrub *Tabernaemontana coronaria* or *Cassia auriculata* and the fragrant powder obtained from it; cf. Turner 1966: nos. 5622, 5624. The word appears to be of Dravidian etymology, cf. Burrow & Emeneau 1984: nos. 3002 (Tamil *takaram* 'wax-flower dog-bane, *Tabernaemontana*; aromatic unguent for the hair, fragrance', Malayalam *takaram*, Kannada *tagara* 'T. coronaria') and 3003 (Tamil *takarai* 'fetid cassia, *Cassia tora*'), and cognates in Malayalam, Kannada, Tulu, Telugu; and Sanskrit *taravaṭa*, Marathi *tarvaḍ*, *tarov* 'Cassia auriculata or tora', etc., Turner 1966: no. 5705). The fragrant powder was prepared by pounding; according to Gobhila-Gṛhyasūtra 4.2.29 this is done by the wife (*sthagaram pinasṭi*) (the context here is the *anvaṣṭakya* rite, where also collyrium, salves and garlands are presented to the ancestors and their wives). – Note that the Sanskrit word *vallī* 'creeper' – a symbol of a loving woman – is also of Dravidian origin, from Proto-Dravidian **valli* 'creeper' (cf. Burrow & Emeneau 1984: 480, no. 5316), with North and Central Dravidian *l* from Proto-Dravidian **l*. Cf. also below Section 34.

²⁵⁷ This is my translation. For a paraphrase, see Srimannarayana Murti 1988: 13f.

²⁵⁸ Āgniveśya-Gṛhyasūtra 1.7.1: *athātaḥ sthāgaram alaṅkāraṃ vakṣyāmaḥ | ādarśaṃ cāñjanaṃ cāhataṃ vāsaḥ sarvasurabhitaṃ vrīhīn dṛṣadupale ity ete 'sya sambhārā upakṣptā bhavanti | pañnigrahaṇād ūrdhvaṃ śvobhūte śvaśrūr śvaśuro vā syālo vā gomayena gocarmamātraṃ caturaśraṃ sthaṅḍilam upalipya prokṣya lakṣaṇam ullikhyādbhir abhyukṣya śuci śuklam anārdram ācchādyā suprakṣālitapāñipādāv apa ācamya pavitrapāñi stanḍilasyāparārdhe dampatī upaviśataḥ | pūrvārdhe vrīhīn avakīrya dṛṣadupale prati-ṣṭhāpyāhatena vāsasā pariveṣṭayati | gandhapuṣpadhūpadīpaiḥ yavākṣatataṅḍulair abharcya purastād daśahotāraṃ sagṛhaṃ japati cittiḥ srug iti, caturhotāraṃ dakṣiṇataḥ pṛthivīti, pañcāhotāraṃ paścād agnir hoteti, ṣaḍḍhotāraṃ uttarataḥ sūryaṃ te cakṣur iti, saptahotāraṃ upariṣṭān mahāhavir hoteti | etasmin kāle varasya bhāginya apareṇa dṛṣadupalābhyāṃ prāñ upaviśya sarvasurabhitaṃ piṣṭvā devatābhyo nivedyāñjanenāñkte | ādarśam avekṣa(yi)tvā śeṣeṇa duhitaram alaṅkṛtya mukhe 'gnir yajurbhiḥ senendrasyeti paścāj jāmatāraṃ (alaṅkaroti) | yac cātra striya āhus tat kurvanti | sā priyā bhavati | priyo haiva bhavati iti brāhmaṇam (Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa 2.3.10, see note 255).*

ly married couple has been covered with a new garment, the ten-, four-, five-, six- and seven-hotar formulae are recited around them. While this recitation is going on, the sister of the groom sits down west of the couple facing east and grinds the fragrant substance with grindstones, offers it to the deities, and smears collyrium on (the eyes of) the couple. Then the mother of the bride takes the leftovers (of the offering made to the gods with the fragrant substance) and adorns with it the face of her daughter while making her look in the mirror, and with the mantras 'Agni with *yajus* formulae...' and 'Senā (is the wife) of Indra...'; thereafter (she likewise adorns) her son-in-law. And here they do whatever the women tell (to be done). She will become dear (to her husband), for the Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa (2.3.10.4) says, 'he will become dear'.²⁵⁹

Jan Gonda quotes this passage as an example of the author's 'strong tendency to incorporate rites that are foreign to the sūtra tradition or have at least no parallels in the older gṛhya works' (Gonda 1977: 594). He has not noticed that the ritual is described in the Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa (albeit not as part of the marriage but as a *kāmya* practice). Moreover, though it is a very important part of the marriage ceremonies nowadays, the other Gṛhyasūtras do not describe the adornment of the foreheads of the newly wed (which suggests that the practice is of non-Aryan origin). Yet there is a parallel in the marriage section of the Kauśikasūtra belonging to the unorthodox Atharvaveda: Kauśikasūtra 76.12 prescribes that a piece of gold should be placed on the bride's forehead. The Kauśikasūtra 35.21 also prescribes the use of the *sthakara* (ms. D: *sthakala*) paste along with some other substances for one who wishes to win the love of a woman: the ingredients should be crushed between two pieces of wood, taken from a tree and from a creeper that has grown around it, mixed with ghee and the paste prepared while chanting several spells from the Atharvaveda-Saṃhitā is to be applied on the woman desired.²⁶⁰ The variant form *tagara* is attested in the same text in a charm for victory in battle.²⁶¹

This evidence on the bridal forehead mark from Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa 2.3.10 and Āgniveśya-Gṛhyasūtra 1.7.1 ties up remarkably with other arguments that I have adduced earlier in support of a thesis that the red spot on the forehead as a mark of a married woman has been inherited from the Indus Civilization (Parpola 1994a:

²⁵⁹ I have paraphrased and translated the most important parts of the passage; for a (slightly different) translation of the entire passage, see Gonda 1977: 594.

²⁶⁰ Kauśikasūtra 35.21: *yathedaṃ bhūmyā adhi* (AS 2.30.1) *yathā vṛkṣaṃ* (AS 6.8.1) *vāñca me* (AS 6.9.1) *yathāyaṃ vāha* (AS 6.102.1) *iti saṃsprṣṭayor vṛkṣalibujayoḥ śakalāntareṣu sthakarāñjanakuṣṭhamadughareṣmamathitatṛṇam ājyena saṃnīya saṃsr̥ṣati*.

²⁶¹ According to Kauśikasūtra 16.1, powder made of *tagara* and *uśira* is to be applied on all the war drums by the king's house priest after he has washed them and poured the remnants of ghee libations on them, whereafter he hits them three times with appropriate hymns of the Atharvaveda and gives them to the musicians: *uccair ghoṣa* (AS 5.20.1) *śvāsayeti* (AS 6.126.1) *sarvavādītrāṇi prakṣālya tagarośireṇa saṃdhāvya saṃpātavanti trir āhatya prayacchati*.

Section 14). In that connection I discussed evidence relating to Rohiṇī, and it is to her I must now turn.²⁶²

22. ROHIṆĪ AND THE MOON

In the myth cited earlier from the Skanda-Purāṇa and adopted there from the Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa, Prajāpati/Brahmā's wife Sāvitṛī is identified with the red star Rohiṇī (Section 17). We have seen above that Sāvitṛī is considered to be the wife of Soma, the moon (sections 20-21). In another myth known from the oldest Brāhmaṇas,²⁶³ Rohiṇī is the favoured wife of the moon:

Soma was married to the nakṣatras, the lunar marker stars, but he favoured only one of them, Rohiṇī; the others, neglected, returned home. Soma went after them, but their father Prajāpati did not return them until Soma had promised to treat them equally. Because the moon again favoured only Rohiṇī, he was punished with the disease of consumption that causes him to wane.

The star Rohiṇī is praised as 'the very best of women and a goddess up in the heavens', as she 'is never seen an instant separated from the moon', her husband (Rāmāyaṇa, 2.110.11),²⁶⁴ the preceding verse lauds Sāvitṛī and Arundhatī for their marital faithfulness, through which they have reached the heavens.²⁶⁵ In the cultic ritual, too, the Rohiṇī star is worshipped together with the moon. Thus a vow called *rohiṇī-candra-śayana-vrata* is celebrated on the full moon day that falls on a Monday (the day of the moon), or when the moon rises full in the Rohiṇī constellation (called here Brahmā's nakṣatra) (Matsya-Purāṇa 57; Padma-Purāṇa 1.26). It includes the votive offering of golden images of Rohiṇī and the moon and of a bed (*śayana*), given to a Brahmin and his wife with a prayer for a happy married life.

In many Gṛhyasūtras, Rohiṇī is the first to be mentioned among the constellations auspicious for marriage.²⁶⁶ According to the Old Tamil poem preserved in Akanāṇūru 136, the marriage took place 'as omens fell together favourably, as the broad sky shone with clear light, and as there was an unjeopardized conjunction of the moon and *cakaṭam* [= the constellation Rohiṇī]' (transl. Hart 1975: 72). In Akanāṇūru 86.5-7, too, the moon and 'the faultless [Rohiṇī] star of excellent fame' are connected with marriage.

²⁶² As I cannot assume that every reader of this article has read my book, it has seemed me useful to repeat some material presented there, freely using and adapting my earlier formulations (Parpola 1994a, especially Section 14); more documentation can be found through the bibliographical notes given at the end of the book.

²⁶³ See Kāthaka-Saṃhitā 11.3; Maitrāyaṇī-Saṃhitā 2.2.7; Taittirīya-Saṃhitā 2.3.5.

²⁶⁴ Rāmāyaṇa (crit. ed.) 2.110.11: *variṣṭhā sarvanārīṇām eṣā ca divi devatā / rohiṇī na vinā candram muhūrtam api dṛśyatell*. The translation cited is Pollock's (1986: 319).

²⁶⁵ Rāmāyaṇa (crit. ed., with the correction made by Pollock 1986: 524) 2.110.10: *sāvitṛī patīśuśrūṣāṃ kṛtvā svarge mahīyate / tathaivarundhatī yātā patīśuśrūṣayā divam ||*.

²⁶⁶ Cf. Baudhāyana-Gṛhyasūtra 1.1.20; Mānava-Gṛhyasūtra 1.7.5; Kāthaka-Gṛhyasūtra 14.10.

23. ROHIṆĪ AND THE RISING SUN (Rohita)

The first constellation of the Vedic star calendar is the Pleiades (*ḥṛttikāḥ*), and it is under this nakṣatra that the Brāhmaṇa texts recommend a Brahmin to establish the sacred fires in the spring.²⁶⁷ It seems that the birth of the sacred fire, Agni, was made to coincide with the yearly birth of the sun. As the spring was considered to be the beginning of the year, and the calendar begins with the Pleiades, it has been plausibly suggested and fairly largely agreed that the star calendar was probably compiled around the 23rd century BC, since the heliacal rise of the Pleiades at the vernal equinox took place *c.* 2240 BC. This time coincides with the peak of the Indus Civilization which, as all other early urban cultures, needed a luni-solar calendar. In Mesopotamia, the star calendar is based on the observation of the heliacal rise of the marker star, i.e. the star rising in the eastern horizon just before sunrise. As the time for making this observation is short, the compilers of the nakṣatra calendar resorted to defining the heliacal rise of a star by observing the conjunction of the diametrically opposite star with the full moon.²⁶⁸

The Brāhmaṇa texts give, however, alternatives for the establishment of the sacred fires:

He may also set up his fires under (the asterism of) Rohiṇī. For under Rohiṇī it was that Prajāpati, when desirous of progeny (or creatures), set up his fires. (Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 2.1.2.6, transl. Eggeling 1882-1900, I: 283).²⁶⁹

The myths of Rohiṇī as the favoured mate of the moon probably refer to the times preceding the compilation of the nakṣatra calendar, when Rohiṇī was not the second but the first nakṣatra, i.e., when Aldebaran rose with the sun at the vernal equinox, which took place *c.* 3054 BC. This would take us to Early Harappan times. The Mahābhārata (3.219.10) in fact speaks of the time before the Pleiades rose to the heavens, when 'Rohiṇī was the first'. In the Rāmāyaṇa (5.31.6), too, Rohiṇī is called 'the first of the stars' (*jyotiṣām agryā*).²⁷⁰ Albrecht Weber (1862) pointed to

²⁶⁷ Cf. Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 2.1.2.1: 'He may set up the two fires (that is, the Gārhapatya and Āhavanīya, the two principal fires) under the Ḥṛttikās; for they, the Ḥṛttikās, are doubtless Agni's asterism...'; 2.1.3.5: 'The spring is the priesthood, the summer the nobility, and the rainy season the common people: a Brāhman therefore should set up his fires in spring, since the spring is the priesthood...' (Transl. Eggeling 1882-1900, I: 282, 290.)

²⁶⁸ See Parpola 1994a: Chapters 11.2 & 11.3 with further literature in the bibliographical notes.

²⁶⁹ Eggeling adds in note 1: 'In Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 1.1.2.2, it is stated that Prajāpati created Agni under (the asterism) of Rohiṇī, and that the gods then set up that fire under the same asterism.'

²⁷⁰ The critical edition reads Rāmāyaṇa 5.31.5-6 as follows: *kiṃ nu candramasā hīnā patitā vibudhālayāt / rohiṇī jyotiṣām śreṣṭhā śreṣṭhā sarvagunānvitā // kopād vā yadi vā mohād bhartāram asitekṣaṇā / vasiṣṭham kopayitvā tavaṃ nāsi kalyāṇy arundhatī //*. I am, however, preferring the reading *rohiṇī jyotiṣām agryā śreṣṭhā...* which is found in three manuscripts and in Gorresio's edition (3.31.5). Cf. also the reading of one further manuscript: *rohiṇī jyotiṣām agryā ca śreṣṭhā...*

a structural feature in the nakṣatra calendar that seems to bear out this interpretation: one variant²⁷¹ of the oldest nakṣatra list contains *two* lunar houses which are both called *rohiṇī*, namely the 2nd and the 16th (in other lists, the second *rohiṇī* is called *jyeṣṭhā* 'the oldest, the pre-eminent'); from the fact that these two stars oppose each other 180°, Weber concluded that the two halves of the calendrical cycle had once begun with the same name. Conjunction of the full moon with Rohiṇī coincided with the heliacal rise of the other Rohiṇī. The *vaṭa-sāvitṛī-vrata* is to be performed at the new or full moon of the Jyeṣṭha month: this timing would link it with the 'rebirth of the sun' at the oldest reconstructable Indian new year date.²⁷²

In the very earliest, rudimentary phase of Indian astronomy, the beginning of the new year would have been observed from the *heliacal rise* of Rohiṇī, which can be assumed to have been at that time more or less the only calendrical star of importance. The shift to lunar observation (the star's conjunction with the full moon) took place later, when the nakṣatra calendar was compiled. This later shift appears to be reflected in the story of Rohiṇī's being the favoured mate of the moon, for it is evidently she who is said to have been the wife of Bṛhaspati before she was appropriated by Soma (the moon) in a myth told in many Purāṇas (e.g., Viṣṇu-Purāṇa 4.6), though this astral goddess is here simply called Tārā, 'star':

Soma, the moon, performed the Vedic rite of royal consecration. He became arrogant and abducted Tārā, the wife of Bṛhaspati, the priest and teacher of the gods (identified with the planet Jupiter). The gods declared the war of stars, in which the Asuras (demons) and their teacher Uśanas Kāvya (identified with the planet Venus), fought on the side of the moon. After Tārā was restored to her husband, she was found to be pregnant. At first Bṛhaspati wished to have the child abandoned, but after the birth of a splendid son, both Bṛhaspati and Soma claimed paternity. When Tārā, threatened by her son, finally declared Soma to be the father, the moon named the child Budha, 'wise' (identified with the planet Mercury).

This myth is very ancient, being referred to as early as the Ṛgveda (10.109), around 1000 BC. Bṛhaspati is later the golden planet Jupiter, but in this myth he is undoubtedly the rising sun. In the Jaiminīya-Upaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa (4.27), Savitṛ (the rising sun) and his mate Sāvitṛī form the archetypal 'couple' (*mithuna*); the later state of affairs is reflected in the marriage hymn of the Ṛgveda (ṚS 10.85), where Sāvitṛī is the bride of the moon. The Atharvaveda (13.1.22), too, supports this hypothesis by making the goddess Rohiṇī the mate of the rising sun and, significantly, a goddess of war:

²⁷¹ See Taittirīya-Saṃhitā 4.4.10.1-3; cf. also Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa 1.5.1.4.

²⁷² This timing in the Jyeṣṭha month should not be stressed too much, however, for as the example of the *brahma-sāvitṛī-vrata* shows, the dates can change over the course of a long period of time.

Devoted to Rohita is Rohiṇī his mistress, with beautiful colour (complexion), great, and lustrous: through her may we conquer booty of every description, through her win every battle! (Transl. Bloomfield 1897: 210.)²⁷³

Rohita means 'the red [masculine] one', and Rohiṇī 'the red [female] one'. Rohiṇī is the sun's mate in the yearly cycle as the red star Aldebaran, which is in conjunction with the sun at the new year, but in the daily cycle she accompanies the sun's rise and setting as the red dawn/twilight associated with the daily recitation of the Sāvitrī stanza. In the Vedic myth of Prajāpati's incest with his own daughter, she is said to be, by some, the dawn (Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa 3.33).

24. THE RED FOREHEAD MARK, THE SUN, AND ROHIṆĪ

According to the passage of Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa quoted earlier (in Section 21), Sāvitrī (=Rohiṇī) won her husband the moon by means of the ornament she put on her forehead. The red forehead mark is called by many names, the Dravidian word *poṭṭu* being current in South India, while in North India, among the most common terms are Sanskrit *bindu* 'drop', *tilaka* 'mark on the forehead; small mole on the skin' (from *tila* 'sesame seed, small particle'), and *ṭikā*.²⁷⁴ In its most common function, it is an indispensable attribute of a married Hindu woman whose husband is alive. Texts like Tryambakayajvan's Strīdharmapaddhati, which details the duties of the 'perfect wife', prescribe putting the auspicious tilaka mark on the forehead as a necessary part of the wife's daily toilette. The traditional verses quoted in this connection stress that this should not be forgotten by the devoted wife (*pati-vratā*) who wishes her husband to live long:

The sectarian marks so important for men are deemed irrelevant to their wives... The... references to tilaka have no relation to either Viṣṇu or Śiva. The mark is made with... [saffron or reddish paste, called] *kuṅkuma*, the sign of a woman's marital happiness or *saubhāgya*. For the tilaka is the visible symbol of a woman's religious allegiance as distinct from that of men. It declares first that her husband is her deity; secondly, that he is still alive to receive her daily service and worship. As we have seen, the bulk of the rulings on a woman's appearance carry the same message: her husband lives; all religious devotion must be directed to him alone. A man without his sectarian mark is a man without a god; a woman without her tilaka is one whose god is dead. (Leslie 1989: 96-101.)

The time of celebration (marriage under the Rohiṇī star) and her appearance as the prototypal bride in the myths of her marriage with the moon are not the only things that connect Rohiṇī with brides and marriage. The Sanskrit word *rohiṇī* also

²⁷³ AS 13.1.22: *anuvratā rohiṇī rohitasya sūriḥ suvarṇā bṛhatī suvarcāḥ / tayā vājān viśvarūpāṃ jayema tayā viśvāḥ pṛtanā abhi śyāma ||*

²⁷⁴ The Sanskrit word *ṭikā/ṭikā* 'forehead mark', for which there was previously no etymology, seems to come from a relatively late erroneous analysis (cf. Persian-derived *lālā* 'red') of Sanskrit (Pāṇini) *lālāṭikā* 'forehead mark' < *lalāṭa* 'forehead' (cf. Parpola 1994a: Chapter 14).

denotes a marriageable young virgin in general. According to Parāśara-Smṛti 7.7.4, *rohiṇī* is a marriageable young girl who is nine years old.²⁷⁵ The Gṛhyāsamgraha (2.18) in turn defines *rohiṇī* as follows: 'the girl is "red" (*rohiṇī*) after she has attained menstruation.' This meaning is associated with that of 'the Rohiṇī star' in the Vedic myth where the star Rohiṇī is the firstborn daughter of the creator-god Prajāpati (Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa 3.33). In that primeval act of incest (which according to the Matsya-Purāṇa passage cited in Section 17 actually took place), Rohiṇī was approached by her own father, but the father was killed in punishment for his sinful behaviour.

One function of this myth seems to have been to warn of the dire consequences of incest and to enforce the sacred law which states:

Out of fear of the appearance of the menses let the father marry his daughter while she still runs about naked. For if she stays (in the house) after the age of puberty, sin falls on the father. (Vāsiṣṭha-Dharmaśāstra 17.70.)

In the Sāvitrī legend itself, King Aśvapati sends his daughter to choose her own husband, because he knows the law; Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa quotes in this context a verse, which equates the father's sin to the murder of a Brahmin (*brahmahatyā*) if an unmarried girl sees menses in her father's house.²⁷⁶ Here *brahmahatyā* also seems to hint at the killing of God Brahmā in the myth of his incest and not only at the father's being a 'foetus-killer' (*bhrūṇahā*) by being instrumental in letting the fructification of the girl's womb miss (cf. Skanda-Purāṇa 4.40.34-35 and Dange 1990, V: 1597).

I suspect that the very mention of this rule in connection with Sāvitrī's belated marriage implies an incestuous relationship between Sāvitrī and her father,²⁷⁷ especially as the Bāhlika women are said to indulge in (incestuous) sexual relationships within their (noble) families, due to a curse by a maiden (still) surrounded by her relatives who was unlawfully abused.²⁷⁸ Aśvapati 'lord of horses', is likely to denote Varuṇa, to whom the sacrificed horse victim of the aśvamedha originally belonged and whom it represented, before Varuṇa was ousted from this position by the Brahmanical Prajāpati. Varuṇa represents the sun which has set, i.e. night and death (he is a multiform of Yama, both having *pāśa*, the noose of death, as their attribute). Night is the 'demon' killed by the light of the morning (Sāvitrī) who is

²⁷⁵ Parāśara-Smṛti 7.7.4: *aṣṭavarṣā bhaved gaurī navavarṣā tu rohiṇī / daśavarṣā bhavet kanyā ata ūrdhvaṃ rajasvalā //* – According to Brahmavaivarta-Purāṇa (Prakṛti-Khaṇḍa 26.2), Sāvitrī was twelve years old at the death of her husband: *yama uvāca // kanyā dvādaśavarṣīyā vatse tvaṃ vayasādhunā / ...*

²⁷⁶ Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa 4.102.18 and Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.19: *pitur gṛhe tu yā kanyā rajaḥ paśyaty asaṃskṛtā / brahmahatyā pitus tatra sā kanyā vṛṣalī smṛtā //*.

²⁷⁷ Jamison (1996: 246f.), too, seems to sense something fishy in Aśvapati's relationship to his daughter.

²⁷⁸ Cf. Mahābhārata 8.30.57-59 (see above Section 14).

born from the body of the darkness as his daughter, and night and light 'join' at the dawn. In addition we have the myth of the would-be incest between Yama and his twin-sister Yamī: as this was the primeval pair, Yamī could also be considered Yama's daughter, as Iḍā is in the case of Manu, Yama's double as the first man. In R̥gveda 1.121.2b, Indra is said to have desired his own daughter in the shape of a water buffalo (*anu svajāṃ mahiṣaś cakṣata vrām*): here Indra has temporarily adopted features of his rival, Varuṇa, the mightiest Asura, to whom buffalo sacrifices were due (cf. Maitrāyaṇī-Saṃhitā 3.14.10 and Vājasaneyi-Saṃhitā 24.28), the predecessor of both Prajāpati and Mahiṣa Asura (cf. Parpola 1992: 293-298). Moreover, in the Mahābhārata (3.277.32) Aśvapati asks Sāvitrī to find a husband equal to herself (*sadṛśam ātmanaḥ*) as no wooer is forthcoming, while in the Skanda-Purāṇa (7.1.166.16) Aśvapati says that he cannot find a groom equal to himself (*vicārayan na paśyāmi varaṃ tulyam ihātmanaḥ*). This recalls Megasthenes (c. 300 BC) reporting of Queen Pandaie that she was married at an early age by her own father Heracles, as he could not find any other worthy groom, and that was the beginning of the (Pāṇḍya) dynasty of kings.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁹ Cf. Megasthenes F 13a (Jacoby) in Arrian, Indica 9.2-3: καὶ ὑπὲρ τούτου λεγόμενον λόγον εἶναι παρὰ Ἰνδοῖσιν. Ἡρακλέα, ὀπιγόνου οἱ γενομένης τῆς παιδός, ἐπεὶ τε δὴ ἐγγός ἔμαθεν ἑαυτῷ εὐόσαν τὴν τελευταίην, οὐκ ἔχοντα ὅτῳ ἀνδρὶ ἐκδῶ τὴν παῖδα ἑωυτοῦ ἐπαξίῳ, αὐτὸν μιγῆναι τῇ παιδί ἑπταετεί εὐόση, ὡς γένος ἐξ οὗ τε κάκεινης ὑπολείπεσθαι Ἰνδῶν βασιλέας. ποιῆσαι ὦν αὐτὴν Ἡρακλέα ὠραίνην γάμου· καὶ ἐκ τούδε ἅπαν τὸ γένος τοῦτο ὅτου ἡ Πανδαίη ἐπήρξε, ταῦτόν τοῦτο γέρας ἔχειν παρὰ Ἡρακλέος. 'There is a story about this among the Indians, that Heracles, whose daughter was born to him late in life, realizing that his own end was near, and having no man of his own worth to whom he might give his daughter, copulated with her himself when she was seven, so that their progeny might be left behind as Indian kings. Thus Heracles made her marriageable, and thenceforward the whole of this line which began with Pandaie inherited this very same privilege from Heracles.' (Ed. & transl. Brunt 1983: 330-331.) – As Megasthenes says of Heracles that he is worshipped by Śūrasenas in Mathurā, the vast majority of scholars (including myself) have taken his identity with Κῆρη as a matter of course (cf. Karttunen 1989: 211f.). The evidence now under discussion, however, makes me find the old identification of Heracles with Bala-Rāma (suggested by Tod in 1835, and quoted without mentioning his source by McCrindle in 1896, cf. Karttunen 1989: 212) as not only possible but most plausible, because Sāvitrī is also called Sītā (cf. Section 21), and it is Bala-Rāma who appears to have been her original husband (cf. Section 33). Oskar von Hinüber (Wirth & Hinüber 1985: 1110) has pointed out that the name *Pandaie* might well represent **Pāṇḍeyā* 'daughter of Pāṇḍu' (cf. Karttunen 1989: 204), and the name *Pāṇḍu* in turn denotes 'white, whitish, yellow, pale', being a word of Dravidian origin (cf. Parpola 1984: 455; Karttunen 1989: 203), and thus agrees with the colour characteristic of Bala-Rāma. Moreover, there is a great probability that Queen Pandaie is Goddess Mīnākṣī of Madurai (cf. Parpola 1984: 458f. and Karttunen 1989: 204 with further references), who through the myth of her third breast is related to the fierce three-breasted Kuveṇī (Pali Kuvanṇā) of Sri Lanka, a *yakṣiṇī* who unites with Vijaya, the 'first king' of the island (cf. Shulman 1980: 202-205). Vijaya was a north Indian adventurer belonging to the Pāṇḍu clan who came from Gujarat around the fifth century BC (cf. Parpola 1984: 451ff.; Karttunen 1989: 204). This could explain also Sītā's association with Sri Lanka. If Kuveṇī and Mīnākṣī are forms of Sītā Sāvitrī, they provide important evidence of her warrior nature and identity with Durgā (cf. the myths in Shulman 1980: 202-205).

To continue the argument started before this digression on incest, the expression 'red girl' (*rohiṇī*) appears to get its meaning from the fertile red blood (*rohita*) in her womb. The following considerations lead to the same conclusion. Unmarried girls traditionally have a black forehead mark, the red mark being reserved for married women alone. Moreover, a woman is not to wear the auspicious red mark on her forehead when she menstruates, but is instead supposed to put a black mark for three days. During this time, sexual intercourse is prohibited. On the fourth day she is again available to her husband, and puts on the red mark.²⁸⁰ If a woman becomes a widow or her husband is away, she is not entitled to wear the red tilaka mark.

The wife devoted to her husband has Sāvitṛī and Rohiṇī as her models. If the dot on her forehead symbolizes her husband, then it should depict the sun, because Sāvitṛī and Rohiṇī most originally seem to have been the wives of Savitṛ and Rohita respectively, who both stand for the (rising) sun. This would be in agreement with the red and circular form of the mark and the testimony of C. D. Maclean, whose *Glossary of the Madras Presidency* (1893), under the word 'Pottoo (*boṭṭu*, Telugu; *poṭṭu*, Tamil)', records that 'the dot is the mark of the sun'. The Rāmāyaṇa (3.15.8) compares the northern direction, which is without the sun, to a woman who lacks the tilaka.²⁸¹

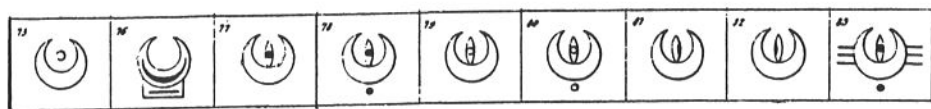


Fig. 1 (= Parpola 1994a: fig. 14.39). Hindu forehead marks. After Moor 1810: pl. II, nos. 75-83.

One of the most extensive and detailed collections of Hindu forehead marks was published by Edward Moor in his book *The Hindu Pantheon* in 1810. The astral nature of the 'crescents, variously accompanied' in nos. 75-83 of Moor's catalogue (see fig. 1) is clear from his comments:

This lunar hieroglyphic seems exclusively the distinction of MAHADEVA and his family: I do not, in this instance, find any exception. Nos. 75. and 76... the *Shivanites* paint... on the forehead in yellow, as emblems of SIVA and PARVATI – the Sun and Moon. In all my pictures the crescents are white. (Moor 1810: 408.)

This interpretation agrees with classical Hindu mythology, according to which Śiva has the crescent of the moon as a diadem on his forehead, and a sun-like third eye on his brow.

²⁸⁰ It is undoubtedly this custom that is reflected in giving the Goddess Durgā her forehead mark on the *fourth* day of the yearly navarātri festival.

²⁸¹ Rāmāyaṇa 3.15.8: *vihīnatilakeva strī nottarā dik prakāśate*.

But if the 'eye' above the crescent is the sun (and the sun is the 'eye' of various Vedic gods already), what is the dot beneath the crescent in nos. 78, 80 and 83 of Moor's catalogue? We find an explanation in B. A. Gupte's article 'Notes on female tattoo designs in India', published in 1902:

1. *The mole* is a well-known protection from the Evil Eye. It is also an emblem of the *Chāndani*, corresponding to Venus, whose approach to the Moon, a personified *male* (as distinguished from the female of the West) is a natural phenomenon held to represent the meeting of a loving pair. The Moon is called *Rāktīpati* or *Tārāgaṇapati*, 'King of the Night', 'Husband of the Stars'.

2. *Rohiṇī* is his favourite wife, and she is represented thus • , while a crescent shows the Moon. A dot between the horns ☽ represents the face of the Moon, which is often, however, drawn like the human face in profile ☽ with another dot below it to represent his loving consort. It is an emblem of conjugal happiness. (Gupte 1902: 293.)²⁸²

Thus the red dot on the forehead, with or without the lunar crescent, seems to have denoted both 'the sun' and 'the star Rohiṇī'.

Originally, it seems to me, the red mark on the forehead was done with the blood of the sacrificed victim. This is still the case, for example, in the *navarātri* festival of Goddess *Durgā*.²⁸³ Early evidence of a forehead mark made with blood at sunrise can be seen in the *Brāhmaṇa* texts explaining the origins of the *agnihotra* sacrifice:

Prajāpati alone was here (in the beginning)... Then Prajāpati created the creatures among whom Agni was the first. Now Agni is Death. He pursued Prajāpati in the form of someone who would eat him. He (Agni) made a rush at him. (Out of fear) for him he wiped off (the sweat of his forehead). Therefore there is no hair on the forehead... (*Vādhūlasūtra* 3.19, transl. Bodewitz 1976: 18.)

(In the beginning) Prajāpati existed here. From him Agni (Fire) was emitted. He rushed upwards from his head. He (Prajāpati) wiped off the blood (*lohita*) left on it... He wiped off (the blood?) from here (i.e. from his forehead). (*Kāṅhaka-Saṃhitā* 6.1, transl. Bodewitz 1976: 14.)

The lunar crescent on the forehead is also an attribute of both *Durgā*²⁸⁴ and *Sāvitrī*,²⁸⁵ it seems to represent *Sāvitrī*'s resurrected lunar husband.

282 Here Gupte does not specify the placement of these tattoo marks, but other reports do. According to Paupa Rao Naidu, *History of Railway Thieves*, 1900 (quoted in Thurston 1906: 377), 'both men and women of the Korava class wear tattoo marks of circular or semicircular form on their foreheads and forearms', while 'many Pulayan men in Travancore are tattooed on the forehead with a crescent and circular spot' (Thurston 1906: 378).

283 Cf. Kane 1958: 166f., and further e.g. Silva 1955.

284 Cf. Kane 1958: 163. This is an early attribute: 'On a coin of the late Kuṣāṇa king Kaneshko the reverse shows the figure of a goddess with a lunar crescent seated full face on a lion...' (Kane 1958: 186).

285 Cf. *Skanda-Purāṇa* 5.3.200.7: *bālā bālendusadr̥ṣī raktavastrānulepanā / uṣaḥkāle tu dhyā-tavyā saṃdhyāsaṃdhāna uttame*, which Dange (1986-90, II: 605) renders 'Sāvitrī... is to be contemplated as a *bālā* (i.e. of about sixteen years in age) having red wearing, at the dawn or

25. ROHIṆĪ AS THE STAR OF GODDESS DURGĀ

According to the Rohiṇī-(somanātha-)tīrtha-māhātmya included in the Skanda-Purāṇa (5.3.108), Rohiṇī won the love of her husband after propitiating the goddess who killed the Buffalo demon.²⁸⁶ That Rohiṇī is the star of Goddess Durgā is also suggested by the fact that Tārā remains one of Durgā's names:

The wise seers call her Ugra-tārā, for Ambikā always protects her devotees against danger, however terrible it may be (Kālikā-Purāṇa 63.61, transl. Kooij 1972).

Tārā, whose name originally denotes 'star' (*tārā* < **stārā*- < Indo-European **ster-*), is worshipped as a most popular tutelary goddess in Tibetan Buddhism. Tradition takes her name to mean 'saviouress' (from the Sanskrit verb *tārayati* 'takes across, saves, protects'), but the astral meaning is implied in the earliest known reference to this Buddhist deity, Subandhu's Vāsavadattā (c. AD 650):

'The Lady Twilight was seen, devoted to the stars and clad in red sky, as a Buddhist nun [is devoted to Tārā and is clad in red garments.]' The pun centers on the ambivalence of two words: *tārā* as either 'star' or 'Tārā', and *ambara* as either 'sky' or 'garment'. (Beyer 1973: 7.)

In the Mahābhārata (2.11.25), Sāvitrī too has the epithet *durga-taraṇī* 'she who saves from difficulties or dangers'. Sāvitrī's identity with Durgā is suggested also by the worship of the cat that is prescribed for the *vaṭa-sāvitrī-vrata* (cf. Section 3a).

We have seen that Rohiṇī probably was the oldest marking star of both the vernal and the autumnal equinox. The two great festivals of Durgā are celebrated around these two dates, in the spring and in the autumn. Before starting out on a war expedition on the 'tenth day of victory' that concludes the autumnal navarātri festival, a Rajput king traditionally lustrates his army. On the appearance of the first

morning twilight'. This translation, however, omits the descriptions 'looking like the young moon' and 'having red ointment (as a forehead mark)'.²⁸⁶

286 Cf. Skanda-Purāṇa 5.3.108.10ff.: *daṣṣasyāpi tathā jātāḥ pañcāśad duhitaro 'nagha // dadau sa daśa dharmāya kaśyapāya trayodaśa / tathaiva sa mahābhāgaḥ saptaviṃśatim indave // rohiṇī nāma yā tāsāṃ madhye tasya narādhipa / aniṣṭā sarvanārīṇāṃ bhartuś caiva viśeṣataḥ // tataḥ sā paramaṃ kṛtvā vairāgyaṃ nṛpasattama / āgatyā narmadātīre cacāra vipulaṃ tapaḥ // ekarātrais trirātrais ca ṣaḍdvādaśabhir eva ca / pakṣamāso-pavāsaiś ca karśayanti kalevaram // ārādhayanī satataṃ mahiṣāsuranāśinīm / devīm bhagavatīm tāta sarvārtivinivāraṇīm // snātvā snātvā jale nityaṃ narmadāyāḥ śucimitā / tatas tuṣṭā mahābhāga devī nārāyaṇī nṛpa // prasannā te mahābhāge vratena niyamena ca / etac chrutvā tu vacanaṃ rohiṇī śāśinaḥ priyā // yathā bhavāmi nacirāt tathā bhavatu mānade / evam astv iti sā caktā bhavāni bhaktavatsalā // stūyamānā munigaṇais tatraivāntaradhīyata / tadāprabhṛti tattīrthaṃ rohiṇī śāśinaḥ priyā // samjātā sarvakālaṃ tu vallabhā nṛpasattama / tatra tīrthe tu yā nārī naro vā snāti bhaktitah // vallabhā jāyate sā tu bhartur vai rohiṇī yathā / tatra tīrthe tu yaḥ kaś cit prāṇatyāgaṃ karoti vai // sapta janmāni dāmpatyaviyogo na bhavet kva cit /*

star (Biardeau 1981: 226), he parades to worship the goddess of victory and her tree (śamī, a hard tree used together with the pipal fig in the kindling of fire). According to Dharmasindhu, the king is to go to the northeast and to pray: 'May Aparājītā... bestow victory on me!' Northeast is the 'invincible (*aparājītā*) direction' (Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa 1.14) of the dawn and the rising star.

The northeastern direction also figures prominently in the marriage ceremony.

The most important and essential rite in the marriage ceremonies is the 'seven steps' (*saptapadī*) taken by bride and bridegroom in the north-eastern direction, the quarter of victory, by which they enter into a bond of union with one another: BG. 1.1.29; HG. 1.21.1f.; ĀśvG. 1.7.19, etc. (Gonda 1980: 38).²⁸⁷

The planet Venus as the brightest morning and evening star would appear to be a natural symbol for the Goddess as 'the light-bringer'. The planet Venus has this symbolism not only in the ancient Near East (Section 15), but also in clearly independent ethnographic parallels, like the rather impressive one quoted from southern Rhodesia by Herman Lommel (1955-58: 99-100): this made Lommel (p. 102-103) suspect that Sāvitrī, too, might be the planet Venus. Why then is the goddess of love and victory, otherwise so similar to her Mesopotamian counterpart Inanna-Ishtar, not represented in India by Venus²⁸⁸ but by Aldebaran. One reason obviously is the calendrical role of Aldebaran as the traditional new year star, and another her red colour. But it seems that one important reason is also the fact that the planet Venus seems to have been reserved in India for another role.

According to the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa, Agni cohabited with the cow, placing his white seed into it: that became the milk. '...Therefore, whether it is in a black or in a red (cow), it is ever white and resplendent like fire.' (Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 2.2.4.15.)²⁸⁹ The white milk in this legend seems to represent the 'white' or 'bright' (*śukra*) planet Venus as the morning star (the 'milk' of the red cow) and the evening star (the 'milk' of the black cow): it represents the seed of Agni (the setting sun) and Sūrya (the rising sun) respectively. In Sanskrit, *śukra* means 'white' or 'bright', 'seminal fluid' and 'planet Venus', and all these meanings are shared by the Dravidian word *veḷḷi*, which seems to occur in the Indus inscriptions (see Parpola 1994a: Chapter 13).

²⁸⁷ In the *vaṭa-sāvitrī-vrata*, according to one source, the marriage of Sāvitrī and Satyavat is celebrated on the morning following Satyavat's death and revival. The morning is when the sun is 'reborn' after its nightly 'death' and rises to the sky accompanied by Sāvitrī, the prayer at sunrise, to be muttered facing east.

²⁸⁸ Later, after the introduction of the Near Eastern/Hellenistic astrology to India, Friday, the weekday associated with the planet Venus, is one of the principal days of the Goddess.

²⁸⁹ Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 2.2.4.15: *tām u hāgnir abhidadyau / mithuny anayā syām iti tām sambabhūva tasyām retāḥ prāsiñcat tat payo 'bhavat tasmād etad āmāyām gavi satyām śṛtam agner hi retas tasmād yadi kṛṣṇāyām yadi rohinyām śuklam eva bhavaty agni-saṃkāśam agner hi retas tasmāt prathamadugdham uṣṇam bhavaty agner hi retāḥ.*

In Hindu mythology, Śukra or the planet Venus is the chief priest (*purohita*) of the Asuras (i.e., originally, the pre-Vedic inhabitants of the Indus Valley). The white colour associated with him points to the priestly class, as white is the symbolic colour of the Brahmins. There is also one Hindu deity who appears to be of Harappan-Dravidian origin, and who is associated with the colour white, namely Bala-Rāma.²⁹⁰ Bala-Rāma is the god of ploughing, an activity that requires seed-grain, something that has been 'left over' from the previous harvest. Such connotations are associated with the name of the white serpent who is said to be Bala-Rāma's incarnation or vice versa, namely Śeṣa, 'remainder'.

26. HARAPPAN AND DRAVIDIAN ORIGIN OF THE RED FOREHEAD MARK

One of the most famous Indus seals (see fig. 2) depicts a horned deity standing inside a fig tree, and a human-looking worshipper who wears a similar horned head-dress and kneels in front of the tree with hands raised in respectful salutation or prayer. The worshipper, probably the chief priest of the deity who possessed this seal, is flanked by a human-faced markhor goat, and, beneath the tree, a low altar or table on which is placed a human head, identifiable as that of a warrior from its 'double-bun' hairstyle which recurs elsewhere in fighting scenes and is of Mesopotamian origin. At the bottom is a row of seven anthropomorphic beings, apparently female, because they wear their hair in just one long plait, which still is the most common hairstyle of women in South Asia.

The tree is probably the banyan fig, and the deity inside it a predecessor of Durgā, the goddess of victory and love,²⁹¹ to whom a human sacrifice of a brave warrior has been made. The decapitated victim is likely to have been the groom in a 'sacred marriage' performed at the new year festival, and to have personified the predecessor of Rudra/Skanda/Rohita/Agni (Section 42). The seven females at the bottom probably represent the 'Seven Mothers' of this war-god, the stars of the Pleiades, which became the constellation of the new year when the nakṣatra calendar

²⁹⁰ Bala-Rāma is called in Tamil Vāliyōṅ 'the white one', from the root *vāl* 'white' (Burrow & Emeneau 1984: 485f., no. 5364, which includes Telugu *vālu-cukka* 'the planet Venus'). As this word does not occur in other Dravidian languages except Tamil, Malayalam and Telugu, it might go back to Proto-Dravidian *pāl* 'milk' (Burrow & Emeneau 1984: 364, no. 4096), and, taking into consideration the Proto-Dravidian alternation found e.g. in *kāṇ* 'to see' and *kaṇ* 'eye', one could speculate that originally the word for 'tooth', *pal* (Burrow & Emeneau 1984: 355, no. 3986) as 'a white thing' might be of the same origin. In any case all these concepts are connected with Bala-Rāma (for a connection between 'tooth' and 'plough', see Section 33).


²⁹¹ Both female and male divinities have been associated with the banyan tree in South Asia. Besides Goddess Durgā or Kālī, the most important other deity is the god of death, Yama (cf. Section 3a), also called Kāla 'the black one' as the husband of Goddess Kālī (cf. Section 3b). See further Parpola 1994a: Chapter 14.





Fig. 2 (= Parpola 1994a: fig. 14.35). The 'fig-deity seal' from Mohenjo-daro (M-1186). The iconography of this seal is briefly explained in the following on the basis of the more extensive argumentation in Parpola 1994a: Chapter 14.3.

was compiled around the 23rd century BC. The markhor goat (*śarabha* in Sanskrit) is a symbol of Agni in Vedic texts; according to the *Kālikā-Purāṇa*, the Goddess most appreciates man as a sacrificial victim, but next to a human victim she likes best the *śarabha*. The human face of this beast in the seal may indicate that a ritual of head exchange was practised (cf. Section 43).

In addition to this pictorial scene, which could convey the message of the seal even to an illiterate viewer, there is an inscription, which I have assumed to repeat the same message, stating the owner of the seal to be the high priest of the deity depicted. Obviously I cannot here give any comprehensive account of how the Indus script, in my view, is to be deciphered (again the reader must consult my book, Parpola 1994a), but I would like to briefly present my interpretation of the three last signs in the upper row (to be read from right to left in the impression of the seal). The last sign (half worn away) is a picture of 'man', and I read it in Proto-Dravidian as **ā!* 'man', in Tamil also 'servant (of a deity)'. The preceding sign, by far the most commonly occurring one in the entire script, seems to depict a frontal image of a cow with horns and ears, to judge from more or less simplified parallels on Early Harappan pottery at Rahman Dheri; I read it in Proto-Dravidian as **ā* 'cow', here used as a rebus for **-ā* 'of, belonging to', the nominal suffix of the possessive case.

In this interpretation the sign preceding this suffix sign, the third from the end, , stands for the deity whose 'man' or 'servant' possessed this seal. It is a sign put together of two components, one of which is the picture of 'fish' (this is proved by Harappan iconography showing identically drawn fish swimming around a gavi-al, or in the jaws of this fish-eating crocodilian of South Asia). In Proto-Dravidian, the word for 'fish', **mīn*, was homophone with the word **mīn* 'star'. In the Indus inscriptions the plain fish sign often forms compounds with a preceding numeral sign, so that the resulting compound always corresponds to star names actually attested in Old Tamil texts (Old Tamil *arū-mīn* 'Pleiades', literally 'six-star'; *elū-mīn* 'Ursa Major', literally 'seven-star', and so forth). Plain or compounded fish signs constitute approximately ten percent of the total of signs occurring in the Indus inscriptions, which are mostly seal texts, yet fish are never mentioned on the contemporary Mesopotamian seals (though they are in economic texts), which were used in the same way as the Indus seals, for stamping bales of goods. Therefore, it is likely that the 'fish' signs in the Indus inscriptions do not usually denote 'fish', but something else that was commonly mentioned in seals that can be assumed to have contained mainly proper names and (priestly) titles. Names of deities, often forming components of human proper names in the ancient Near East as well as in historical South Asia, are a likely meaning for the 'fish' signs. In the ancient Near East, the deities had an astral aspect and could be expressed through their stellar symbol, for example, Inanna-Ishtar, the goddess of love and war, through the planet Venus, or Nergal, the male god of war, through the planet Mars. In ancient India, people were given astral names according to their birth star or planet, and the birth stars were guarded by particular deities.

In the 'fig-deity' seal, the 'fish' sign assumed to stand for the goddess of love and war, the Harappan protoform of Durgā, is most likely to represent the star Rohiṇī, on the basis of what has been presented in this article. It consists of a 'dot' or 'drop', in Proto-Dravidian **poṭṭu*, in the 'stomach' (*poṭṭu*) of a 'fish' (*mīn*): . This interpretation of the sign yields the Dravidian compound *poṭṭu-mīn*, which has been recorded as occurring with the meaning of 'rohita fish' i.e., the carp, in Central Dravidian. The red scales of the carp itself are prescribed for making the forehead mark in marriage ceremonies. *Rohita* is the masculine form of the same word for 'red' that occurs in feminine in the name Rohiṇī, so the *rohita* fish may be assumed to have originally symbolized the red star Rohiṇī rather than the *śakula* fish mentioned as the symbol of the star Rohiṇī in one astronomical text; both the *rohita* and the *śakula* fish figure prominently in the cult of the Goddess. As we have seen, Rohiṇī is spoken of as a goddess of victory in the Atharvaveda, and the 'red dot put on the forehead', *poṭṭu* in Dravidian, has a central role in the marriage ceremony as well as in the cult of the Goddess (this is the mark put on their forehead by the visitors to the temples of the Goddess). The Tamil goddess of Madurai, who according to the local legend was raised up like a warrior and conquered the whole

world, has eyes shaped like the red carp, which is also implied by the shape of the Indus sign . The red forehead mark of a warrior, too, according to medieval sources, should have the form of a fish (*mīna*). While the star on the forehead of the Mesopotamian bull figurines has been assumed to represent the star Aldebaran (=Rohiṇī), as the eye of the constellation Taurus, Vedic and epic-Purāṇic texts connect the forehead mark directly with Sāvitrī/Rohiṇī. Vedic texts connect the forehead-mark of the victim of the horse sacrifice with the asterism of the Pleiades and with the eye, but comparison with the symbols traditionally associated with the nakṣatras proves its original connection with Rohiṇī.

27. THE BANYAN TREE AND ITS ASSOCIATION WITH YAMA AND VARUṆA

According to the Indus iconography (see fig. 2), the holy fig tree held a very important position in the Harappan religion.²⁹² As indicated already by the name of the fast, *vaṭa-sāvitrī-vrata*, the Sāvitrī ritual is intimately connected with the *vaṭa* tree, the holy banyan fig (*Ficus indica* L. = *Ficus bengalensis* L.), and it was actually this association that originally interested me in the study of the Sāvitrī legend and vow. According to the texts, the woman observing the *vaṭa-sāvitrī-vrata* should sprinkle water at the root of the banyan tree every month during the entire preceding year. In the mantra with which the watering of the banyan tree is to be done, it is called 'eternal banyan tree' (*akṣayo vaṭaḥ*) and identified with Yama.

Curiously, the banyan tree is not even mentioned in the polished literary version of the Mahābhārata, but it does figure fairly prominently in several Purāṇic versions of the legend (see Section 2) and especially in the more elaborate descriptions of the *vrata* ritual (see above Section 3 & fig. 3).²⁹³ A closer study of this tree and its symbolism makes it possible to connect Sāvitrī with yet another prominent model of wifely chastity in ancient India, namely Arundhatī, a star in the constellation of Ursa Major which is pointed out to the bride in the Vedic as well as the Old

²⁹² In my 1994 book I have extensively dealt with the following evidence which makes it to appear quite likely that the Sāvitrī legend and the ritual associated with it go back to the Indus Civilization. I first thought of omitting all this discussion in the present article, because it is so long and because I have already published it, but then decided to repeat (with a few modifications) all essential parts of it here anyway, because otherwise my understanding of the Sāvitrī legend and ritual would be left badly incomplete for many readers.

²⁹³ This was noted already by Allen in 1901, and stressed again by Dange 1963 and 1987: 60, 63. In Dange's opinion, the Mahābhārata in its omission of any reference to the banyan tree represents the more original version of the Sāvitrī legend, while the Purāṇas have added to it a theme of pre-Aryan religion. My own view is that the Purāṇas are more conservative here, and the Mahābhārata represents a refined literary version that has innovated by leaving out this popular detail. This is apparent from the fact that the Mahābhārata has otherwise kept the related key phrases intact, cf. Mahābhārata 3.281.103: *vrkṣaśākhāvalambinam*, and Skanda-Purāṇa 7.166.50: *vaṭaśākhāvalambitaḥ* (variant reading: *vaṭaśākhāvalambanam*).

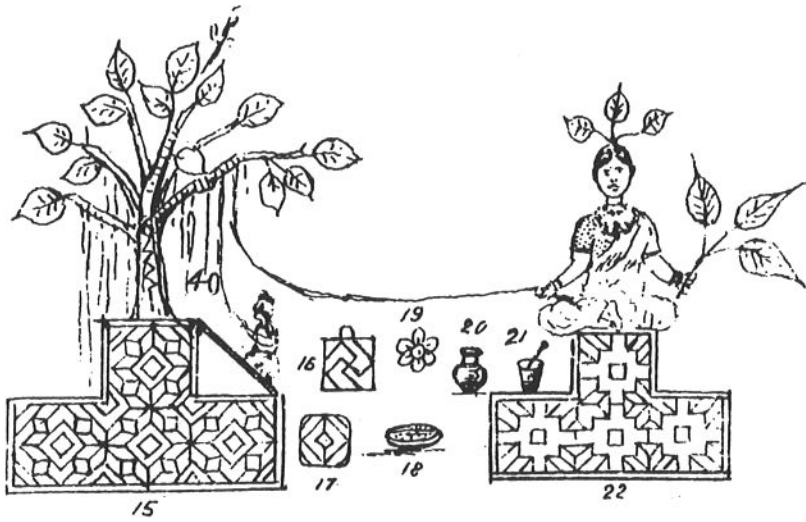


Fig. 3 (= Parpola 1994a: fig. 14.1). *Vaṭa-Sāvitrī* in a picture drawn after traditional models by Mrs Gupte about 1905 (after Gupte 1906, plate nos. 15, 22, 40). The dying Satyavat, shown beneath a banyan fig, holds one of the air-roots of the tree, while his faithful wife Sāvitrī holds another air-root in her right hand. In her left hand and over her head, Sāvitrī has a miniature banyan with three branches, each ending in a single leaf; this is identical with the 'three-branched fig tree' motif of Harappan pottery and the Indus script (see Parpola 1994a: fig 13.16).

Tamil marriage ritual. A woman performing the *vaṭa-sāvitrī-vrata* rite should look at this star Arundhatī and worship it as the faithful wife of Sage Vasiṣṭha (Section 3a).

But let us first note that the banyan tree is associated with death and the god of death, Yama, even outside the Sāvitrī legend and the *sāvitrī-vrata*. The *Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā* (10.135.1) mentions 'a tree with good or beautiful leaves' (*vṛkṣé supalāśé*) where Yama drinks with the gods. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* (3.33.36), a sacred banyan tree called Subhadra is characterized by the claw marks left on it by the bird *Suparṇa* who stole the nectar of immortality (*suparṇakṛtalakṣaṇam... nyagrodham*): the bird *suparṇa* ('having beautiful feathers') appears to have been connected with the banyan because this word also describes this tree ('having beautiful leaves'). The *Atharvaveda-Saṃhitā* (5.4.3) is more specific in saying that the gods abide in an *aśvattha* fig in the third heaven. I have proposed that Yama is partly identical with *Varuṇa* (originally an Asura deity), who is likewise associated with a heavenly fig tree, in particular the banyan tree. But why should the god of death have a special relationship to the banyan tree? In very early times, it seems, the dead were disposed

of by suspending them from trees to expose them; texts like the *Vetāla-Pañcaviṃśatikā* speak of corpses hanging from trees in cemeteries (cf. Section 37). A special reason for connecting the banyan tree with death is provided by the hanging air-roots of this tree, on which people committing suicide hang themselves in Indian narrative literature. They are likely to be the reality behind the *pāśa* or 'noose', which is an emblem of both *Varuṇa* and *Yama*. It is with such a noose that *Yama* seizes the soul of *Satyavat* in the *Sāvitrī* legend after he has fallen down under the banyan tree.

28. DRAVIDIAN *vaṭa* 'BANYAN TREE' AND *vaṭa-mīn* 'NORTH STAR'

It is true that the word *vaṭa* has generally been considered an Indo-Aryan word, a 'Prakritic' form derived from Sanskrit *vṛta* 'surrounded, covered'. However, the Sanskrit word *vṛta* is never used in the meaning 'banyan tree'. Secondly, the Aryan nomads did not bring this tree to the subcontinent, but encountered it first there, so adoption of the tree's earlier native appellation would be a natural process. A non-Aryan origin is also likely because the word *vaṭa* is not known from the Vedic texts but only from the *Mahābhārata* onwards. The banyan tree is called *vaṭam* in a number of Dravidian languages, and this name seems to be ultimately derived from the Proto-Dravidian word **vaṭam/*vaṭi* 'rope, cord'. The rope-like hanging aerial roots are most characteristic of the banyan, and it would be natural to call it in Proto-Dravidian (as in Tamil) *vaṭa-maram* 'rope-tree', whence *vaṭam* for short.

The Dravidian explanation of the banyan's name *vaṭa* as 'rope-tree' makes it possible to find a Dravidian homophone eminently fitting the astral meaning that can be assumed for the sequence of two pictographic signs that occurs several times in the Indus inscriptions. These two signs can be shown to represent 'fig tree' and 'fish' respectively. In Dravidian, the word *vaṭa* also means 'north', and in Old Tamil literature the compound *vaṭa-mīn*, 'star of the north', occurs many times (e.g. in *Puraṇānūru* 122.8) as the symbol of conjugal fidelity (*karpū* or *tiraṃ*).

According to the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* (2.1.2.3-4), the six stars of the Pleiades (*kṛttikāḥ*) were separated from their husbands, the seven stars of the Ursa Major representing the 'Seven Sages' (*sapta ṛṣayaḥ*), on account of their infidelity, as they had had sexual intercourse with *Agni* in the absence of their husbands. Other texts specify that only one of the seven wives, *Arundhatī*, remained faithful, and she was therefore allowed to stay with her husband *Vasiṣṭha*: she is identified with the small star *Alcor* in Ursa Major, next to *Mizar*, the central star of the 'tail' of the 'Great Bear' representing *Vasiṣṭha*. This myth is known as early as the *Kaṭha-Saṃhitā* (8.1) and the *Maitrāyaṇī-Saṃhitā* (1.6.9), which speak of 'the seven Pleiades',

including Arundhatī. As noted above, they are likely to be the seven human and evidently female figures represented in a row on Harappan seals and amulets (fig. 2).

The ancient commentators of the Old Tamil texts unanimously identify *vaṭa-mīṇ* with Arundhatī, the chaste wife of Sage Vasiṣṭha. According to the first canto of Cilappatikāram, *vaṭa-mīṇ* was pointed out to the bride by the groom some 1500 years ago, as is still done in South India. In the Vedic marriage ritual, the groom similarly shows the Arundhatī star to the bride, after having first shown her the star called *dhruva* 'steadfast, firm, fixed', i.e. the pole star. According to later explanations, the pole star is shown to the bride first because it is easier to see than the small star Alcor; it has become an example or 'maxim' (*nyāya*) of 'gradual instruction'.²⁹⁴ However, two Gṛhyasūtras²⁹⁵ prescribe only the pole star to be shown, as does Kālidāsa,²⁹⁶ while one Gṛhyasūtra prescribes the pole star and Arundhatī²⁹⁷, and other Gṛhyasūtras add even other stars, especially the Seven Sages.²⁹⁸ There can be no doubt that both Arundhatī and the pole star are here models for the wife:

To the pole star she addresses, looking at it, the formula: 'Thou art the pole-star (*dhruva*, firm), may I become firm (i.e. fixed) in the house of my husband So-and-so', uttering the name of her husband (instead of 'So-and-so'), and at the end of the formula her own name in the nominative case. On Arundhatī she looks with the formula: 'Arundhatī, may I be held fast [*ruddhā*] by my husband So-and-so', uttering the name of her husband and at the end of the formula her own name. (Jaiminīya-Gṛhyasūtra 1.21, transl. Caland 1922: 39.)

It would seem logical to assume that originally there was just one star symbolizing marital faithfulness, and that it was the 'steadfast' pole-star. In 2780 BC, the star Thuban (alpha Draconis) was only 0.6 degrees distant from the heavenly pole. Thuban is the only star that could really be called 'unmoving' or 'fixed' (*dhruva*) before our own pole star Polaris. Many scholars have therefore drawn the conclusion that the notion of a 'fixed' pole star in India must date from the third millennium. This date links it with the Harappan tradition.

294 Cf. Śankara on Uttara-Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra 1.1.8 and 1.1.12.

295 Pāraskara-Gṛhyasūtra 1.8.19; Śāṅkhāyana-Gṛhyasūtra 1.17.3-4.

296 Kālidāsa, Kumārasaṃbhava 7.85.

297 Just the pole star and Arundhatī are mentioned in Gobhila-Gṛhyasūtra 2.3.8-12.

298 Jaiminīya-Gṛhyasūtra 1.21; Āśvalāyana-Gṛhyasūtra 1.8.22; Hiranyakeśi-Gṛhyasūtra 1.22.14.

29. ARUNDHATĪ, *cem-mīn* AND ROHIṆĪ

What is the meaning of the name Arundhatī used of Sage Vasiṣṭha's chaste wife? In the Atharvaveda, the word *arundhatī* denotes a climbing creeper, which has healing properties due to its red-coloured lac. In Indian poetics, creeper plants winding themselves around trees are prominent symbols of loving wives. The red colour of the lac also seems to be implied in the name, the literal import of which has not been satisfactorily explained.²⁹⁹

The redness and ascent of the arundhatī plant are punningly referred to with words associating it with Rohiṇī: *rōhaṇy asi rohiṇi* 'you are a grower, O red one!' (Atharvaveda-Saṃhitā 4.12.1). Their shared association with both conjugal fidelity and the colour red suggests the ultimate identity of Arundhatī and Rohiṇī, at least as far as the star names are concerned. Besides *vaṭa-mīn*, Arundhatī is called *cem-mīn* in Old Tamil. *Cem-mīn* can mean both 'the star of straightness or propriety (i.e. conjugal fidelity)' and 'the red star'. In the latter meaning, which is undoubtedly primary for a star, *cem-mīn* would be fully synonymous with Sanskrit *rohiṇī* 'the red (star)'. The colour red agrees with Aldebaran, but not with Alcor. Another consideration points to the same conclusion. According to an old Indian dictum,

he who does not smell the odour of an outblown lamp, hear the words of a friend, or see Arundhatī, is about to die (Rāmāyaṇa 3.59.16).

This belief concerning Arundhatī (found as early as Lāṭyāyana-Śrautasūtra 3.3.6-7) implies that the star was normally easily visible, which is certainly true of Aldebaran, but not of Alcor. A myth preserved in the Skanda-Purāṇa (7.1.129.5-33) makes Arundhatī the daughter of a low-caste Cāṇḍāla,³⁰⁰ whom the Vedic sages asked for food during a drought. Food was given after the chief sage Vasiṣṭha had married the girl called Akṣamālā ('garland of dice/eyes'). She practised austerity and became so brilliant that her lustre obstructed the sun (*arkabimbam arundhata*), whence her new name Arundhatī. This legend is referred to in Manu-Smṛti 9.23:

²⁹⁹ Traditionally, of course, *arundhatī* has been connected with the root *ru(n)dh-* 'to obstruct, prevent, keep back' (thus also in the passages cited above and below from the Jaiminīya-Gṛhyasūtra and the Skanda-Purāṇa); but for a negated feminine present participle one would expect *a-rudhatī-*, and what precisely would be the import of 'non-obstructing'? *Arundhatī* begins like *aruṇa* 'red, ruddy, the dawn (personified as the charioteer of the sun), the sun', and *aruṣa* 'red, reddish; the sun'; indeed, the first syllable, *aru-*, is recorded by lexicographers as a masculine noun meaning 'sun' and 'red-blossomed khadira tree'. As a healing plant, *arundhatī-* might originally mean 'holding the wound', *arun-dhatī-*, comparable to *aru(s)srāṇa-* n. 'a kind of medical preparation for wounds' (AS 2.3.3 and 5), from *arus-* n. 'wound' (also mfn. 'wounded, sore'), which in compounds occurs in the here attested form, cf. *aruṃ-tuda-* 'beating or hurting a wound, causing torments, painful' (Pāṇini 3.2.35 and 6.3.67; Manu 2.161, etc.); the latter part could be the feminine present participle from the root *dhā-* (2. *dhāti*).

³⁰⁰ For Arundhatī's possible origin from Dravidian *vaḷḷi* 'climber, creeper', in Tamil the low-caste bride of God Murukan, cf. Section 34; note also *tagara-vallī* in Section 21.

Akṣamālā, a woman of the lowest birth, being united to Vasiṣṭha,... became worthy of honour (transl. Bühler 1886: 331).

At the very earliest stage of Indian astronomy and calendar, as noted above, the new year star is likely to have been Aldebaran, *Rohiṇī* in Sanskrit, the 'faithful wife' of the sun (and later the moon). At some stage *Rohiṇī* as a symbol of faithfulness was apparently mythically identified with the 'steadfast' pole star. Due to precession, the beginning of the new year at the vernal equinox shifted by around 2500 BC from *Rohiṇī* (Aldebaran) to the next constellation, the Pleiades, and the myth of the Pleiades as the mothers of the young sun (Rohita, Rudra, Agni) came into being. At this later stage, the stars of the Pleiades were conceived of as the wives of the Seven Sages, six of them separated from their husbands due to unfaithfulness; thus Alcor became the 'faithful' wife of Vasiṣṭha who remained with her husband.³⁰¹ The passage in *Mahābhārata* 1.188.14 seems to relate to the earlier phase and to the pole star. In reply to King Drupada's question, 'How can one woman be the wife of many men and yet the Law be not broken', Yudhiṣṭhira defends the polyandrous marriage of the Pāṇḍavas by mentioning this precedent: 'We hear in the ancient Lore that a Gautamī by the name of Jaṭilā lay with the Seven Seers'.

30. POLE STAR AND THE HEAVENLY BANYAN TREE

The name Jaṭilā for the common wife of the Seven Sages, probably the pole star, is highly interesting, for the Sanskrit word *jaṭila* means 'wearing the hair in twisted locks'. As this is the traditional hair-style of ascetics, this name well suits Arundhatī leading an ascetic life in the forest hermitage of the Seven Sages. But as pointed out by M. B. Emeneau (1949: 363), the word has also another meaning not recorded in dictionaries, 'possessing aerial roots (*jaṭā*)', used with reference to the banyan and plakṣa figs.³⁰² This association between Arundhatī and the banyan tree in the name Jaṭilā is doubled in the proper name *arundhatī-vaṭa*, mentioned as a place of pilgrimage in the *Mahābhārata* (3.84.8019). With reference to the following, I would also like to remind the reader how Brahmā/Prajāpati, in the myth of his incest cited earlier (Section 17) from the third chapter of the *Matsya-Purāṇa*, out of shame covered his fifth, upwards looking face with the matted locks (*jaṭā*) of a hermit or ascetic.

Many sacred localities (including Allahabad and Bodh Gaya) have had an *akṣaya-vaṭa* 'eternal banyan'.³⁰³ Banyan trees are extremely long-lived, but this

³⁰¹ The 'faithful' *Rohiṇī*, in her position as the star next to the six Pleiades = the six *Kṛttikās*, can represent the 'seventh *Kṛttikā*' equally well as Arundhatī in her position in the constellation of Ursa Major.

³⁰² Cf. Hemacandra, *Triṣaṣṭīśalākāpuruṣacarita* 1.5.559, 1.6.405, 1.3.128; Kālidāsa, *Raghuvamśa* 13.71.

³⁰³ See especially Gode 1957 and Dubey 1986.

epithet obviously also has a cosmic dimension, for many texts speak of a heavenly pipal fig (*aśvattha*) which is called 'eternal'.³⁰⁴ In the Atharvaveda (5.4.3), as noted above, a pipal fig is the seat of the gods in the third heaven from here. That the fig tree had an astral aspect in the Harappan religion is suggested by an Indus tablet from Harappa, where a star is depicted on either side of a fig tree inhabited by an anthropomorphic deity; these stars are placed in the loops of the tree.

As early as in the Ṛgveda (1.24.7), mention is made of a banyan tree in the middle of the sky:

King Varuṇa holds up the crown of the (heavenly banyan) tree in the bottomless space; up is the basis of its (aerial roots) which hang down: may these beams of light be fixed on us!³⁰⁵

The cosmological descriptions in the Purāṇas ask: Why do the stars remain in the sky and not fall down?, and reply to it by explaining that the stars and planets are fixed to the pole star with invisible 'ropes of wind' (*vāta-raśmi*).³⁰⁶ The idea that the stars are bound to the pole star seems to be implied as early as the Ṛgveda, which states that

those stars, which, being fixed to what is high up (*nihitāsa uccā*), were to be seen in the night, have gone somewhere in daytime (ṚS 1.24.10).

As this same hymn speaks of the heavenly fig tree and of its high-fixed air-roots as beams of light, it does not seem farfetched to think that the poet linked this heavenly banyan tree with the pole star. In the Ṛgveda, the heavenly banyan tree belongs to King Varuṇa,³⁰⁷ and so also apparently did the pole star, for in some Gṛhyasūtras the groom (and not the bride) should address the pole star with a long mantra,³⁰⁸

³⁰⁴ Cf. Kaṭha-Upaniṣad 6.1; Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka 1.11.5; Maitrī-Upaniṣad 6.4; and Bhagavad-Gītā 15.1.

³⁰⁵ Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā 1.24.7: *abudhne rājā varuṇo vanasyordhvaṃ stūpaṃ dadate pūதாக্শাহ / nīcīnāḥ sthur upari budhna eṣām asme antar nihitāḥ ketavaḥ syuḥ ||*.

³⁰⁶ Cf. e.g. Viṣṇu-Purāṇa 2.9 and 12; Matsya-Purāṇa 127.12-14; Bhartḥhari 3.91. The oldest certain reference for invisible 'cords of wind' holding up stars seems to be Maitrī-Upaniṣad 1.4, but even the Ṛgveda speaks of 'ascetics having ropes of the wind' (*munayo vāta-raśanāḥ*), whom the traditional index of the Ṛgveda identifies with the Seven Sages (i.e. Ursa Major), while in Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka 1.23ff. 'sages having ropes of the wind' (*vāta-raśanā ṛṣayaḥ*) are identified with 'red beams of light' (*aruṇāḥ ketavaḥ*), which came into being together with the sun and rule the cardinal directions. The aerial roots of the banyan tree are reddish, and the word *ketu* seems to refer to them as well; cf. also Section 39, and note 431.

³⁰⁷ According to the Gobhila-Gṛhyasūtra (4.7.24), too, 'the banyan is Varuṇa's tree'.

³⁰⁸ Cf. Hiranyakeśi-Gṛhyasūtra 1.22.14-1.23.1: 'Then he worships the polar star with (the formula):

'Firm dwelling, firm origin. The firm one art thou, standing on the side of firmness. Thou art the pillar of the stars; thus protect me against the adversary... I know thee as the nave of the universe. May I become the nave of this country. I know thee as the centre of the universe. May I become the centre of this country.'

whose original context clearly is the royal consecration, called 'Varuṇa's sacrifice'. The pole star is in this mantra spoken of as 'firm dwelling', which phrase demands comparison with Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā 8.41.9:

Fixed is Varuṇa's dwelling-place (*varuṇasya dhruvaṃ sadah*); (there) he governs the seven (= the Seven Sages near the pole star?) (ṚS 8.41.9).

The likely connection between Varuṇa and the pole star and its characterization as 'the string that holds the universe' supports the interpretation of Varuṇa's heavenly banyan tree in accordance with the Purāṇic cosmology.

Proto-Dravidian homophony, linking *vaṭa* 'rope', *vaṭa* 'banyan tree' and *vaṭa* 'north', provides a natural explanation for such a cosmological conception. It is also worth noting that Tamil *vaṭa-mīn* cannot be a translation from Sanskrit, for the Sanskrit sources do not have a term meaning 'northern star'. But the Sanskrit tradition has preserved another tradition which seems relevant here and which can be understood against the linguistic background of the assumed Harappan-Dravidian substratum. According to the Purāṇa texts, four mountains arise at the four cardinal points around the golden Mount Meru in the centre, and on the top of each mountain grows an enormous tree, different in each direction. The tree growing in the north is the banyan fig, which is called either *vaṭa* (thus in most sources)³⁰⁹ or *nyagrodha*.

31. ŚIVA'S CASTRATION AT THE HERMITAGE OF THE SEVEN SAGES

The Sāvitrī legend and ritual is by no means the only Indian counterpart to the Near Eastern theme of the sacred marriage and death and resurrection of the youthful god of fertility. Reference has already been made to the Old Tamil epic Cilappatikāram and the associated Pattinī cult (Section 7). But there are several other parallels, too, including some of the most central ones of Hindu mythology.³¹⁰

Śiva is mainly worshipped in his phallic form all over India: in the sanctum sanctorum of most Śaiva temples he is represented by the *liṅga* or erect phallus as the 'characteristic mark' of the male gender. The Purāṇas trace the origin of the *liṅga*

I know thee as the string that holds the universe. May I become the string that holds this country.

I know thee as the pillar of the universe. May I become the pillar of this country

I know thee as the navel of the universe. May I become the navel of this country..."

309 e.g. Viṣṇu-Purāṇa. 2.2; Agni-Purāṇa 108.11-12; Matsya-Purāṇa 113.47; 264.15-16.

310 For an important discussion of the theme 'death and revival' in South Asia, particularly in the present-day folk cults of South India (occasioned by the episode in which the sons of Draupadī and the five Pāṇḍavas are slain and revived in the Tamil dramatic performances of the Mahābhārata in the Draupadī cult), see Hildebeitel 1991: 339-380; cf. also Hildebeitel 1997.

cult to the castration of Śiva through the curse of the Seven Sages, after Śiva had had sexual intercourse with their wives (excepting Arundhatī). One of the natural phenomena behind this myth is the conjunction of the sun (Rohita/Rudra/Agni) with the Pleiades at the new year (vernal equinox) (Section 23). The castrated Śiva corresponds to the beheaded virginal youth (*kumāra*) who seems to have personified the divine youth (Kumāra, Rudra) in the human/horse sacrifice of the Veda (Section 42). This myth clearly related to the Sāvitrī/Rohiṇī theme is well known,³¹¹ and I pass over to a less recognized variant of it, where the resurrection theme is paramount.

32. THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF KĀMA

Like her ancient Near Eastern counterparts typified by Inanna/Ishtar (cf. Bruschweiler 1987), Durgā/Kālī, the Indian goddess of victory, has an erotic side besides the martial one:

After abandoning her sword when it is time for love (*kāma*), she spontaneously seizes her garland; when she has abandoned love, she holds her sword (Kālikā-Purāṇa 60.57).

Indeed, the Goddess 'has no equal to her in giving sexual enjoyment (*kāma*)' (Kālikā-Purāṇa 63.97-98). In her erotic aspect, the Goddess is called Kāmākhyā, especially in her most famous manifestation in Assam. The Kālikā-Purāṇa (64.2), while explaining this name, makes an interesting reference to the male god of love, Kāma:

As she gives love, is a loving woman, is love, is beloved, gives the god of love his body and destroys it, therefore she is called Kāmākhyā (Kālikā-Purāṇa 64.2).

According to the most famous myth concerning Kāma, the god of love was reduced to ashes by Śiva's fiery third eye. In this myth Śiva is the prototype of the ascetic, and the myth can be understood as illustrating the ascetic's necessity to subdue his own sexual passion (*kāma*). But Śiva is said to have got his third eye from the Goddess, and in another version of the myth it was rather the Goddess who burnt Kāma/Śiva/Mahiṣa to ashes with her third eye.³¹²

Many variants of the myth and cult both in the ancient Near East and in South Asia stress the purity and virginity of the Goddess, who is often a virginal widow. These characteristics are epitomized by the enlivening radiance of the Sumerian

³¹¹ See especially O'Flaherty 1973; Parpola 1985 (Index).

³¹² Cf. also the Tantric image of the corpse of Śiva (*śiva-śava*) as the reanimated and sexually aroused partner of Goddess Kālī, who as a widow dances a mad dance of destruction over Śiva at the funeral of the cosmos (cf. Hildebeitel 1991: 364, and below Section 35 on Sāvitrī as the prototypal sañī widow). – The 'third eye' is the rising sun, and, as pointed out below, the celestial light of the morning can be conceived as a masculine or a feminine force.

goddess Inanna, symbolized by the morning star (the planet Venus).³¹³ Her chastity and purity provide the Goddess with her almighty power to destroy and to revive her paradoxical enemy/lover,³¹⁴ who often appears as a demon or is otherwise sinful (cf. Brahmā's incest in the Sāvitrī myth).

And when Durgā battled her demon-lover Mahiṣāsura, at least one story insists that the demon tried to escape by taking the form of a (vanni) tree. However, the goddess discovered this ruse, and cut the tree down... The possible symbolic linkage between such tree trunks and the male penis can hardly go unnoticed. Similarly the burning and cutting themes suggest an idea of castration... Sir Walter Elliott (...between 1821 and 1860) has provided the text of a myth, very like the account of Māriyamman's marriage with an untouchable... In Elliott's version, however, the angry goddess, upon the discovery of her lover's deceit, is said to have castrated him (as well as beheaded him) and then to have thrust the severed sexual organ into the victim's own mouth. This story, as Hildebeitel astutely notes, helps account for why the right foreleg of sacrificed goats (and buffaloes) is even today cut off and placed in the mouth of the beheaded victim...³¹⁵ The tree specifically said to represent the goddess's husband, then, can be seen to bear a heavy burden of diffuse meaning. It can be linked to the genitals, to lust, and the sacrifice or burning of that lust... (Beck 1981: 121f.)

Kāma has rightly been seen as an aspect of Śiva himself:

It has been suggested that the burning and resuscitation of Kāma has its basis in a fertility ritual in which either Kāma's image or a tree is burnt... The myth of the burning of Kāma by Śiva may stem from the... rite of burning the tree that symbolizes the demon of fertility, a rite which was later replaced by the self-castration of the god. In this context, Śiva's burning of Kāma (equated in folk-legend with the castration of Kāma by Śiva) is equivalent to the [seven] sages' castration of Śiva, and the revival of Kāma is a multiform of the restoration of Śiva himself. Śiva is 'reborn' as a tree... just as Śiva's self-castration is ultimately procreative, so his burning of Kāma is ultimately conducive to fertility...

Nathurām, a folk deity considered to be a form of Kāma, is also burnt in effigy as a tree. He is 'a phallic fetish' whose image is made 'of a most disgusting shape', a god who is said to have seduced a number of women until he was put to death, where-

³¹³ Cf. Bruschweiler 1987: 160ff., 187ff., and above Section 15.

³¹⁴ On this important theme, which I cannot elaborate further here, see Hildebeitel 1991: 362ff. with further references. Touching the pure, virginal goddess is fatal to her lover (cf. also Alster 1985: 144-146).

³¹⁵ The custom of cutting off the right foreleg of the sacrificial victim seems to be attested in one of the oldest Yajurvedic texts. Maitrāyaṇī-Saṃhitā 3.10.1 states that 'the omentum (*vapā*) is the foremost part of the animal' (*agraṃ vai etat paśūnām yad vapā*). This is in accordance with the normal ritual of the Vedic animal sacrifice (*paśubandha*), where the omentum is extracted immediately after the animal has been killed, and is then roasted, cut off or divided (*ava-do-*) into four or five portions and sacrificed (cf. Hillebrandt 1897: 122f.). But in this passage there is also a reference to the practice of 'the descendants of Dakṣa': the Dākṣāyaṇas say that one should take the cut-off portion from the right foreleg, for by doing so one has taken the cut-off portion from the entire animal (*dakṣiṇasya pūrvapadasyāvadeyam iti hi smāhur dākṣāyaṇās tathāsya sarvasya paśor avattaṃ bhavatīti*). In the *śākhāpaśu*, Vedic animal sacrifice performed on domestic occasions, a 'cut-off portion' (*avadāna*) is taken of eleven parts of the animal: from the heart, tongue, chest, etc. (cf. Gonda 1980: 434).

upon he became a ghost who can only be appeased by 'indecent songs and gestures performed by women'. The description of Nathurām's activities could apply to the myth of Śiva in the Pine Forest as well as to Kāma: he annoys the women until he is killed (castrated), and then continues to plague them until he is worshipped as a phallus. (O'Flaherty 1973: 160.)

It is also significant that the Śaiva devotees smear their forehead with ashes, just as the devotees of the Goddess put a tilaka on their forehead. Śiva's ashes connect him with Kāma (and with Brahmā)³¹⁶:

That Kāma should be reborn after having been burnt to death is quite natural in the context of Hindu mythology, in which rebirth from fire is a generally accepted theme. In Indian folklore also, rejuvenation by burning and resuscitation from ashes are recurrent motifs... Śiva says to Pārvatī, 'Kāma who was burnt by me lives in the form of ashes on my body, acting against me and trying to burn me in your presence. Draw me out of Kāma as if out of fire, and save me with the Soma of your body.' The ashes upon Śiva's body are sometimes said to arise from a different but related source: when Satī has burnt herself, Śiva smears his limbs with her ashes. The model for this episode is the mourning of Rati, who takes the ashes of her husband Kāma and smears them upon her body, preserving them in order to revive him later, and at last presenting them to Śiva so that he may produce Kāma from them. (O'Flaherty 1973: 161.)

A few words may be added to strengthen the connection between Śiva and Kāma discussed above and Brahmā, the husband of Goddess Sāvitṛī. Greg Bailey, while examining Brahmā's role as the creator, emphasizes his sexuality in several myths (1983: 117-121).

When Brahmā's creation did not thrive he became anxious and distressed. A voice from the sky said, 'Create by copulation!' So he resolved to do this... (Śiva-Purāṇa 3.3.2-29.)³¹⁷

In the myth of Brahmā's incest with his own daughter (Section 17),

³¹⁶ Skanda-Purāṇa 3.1.14 relates the origin of the pilgrimage site Brahmakuṇḍa to the myth of Brahmā's contest with Viṣṇu about their mutual superiority, both claiming to be the creator of the universe. Brahmā on his return from his flight up in the form of a goose, lied that he had seen the top of the fiery liṅga. Then Śiva cursed Brahmā on account of his lie: people would cease to worship Brahmā, while Viṣṇu would be worshipped as much as Śiva, because he had told the truth by confessing his inability to find the bottom of the liṅga, which he had sought in the shape of a boar. Brahmā repented, and Śiva told him to perform sacrifices on Mount Gandhamādana to expiate his sin. After this had gone on for 88,000 years, Śiva relented, and absolved Brahmā of his sin; he would be worshipped in *śrauta* and *smārta* rites, but not in idol form. And whosoever would bathe at Brahmakuṇḍa, and apply on his forehead ashes from Brahmā's sacrificial firepit (*kuṇḍa*), would attain salvation and never suffer from evil spirits. – The late Vedic Vaikhānasa-Śrautasūtra (2.1-11, cf. Śrauta-kośa 1.1, Engl. transl., p. 125) enjoins that one should take ashes from the *gārhapatya* fireplace and draw with it vertical *puṇḍra* marks looking like flames of fire upon the forehead, heart, belly, arms and throat (cf. Kumar 1983: 23-26); also the late passage Śāṅkhāyana-Gṛhyasūtra 2.10.7 prescribes making the *tripuṇḍra* mark on the forehead, etc. with ashes, cf. Kane 1941: 674.

³¹⁷ The passage is summarized by Bailey 1983: 117.

Brahmā's sexuality is taken to the extreme... From the earliest appearance of this motif in Indian literature the incestuous father has always been a creator god. So there is considerable justification for understanding the incest motif in terms of sexuality as a means of creation taken to its extreme. (Bailey 1983: 118-119.)

In another myth, Brahmā is the priest celebrating the marriage of Śiva and his wife Satī:

Brahmā's uncontrollable sexuality is depicted here in the strongest possible terms. Even at a sensitive occasion such as a wedding at which he is the officiant, he is simply unable to control his illicit lust for another god's wife. (Bailey 1983: 120-121.)

33. SĪTĀ AND RĀMA, AND SĪTĀ SĀVITRĪ AND BALA-RĀMA

Sītā is best known as the wife of King Rāma in the Rāmāyaṇa. She is also one of the most important models of marital chastity for Hindu women, and in this regard closely akin to Sāvitrī. It is hardly accidental that the two names are both borne by the heroine in the myth of Sītā Sāvitrī's marriage with the moon, told in Taittirīya-Brahmaṇa 2.3.10 (see above Section 21). Therefore, the story of the Rāmāyaṇa, just like the Sāvitrī legend, is likely to have a mythical and symbolic background.

Sītā's father in the Rāmāyaṇa is King Janaka. In the early Upaniṣads there are historical kings called Janaka ruling in the upper Gangetic Valley around the sixth century BC, i.e. when and where we have all reason to expect the Rāmāyaṇa epic to have started to develop.³¹⁸ That, however, does not prevent the name having mythical implications in the epic. Janaka means 'generating, begetting, progenitor, father', and strongly recalls the main function of Sītā Sāvitrī's father, Prajāpati, the god of creation and offspring.³¹⁹ In fact, Janaka occurs among the names used of God Brahmā in the Purāṇas.³²⁰

Sītā's own name means 'furrow', and at the end of the epic, she disappears in a furrow. Sītā as personified furrow is a very ancient agricultural deity, to some extent known to us from the Vedic Gṛhyasūtras. It is this Sītā who was depicted on the standard of Śalya, king of the Madra country, which was Sāvitrī's domicile (cf. Section 14). In an elaborate bali ritual offered to Sītā, the furrow where it is performed is supposed to be protected by four demons sitting around it in the east, south, west and north; the balis which these demons receive consist of food different from sacrificial food, and the accompanying oblations are made by women 'because such is the custom' (Pāraskara-Gṛhyasūtra 2.17).³²¹ The cardinal direc-

³¹⁸ See above Section 13 for some consideration concerning Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa.

³¹⁹ The Indo-Aryan speaking inhabitants of the Gangetic Valley have originally come from the west, and in the course of time, their appellation of the creator god can be expected to have changed.

³²⁰ Cf. Bailey 1983: 123, quoting Śiva-Purāṇa 2.2.8.33 and Brahmavaivarta-Purāṇa 1.25.5.

tions clearly identify Sītā with the four-cornered earth. She is here said to be the wife of Indra, the chief god of the Vedic pantheon. Agriculture, however, was of marginal import in the Vedic culture compared to the Indus Civilization, where it was the main basis of the economy. Sītā 'furrow' as the name of the Goddess is likely to an Indo-Aryan translation of Proto-Dravidian *cāl 'furrow in ploughing'.³²² The homonymous Proto-Dravidian root *cāl meaning 'to be able,³²³ to be capable, to be sufficient, to be suitable' and (these meanings being attested from South Dravidian only) 'to be excellent, to be noble, to be abundant, to be full'³²⁴ is used of the large and highly decorated water pots (*cāl karakam*) that represent the Goddess in present-day Tamil folk rituals (cf. Hildebeitel 1991: 64 and 523, s.v. *karakam*).

In the epic, Sītā's husband is called Rāma. The word *rāma* has many meanings, among them 'charming, lovely, beautiful', with sexual undertones (the root *ram-* means 'to stop, stand still or overnight, rest, be glad or pleased, rejoice, dally, have sexual intercourse'). The hero of the Rāmāyaṇa is also called Rāmacandra 'lovely moon', which tallies with Sītā Sāvitrī's husband, King Soma, i.e. the moon.

In the Hindu mythology, however, there is also another Rāma,³²⁵ namely Bala-Rāma, 'the strong Rāma', whose main attribute is the plough, and who is therefore also called Halāyudha, Haladhara, Halabhṛt, Lāṅgalin, Saṅkarṣaṇa 'plougher', and so on. Plough is an appropriate symbol for the husband of furrow. The Gobhila-Gr̥hyasūtra prescribes that at the time of ploughing, an offering should be made to Goddess Sītā.³²⁶

Bala-Rāma is considered to be white in skin colour and to be the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa, who in contrast has a dark skin colour. It is tempting to connect the two brothers with the two halves of the lunar month. The elder brother would be the 'bright' or 'white' half-month (*śukla-pakṣa*), which starts with the new moon, represented by the crescent moon's sickle; the younger brother would be the 'dark' or 'black' half-month (*kṛṣṇa-pakṣa*), which starts with the round full-moon. The full moon reminds us of Kṛṣṇa's 'circular' dances in the light of the full moon, and of his characterization as the 'full' incarnation of Viṣṇu. Bala-Rāma's attribute, the plough, can also be connected with the sickle of new moon, but this requires some further explanation.

Among the Sanskrit words denoting 'plough' is the word *eka-danta*, which literally means 'having (just) one tooth'. It also refers to Viṣṇu's 'one-tusked'³²⁷

³²¹ See also Gonda 1980: 57, 200f., 297, 306, 418, 428 (with further Vedic references).

³²² Burrow & Emeneau 1984: 216, no. 2471.

³²³ Cf. the Goddess as *śakti* 'ability, power', especially the power to manifest and create.

³²⁴ Burrow & Emeneau 1984: 216, no. 2470.

³²⁵ Bala-Rāma is occasionally called just Rāma, cf. e.g. Rāmānuja 'younger brother of Rāma' as a name of Kṛṣṇa in the Mahābhārata (5.2741 quoted in Sörensen 1904-25: 423).

³²⁶ Gobhila-Gr̥hyasūtra 4.4.27-29: *athātaḥ halābhīyogaḥ... sītām... ca yajeta*.

incarnation as a wild boar (*varāha*), who dove to the bottom of the ocean to fetch his wife Bhūmī, the earth, who had sunk there³²⁸ unable to bear any longer the heavy of load of people's sins; in the course of this rescue operation, however, the boar accidentally wounded his wife with his single tusk. This is a very transparent myth, based on the pig's habit of digging up earth with its tusks while searching for edible roots, and obviously refers to the ploughing of flooded fields. 'The boar-incarnation is not Viṣṇu's in the older Rāmāyaṇa but Brahman's (R 2.110.3)',³²⁹ and indeed the boar is identified with Prajāpati in the Veda. Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 14.1.2.11 prescribes as one ingredient for making the *pravargya* pot 'earth torn up by a boar', which is to be taken up with the mantra 'Only thus large was she in the beginning...' (Vājasaneyi-Saṃhitā 37.5), explaining this as follows:

For, indeed, only so large was this earth in the beginning, of the size of a span. A boar, called Emūṣa, raised her up, and he was her lord Prajāpati: with that mate, his heart's delight, he thus supplies and completes him. (Transl. Eggeling 1882-1900, V: 451.)³³⁰

The name Emūṣa comes from *emuṣam* 'injuring, dangerous'³³¹ which in R̥gveda-Saṃhitā 8.77.10 qualifies the word *varāham* 'boar'; from later Vedic texts it appears that this boar originally belonged to the Asuras, the enemies of the (R̥g)Vedic Aryans.³³² At Puṣkara, the principal pilgrimage site connected with Brahmā, the boar has been worshipped since the 8th century AD as Yajña-Varāha 'boar symbolizing sacrifice'.³³³ In Dravidian languages, one and the same root is used both

³²⁷ This conception is found as early as the Mahābhārata (3.272. 55), where 'the boar-form is that of a monstrous beast ten by one hundred leagues in size, having one tusk and red eyes; in this account earth is submerged by a flood, not by sinners...' (Hopkins 1915: 210).

³²⁸ Actually she is said to have sunk into Pātāla (Hopkins 1915: 210), which links this myth even more with Bala-Rāma and the lower Indus Valley, see further on below.

³²⁹ Hopkins 1915: 197, where it is further stated that 'the gods do not at first recognize the boar-form of Viṣṇu at all (3.142.50). RG. 2.119.3 says that Brahman the boar is "Viṣṇu", a later version.' (Hopkins 1915: 210, n. 1.)

³³⁰ In his note 1 Eggeling points out that in Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa 1.10.8, 'the earth is said to have been uplifted by a black boar with a thousand arms'. Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 14.1.2.11: *atha varāhavihatam / iyaty agra āsīd itīyatī ha vā iyam agre pṛthivy āsa prādeśamātrī tām emūṣa iti varāha ujjaghāna so 'syāḥ patiḥ prajāpatis tenaivainam etan mithunena priyeṇa dhāmnā samardhayati kṛtsnaṃ karoti...* – In Taittirīya-Saṃhitā 7.1.5.1ff: Prajāpati moves as wind over the primeval ocean, finds the earth, becomes a boar and lifts her up. Extensive discussion of the boar in Vedic texts and its symbolism in Krick 1982: 145-155 with further literature. Cf. Parpola 1992: 294f.

³³¹ *Emuṣam* is an aberrant accusative of the perfect participle *emivaṃs* from the root *am-* 'to injure' (cf. Böhtlingk & Roth 1855: 367, 1098).

³³² R̥gveda-Saṃhitā 8.77.10: *viśvet tā viṣṇur ābharad urukramas tveṣitaḥ / śataṃ mahiṣān kṣīrapākam odanaṃ varāham indra emuṣam* 'sent by you, O Indra, the wide-stepping Viṣṇu brought all these things (for you to eat), a hundred buffaloes, rice gruel cooked in milk, and the dangerous boar'. According to Maitrāyaṇī-Saṃhitā 3.8.3, Viṣṇu brought the rice gruel from the inaccessible place (fort) of the Asuras, where it was their sacrificial food, while Indra shot the boar Emuṣa in the inaccessible (fort) that had 3 x 7 walls. The boar was thus originally a god of the Asuras.

for 'ploughing' and for 'digging up' like a pig.³³⁴ The Dravidian word for 'hog, swine, pig' is **panti*³³⁵, derived from **pal* 'tooth', which in Tamil, Kannada and Telugu is also found in the names of 'toothed harrow, drill-plough'.³³⁶

Another animal systematically depicted as 'one-tusked' in Hindu iconography is the elephant-headed Gaṇapati, a god of fertility who is related to the creator god Prajāpati through the mantra *gaṇānāṇi gaṇapatiṃ tvā...* addressed to the victim in the Vedic human or horse sacrifice (see sections 42-43). One of the Purāṇic myths explaining why Gaṇapati is called *ekadanta* says that he broke off one tusk to throw it at the moon, who laughed at seeing Gaṇapati's belly burst from eating too many sweets. There is thus a connection between the tusk-shaped new moon and the plough.³³⁷

The purposely one-tusked animals of Hindu iconography just mentioned demand comparison with the purposely one-horned bull which is the principal iconographic motif of the Indus seals. The idea of a single-horned bull may have been borrowed from the Near Eastern glyptics, where it occurs much earlier, but there can be no doubt that this animal differs from all the many other animals on Indus seals, which are usually depicted with two horns; there is now even a three-dimensional figurine of this bull from Harappa, also with a single horn. It is quite likely that the later Indian legend of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga goes back to this Harappan prototype.³³⁸ Ṛṣyaśṛṅga was an ascetic who had a single horn (*śṛṅga*) of an antelope (*ṛṣya*) growing from his forehead. Having lived alone in the forest he had never seen any woman, and had accumulated huge powers of fertility. The country was suffering from severe drought, and in order to produce rain the king released the powers of

333 Cf. Malik 1993: 41-44. The worship was started by the Gurjara-Pratihāra king Nāgabhaṭṭa I, who is said to have in vain chased a boar coming from the Puṣkara region. The king suffered from leprosy, which was cured when he washed his hands in the spring to which the boar had led him.

334 Cf. Burrow & Emeneau 1984: 67, no. 688, Tamil *uḷu* 'to plough, dig up, root up (as pigs), scratch, incise (as bees a flower)'. The word is found throughout the Dravidian language family, including the northern branch with Kurukh (*uinā* 'to plough') and Malto (*use* 'to turn up the soil, as pigs do'). Lexicographers also record the meaning 'plough' for the Sanskrit word *potra* 'snout of a hog'.

335 Burrow & Emeneau 1984: 360, no. 4039; the dictionary gives no crossreference to *pal* 'tooth'.

336 Burrow & Emeneau 1984: 355, no. 3986(a).

337 The boar is not depicted in the seals of the Indus Civilization until the Late Harappan period, when it is found in the Jhukar-type seals of Chanhu-daro. The boar worship, therefore, may have become important only with the arrival of the Bactrian Bronze Age culture (with several eminent representations of the boar) in the Indus Valley c. 20th century BC; I have suggested identifying these Bactrians with (Indo-Aryan speaking) Dāsas and Vṛātyas (Parpola 1988: 249ff.). But the elephant, an animal even more notable for its tusk, physical power, and rut, is found on Harappan seals fairly frequently.

338 Cf. O'Flaherty (1973: 50), who has further suggested a historical link between the Ṛṣyaśṛṅga myth and the Mesopotamian myth of the bull-man Enkidu's seduction by a prostitute. This link has since been made very likely by Della Casa (1986).

this virginal youth through having him seduced by a courtesan.³³⁹ *Ṛśya* was the animal form in which Prajāpati/Brahmā had intercourse with his own daughter Sāvitrī/Rohiṇī (cf. Section 17). Prajāpati as the god of generation and fertility would, of course, be an appropriate divinity for ploughing and fructifying the furrow.

In the Ṛgveda, one of the principal adversaries of God Indra is a demon called Vala, the brother of Indra's ancient arch-enemy Vṛtra who is responsible for drought. According to the Padma-Purāṇa, the demon Vala was a Brahmanical ascetic: Indra cut this demon into two pieces with his thunderbolt when Vala was praying on the seashore at his evening worship, 'shining with the radiance of celibacy and the divine rod and deer-hide'.³⁴⁰ In the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas, the Vedic demon Vala is usually called Bala, and he is said to have been very strong (*ati-bala*).³⁴¹ I am inclined to identify him with the 'strong god' Bala-deva alias Bala-Rāma, who is called 'strong' because he is 'endowed with might capable of uplifting the whole earth'.³⁴² Vedic Vala could render the original Dravidian name of this god, for Proto-Dravidian *valam* 'strength, power'³⁴³ corresponds to Sanskrit *balam* 'strength, power'.

In the Mahābhārata, there is a long description of Bala-Rāma's visit to all the sacred places of pilgrimage along the Sarasvatī river,³⁴⁴ which is one of the main areas of the agriculturally-based Indus Civilization. Besides the plough, his other emblem is the wine-palm (*tāla*), and he is much addicted to drinking wine. The wine palm is a characteristic of the region of the Indus delta, and was already so at the time of Alexander's expedition; the Greeks expressly mention the word *tāla*,³⁴⁵ which is of Dravidian etymology.³⁴⁶ Bala-Rāma is further considered to be an incarnation of the white snake Śeṣa or Ananta, which forms the couch upon which Viṣṇu is often depicted floating in the cosmic ocean. Large snakes floating in the ocean at the mouth of the Indus is another characteristic of the Indus delta region noted in the Greek texts, which likewise mention Patala or Potala as its capital city. In Hindu mythology, Pātāla is the netherworld that is the realm of the snakes. Pātāla is also associated with the ocean, and Śeṣa lives there. Eleven seals discovered at the

³³⁹ For *Ṛśyaśṛṅga*, see e.g. O'Flaherty 1973: 42ff.

³⁴⁰ Padma-Purāṇa, Bhūmi-Khaṇḍa, cited from Mani 1975: 822.

³⁴¹ Mahābhārata 7.118.4698: *vaktram cikarta dehāt / yathā purā vajradharaḥ prasahya balasya saṃkhye 'tibalasya rājan*, cited from Sørensen 1904-25: 105.

³⁴² Sørensen 1904-25: 108 from the Mahābhārata. Compare the above-discussed boar-husband of the earth uplifting his wife from the ocean.

³⁴³ Burrow & Emeneau 1984: 476, no. 5276 Tamil *valam* 'strength, power, right side', *valai-kai* 'right hand', etc. The etymon is found in all branches of the Dravidian language family.

³⁴⁴ Cf. Sørensen 1904-25: 106-107.

³⁴⁵ Cf. also Karttunen 1989: 191.

³⁴⁶ Cf. Burrow & Emeneau 1984: 276f., no. 3180, Tamil *tāl* 'palmyra or toddy palm, *Borassus flabelliformis*', etc.

Harappan town of Chanhu-daro in the Indus delta region have a pictogram that is known from this Indus site alone and which, often occurring alone on a separate line, most probably expresses the name of this town. It can be interpreted as a schematic representation of 'the lowest of three worlds', i.e. Pātāla.³⁴⁷ Bala-Rāma's affinity to the Sītā Sāvitrī myth is underlined by the fact that his mother's name is Rohiṇī.

The two divine brothers, Bala-Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, may therefore go back to the Harappan pantheon. Besides the lunar symbolism, these deities would, of course, have conveyed other meanings too, not least social. The 'elder' one would seem to stand for settled agriculturists, the 'younger' for pastoralists and more dark-skinned aboriginal populations.³⁴⁸

34. SĀVITRĪ AND ŚRADDHĀ AS THE ELDER AND YOUNGER WIVES OF THE MOON

The relationship between the elder 'white' brother Bala-Rāma and the 'black' younger brother Kṛṣṇa can be compared with the relationship between God Brahmā's two wives in the myth of Brahmā's sacrifice (Section 5), the 'elder', Brahmin wife Sāvitrī, and the less officially married 'younger' wife Gāyatrī belonging to the Ābhīra cowherds.

In the Dravidian-speaking South India, the Tamil god Murukaṅ likewise has two wives, Brahmanical Devasenā and the tribal Vaḷḷi.³⁴⁹ In the Dravidian kinship

³⁴⁷ See Parpola 1975.

³⁴⁸ The Keralan folk deity Kuṭṭiccātan, particularly in his variant called Karinkuṭṭi 'black boy', provides interesting insight into some characteristics of Kṛṣṇa and the process of his adoption to the pantheon of higher deities. Like Kṛṣṇa, Kuṭṭiccātan/Karinkuṭṭi is a black-skinned cowherd-boy, but while Kṛṣṇa's 'tricks' are relatively innocent pranks of a pampered child, Kuṭṭiccātan does more serious 'mischief' (*upadrava*). Both are brought up in tribal surroundings by a 'fostermother', while their 'real mother' is maintained to be a member of the higher society or a deity of the Hindu pantheon. See Parpola, in press 2.

³⁴⁹ See the thorough and penetrating discussion of Shulman (1980: 267-294, 'The double bride'), including the myth of Sāvitrī and Gāyatrī. Shulman observes: 'In its account of the marriage at Puṣkara, the Padmapurāṇa lavishes attention on the figure of Gāyatrī, the *gopakanyā* with her fresh load of butter, thick soured milk, and buttermilk to sell, who suddenly finds herself elevated to the status of wife of the Creator. Unlike Sāvitrī, the senior wife, Gāyatrī is thoroughly located in the site; her kinsmen come to seek their stolen child, and in an exchange of much humor and beauty she tries to explain to them her joy at being married to the elegant stranger. The whole force of the passage suggests that Gāyatrī is rather more important and possesses greater prestige than her prim, orthodox rival, despite the humble origins of the parvenue. Here bhakti, with its preference for the unconventional, the socially inferior, the inversion of values, intrudes upon the scheme of the double marriage. Precisely the same pattern obtains in the most important of all Tamil myths of the second marriage, the story of Murukaṅ's courtship and union with the daughter of the hunters, Vaḷḷi. In the Sanskrit tradition, Skanda is either an eternal *brahmacārin* or the husband of the Army of the Gods, Devasenā. But in Tamil the earliest reference to a bride of Murukaṅ is to Vaḷḷi,

terms, a clear hierarchical distinction is made between 'elder' and 'younger' brothers and sisters, while Indo-European languages (including Sanskrit) have only the terms 'brother' and 'sister' without any such distinction.

This conception of two wives exists as early as the Brāhmaṇa texts and probably goes back to the pre-Vedic, 'Proto-Epic' religion of the plains of North India. In the Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa (2.3.10), Sītā Sāvitrī as well as Śraddhā are two daughters of Prajāpati,³⁵⁰ who both love King Soma. In the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa (12.7.3.11),³⁵¹ Śraddhā is the daughter of Sūrya, who helped King Soma to grow.³⁵² Śraddhā 'faith' has dark associations, as Śraddha denotes rites performed for the dead. Chāyā 'shadow', who as a wife of the sun appears as Śraddhā's double, shares this dark connotation.

At sunset, milk is offered to Agni, the fire, and at sunrise to Sūrya, the sun (cf. sections 15-16). Agni cohabited with the cow, placing his white seed into it: that became the milk.

...Therefore, whether it is in a black or in a red (cow), it is ever white and resplendent like fire (Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 2.2.4.15.)³⁵³

From this it would appear that Agni had two wives, one represented by a red cow (*rohiṇī*) = the dawn, and another represented by a black cow (*kṛṣṇā*) = the evening dusk. This agrees with the Purāṇic myth of Brahmā having two wives, the elder one (associated with the morning dawn) being Sāvitrī, and the younger one (associated

and there can be no doubt that Vaḷli is the more popular and important of Murukan's two brides in the Tamil area today...' – It seems possible that the name of Vaḷli, which is Dravidian and means 'climber, creeper' (cf. Burrow & Emeneau 1984: 480, no. 5316) is the root for the concept of Arundhatī 'creeper' being the devoted wife of Vasiṣṭha. Shulman (1980: 281) points out that 'the image of creeper and tree representing the union of lovers is conventional, and in the myths women sometimes embrace trees as a means of conceiving a child (n. 56: Mahābhārata 3.115.23-24; Elmore, pp. 81-82. The Tamil myth may suggest an implicit gloss on *valli*, 'creeper')'. It is noteworthy that Arundhatī, too, is supposed to be of very low, Caṇḍāla origin (cf. Dange 1986-90, I: 38f. and above Section 29). Cf. also *tagara-valli* in Section 21.

350 The Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa explicitly says of Sītā Sāvitrī alone that she is the daughter of Prajāpati, but the medieval commentator states this of Śraddhā as well.

351 Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 12.7.3.11: *punāti te parisrutam iti / samyddhikāmasya punāti samyddhyai somaṃ sūryasya duhiteti śraddhā vai sūryasya duhitā śraddhayaiṣa somo bhavati śraddhayaivaināṃ somaṃ karoti*, 'With (Vājasaneyi-Saṃhitā 29.4) "She purifieth thy liquor", he, for prosperity, purifies (the Surā) in the case of one wishing for prosperity; – "to Soma, she, the daughter of Sūrya": the daughter of Sūrya (the sun) assuredly is Faith, and by faith that (liquor) becomes Soma-juice, and by faith he makes it to be Soma-juice...' (transl. Eggeling 1882-1900, V: 226).

352 Cf. Lommel 1955-58: 101-2, with all these references.

353 Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 2.2.4.15: *tām u hāgnir abhidadhya u / mithunya anayā syām iti tāṃ sambabhūva tasyāṃ retāḥ prāsiṅcat tat payo 'bhavat tasmād etad āmyāṃ gavi satyāṃ śṛtam agner hi retas tasmād yadi kṛṣṇāyāṃ yadi rohinīyāṃ śuklam eva bhavaty agni-saṃkāśam agner hi retas tasmāt prathamadugdham uṣṇaṃ bhavaty agner hi retāḥ*.

with the evening dusk) being Gāyatrī, a black-hued cowherd girl of low birth. Śiva praises Gāyatrī's sex appeal, and assures her that she will always be liked by Brahmā, that she will remain at the left side of Brahmā, while Sāvitrī is to Brahmā's right. Gāyatrī will also be 'in the altar of the sacrifices, and stay at the royal gates, sacred places and at the confluence of rivers' (Padma-Purāṇa 1.17.303-331). On the basis of the colours and their positions on right and left, I suggest identifying the red wife of morning with Durgā, the goddess of victory, and the black evening wife with Kālī, the goddess of destruction. The colour red, which we have seen systematically as the original colour of Sāvitrī, also suggests that in pre-Vedic times she did not belong to the Brahmin class (whose symbolic colour is white) but to the class of the nobility. In the epic legend she indeed is a princess.

Kālī is a murderous bride,³⁵⁴ armed with a billhook, with which she decapitates her husband, the sun, and also castrates him, by cutting his right arm (or in the case of animal victims, the right foreleg), which is thrust into the mouth of the severed head (cf. Section 32 with note 315). As the dusk is also a time for counting evening prayers (the number of recited Gāyatrī stanzas), she has a rosary,³⁵⁵ but made of human heads. In olden times, when offerings of human victims to Kālī were possibly made every day,³⁵⁶ as the sun dies each evening, great numbers of human heads accumulated at her sacred tree. The severed arms are also collected and hung as her skirt in the iconography, while aprons and other ritual dresses made of human bone are known from Śākta Tantrism and Vajrayāna Buddhism.

As the 'elder sister', Sāvitrī would be *mahiṣī*, the king's most senior wife, who in the human/horse sacrifice of the Veda is the female partner in the 'sacred marriage', while the male partner represents the dying husband, Prajāpati, the Vedic predecessor of Goddess Sāvitrī's husband Brahmā (and originally the Asura king Varuṇa, the model of the sacrificing king, with whom the victim is also identified).³⁵⁷ In the agnicayana ritual, the *mahiṣī* is equated with Earth, and she bakes a brick called 'invincible' (*aṣāḍhā*), which associates her with Durgā.³⁵⁸ As *mahiṣī* she will also be the wife of *mahiṣa*, literally 'the great (animal)', i.e. the water buffalo, the Asura vanquished by Durgā: this demon is not only the enemy but also the lover/husband of the Goddess.³⁵⁹ The water buffalo is the vehicle and symbol of Yama, the god of death, a double of King Varuṇa, the greatest Asura, the lord of the night.

³⁵⁴ On this theme, cf. Shulman 1980: 176ff.

³⁵⁵ This is possibly the reason why Arundhatī, sage Vasiṣṭha's low caste wife, is called Akṣamālā.

³⁵⁶ From the nineteenth century, there are reports of regular weekly human sacrifices to the Goddess on Fridays, both from Calcutta and from Thanjavur in South India.

³⁵⁷ Cf. Parpola 1992: 299.

³⁵⁸ Cf. Parpola 1992: 281.

³⁵⁹ Cf. Parpola 1992: 300.

35. SĀVITRĪ AS PROTOTYPAL SATĪ

In the Sāvitrī legend and the descriptions of the *sāvitrī-vrata*, the heroine is often called *sādhvī* 'good' and *satī* 'true, good', sometimes also *mahā-satī* 'great satī'. The word *satī* is, of course, best known in the meaning of 'widow who lets herself be burned on the funeral pyre of her dead husband'. Anglicized as *suttee*, the term has in English come to denote the act of 'widow-burning', though the correct Sanskrit name of the rite is *sahamaraṇa* or *sahagamana* '(wife's) dying or going together (with her husband)'. In the later parts of the Mahābhārata, this is actually expected of a *satī* or *sādhvī*: 'A *sādhvī* follows her dead husband' as 'the general rule'.³⁶⁰

The earliest accounts of *satī* come from the historians of Alexander's expedition, including Aristoboulos, who was in India himself (cited by Strabo, p. 714) and who reported that among some Indian tribes women out of their own free will let themselves be burned together with their husbands' bodies, and those who do not do so are looked down upon by others. Strabo (p. 699) and Diodorus (17.91) specifically mention Kathaioi (living in northern Panjab, around Lahore) as having this custom. Diodorus (19.33f.) describes in detail a case from the year 316 BC, when Keteus, the commander of the Indian troops, died in a battle between Eumenes and Antigonos in Asia Minor. His two wives vied with each other for the honour of being burnt with Keteus. The elder, who was pregnant, was precluded on account of Indian law,³⁶¹ and burst into tears, while the younger was jubilant over her victory, arrived to the funeral festively adorned and accompanied by friends who sang songs in her praise. After having divided her ornaments among relatives she ascended the pyre, guided by her brother. The army circumambulated the pyre three times before it was lighted. She leaned against her husband and gave no cry of pain or fear even in the flames. Some of the Greeks pitied her, some praised her, but many considered the practise cruel and inhuman.³⁶²

The *satī* custom has prevailed up to the present time, although it was legally prohibited by the Portuguese in 1510 and by the British in 1829.³⁶³ In most cases, including that witnessed by the Greeks, the *satī* has concerned families of kings and military aristocracy, and been geographically limited mainly to the areas in western India, in more recent times particularly Rajasthan.³⁶⁴ The concept of heroism

³⁶⁰ Mahābhārata 1.74.46 (*mṛtaṃ bhartāraṃ sādhy anugacchati*) quoted by Hopkins 1889: 315, n. 1. — For *satī/sahamaraṇa* in general, see Winternitz 1920: 55-85; Kane 1941: 624-636.

³⁶¹ Such a prescription is found e.g. in Nārādīya-Smṛti: *bālāpatyāś ca garbhīnyāḥ adṛṣṭavās tathā / rajasvalā rājasute nārohanti citāṃ śubhe //*, thus quoted by Mādhavācārya in his commentary on Parāśara-Smṛti 4.31 (Tarkālaṅkāra 1899, II: 49).

³⁶² Winternitz 1920: 70; cf. Lommel 1955-58: 103.

³⁶³ Cf. Winternitz 1920: 79f.

³⁶⁴ Cf. Winternitz 1920: 63-81; Lommel 1955-58: 103-104.

prevalent in these circles is apparent from a proverb in the collection of Cāṇakya, according to which

Brahmins fearing cold, soldiers fearing battle and a lady fearing fire will not attain heaven (Böhlingk 1870-73: no. 6466).³⁶⁵

Herman Lommel (1955-58: 103-109) has plausibly suggested that the Sāvitrī legend provides the mythical model for the satī practice, although this is not directly expressed.³⁶⁶ In the Sāvitrī legend, the husband has died and the faithful wife is prepared for the supreme sacrifice: she is ready to follow him to Yama's realm, trying to save him by her own virtue. In fact she does follow Yama and her husband.³⁶⁷ After Satyavat is revived, she gathers her hair, which she has worn loose like women wailing for the dead.

In the Brahmanical literature there is no clear reference to the satī practice until the more recent layer of legal texts, where statements like the following are found:

Even if he has entered Hell bound with the most terrible chains, and has been brought to the judgement hall by Yama's servants and stands there powerless and pitiable, enveloped by his own deeds, even then she forcefully pulls her husband out like a snake catcher fearlessly draws a snake from its hole, and goes together with him to heaven. Such a wife entirely devoted to her husband, always praised by hosts of heavenly singer maidens, will sport in heaven as long as fourteen Indras rule there. Be her husband a Brahmin-murderer, a forgetter of favours done to him, or a friend-deceiver, he is purified by his wife, if she does not become a widow but dies together with him.³⁶⁸

Because the early Iranian texts do describe funeral practices but make no reference to anything like satī, and because the early Buddhist literature, too, is completely silent about the satī practice, Lommel (1955-58: 105-106) assumed that it had been adopted in India from earlier inhabitants speaking non-Aryan languages.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁵ Cited by Winternitz 1920: 65f. and Lommel 1955-58: 106.

³⁶⁶ Winternitz (1920: 58) did not think of this possibility, but was in fact of the opposite opinion: 'In den ältesten Bestandteilen der volkstümlichen Epen Mahābhārata und Rāmāyaṇa verbrennen sich die Witwen nicht... Sāvitrī, diese herrlichste Frauengestalt des Epos, denkt nicht daran, mit ihrem Gatten zu sterben, sondern sie folgt ihm in die Unterwelt und ringt dem Todesgott das Leben des teuren Gatten ab.'

³⁶⁷ Sāvitrī's following Yama and her husband can be compared to Inanna-Ishtar's descent to the netherworld.

³⁶⁸ Vyāsa-Smṛti quoted by Mādhavācārya in his commentary on Parāśara-Smṛti 4.31 (Tarkālaṅkāraḥ 1899, II: 47f.): *yadi praviṣṭo narakaṃ baddhaḥ pāśaiḥ sudāruṇaiḥ / samprāpto yātanāsthānaṃ grhīto yamakiṅkaraiḥ // tiṣṭhate vivaśo dīno veṣṭyamānaḥ svakarmabhiḥ / vyālagrāhī yathā vyālam balād grhṇāty aśaṅkitāḥ // tadvad bhartāram ādāya divaṃ yāti ca sā balāt / sā bhartṭparamā nityaṃ stūyamānāpsarogaṇaiḥ // krīḍate patinā sārḍhaṃ yāvad indrās caturdaśa / brahmaghno vā kṛtaghno vā mitraghno vā bhavet patiḥ // punāty avidhava nārī tam ādāya mṛtā tu yā /* – Similar stanzas occur in Hitopadeśa 3.29-30 and elsewhere, see Winternitz 1920: 60ff.; cf. Lommel 1955-58: 106f.

³⁶⁹ Lommel says that in assuming a non-Aryan origin for the satī practice he follows the opinion of J. Kohler, for which Winternitz (1920: 84) found no foundation.

He also points to its parallelism with the religious suicide committed mainly by men, especially by religious ascetics, concluding a life fully devoted to piety and difficult vows. Alexander's Greeks witnessed the suicide of Sage Kalanos (= Sanskrit Kalyāṇa), who burnt himself to death.

I think Lommel is right in connecting the Sāvitrī legend with the practice of satī, but I would like to modify his thesis with some corrections and additional arguments. According to Lommel, there are no references to the satī practice in the old parts of either the Mahābhārata or the Rāmāyaṇa. In the Rāmāyaṇa, however, there is something reminiscent of the satī that plays a very prominent part in the epic. After Rāma has conquered Rāvaṇa's capital and liberated Sītā, her purity is doubted. Rāma agrees to have her marital faithfulness publicly tested. Sītā ascends a pyre which is lighted, but the fire does not touch her, leaving her unscathed and her fidelity proven. This is even repeated in the later additions to the Rāmāyaṇa. From such a public testing of marital fidelity by means of fire, the step is very short to the satī's proving her marital fidelity on the funeral pyre of her husband. There are many descriptions of satī cases, some of them quoted by Winternitz and Lommel, where the faithful and determined wife shows no signs of pain, though she has her fingers or arms burned before the actual funeral takes place: it is as if she did not feel the fire.

It also seems significant that though the Mahābhārata has very few references to the satī practice, it does state that Mādri, daughter of the Madra king like Sāvitrī (cf. above Section 14), and four wives of Vasudeva including Bala-Rāma's mother Rohiṇī and Kṛṣṇa's mother Devakī burnt themselves on the husband's funeral pyre, and that the same was done by many wives of Kṛṣṇa (this is also said in the Viṣṇu-Purāṇa).³⁷⁰

I disagree with Lommel when he says (1955-58: 104f.) that the entire Vedic literature from the Ṛgveda down to the most detailed descriptions of mortuary practices is completely silent about widow-burning. In fact Lommel's source here, Winternitz (1920: 57), already pointed out that the Ṛgvedic Aryans did know the practice of widow-burning but did not approve of it. Cf. also Gonda (1980: 203):

The widow is placed to the north of the dead body of her husband when it is being cremated, but her brother-in-law, a pupil (who is an inmate), or an aged servant... cause her to arise (Āśvalāyana-Gṛhyasūtra 2.4.16;18) with Ṛgveda 10.18.8 which on the one hand seems to point to the widow's remarrying and on the other may be reminiscent of an older practice of burning the widow together with her husband.

There is also evidence that among other Indo-European-speaking peoples (Greeks, Germanic, Slavic and Scythians speaking an early Iranian language) either wives or concubines followed their deceased chieftains to the world beyond (cf. Winternitz 1920: 56). Moreover, the Harappans did not dispose of their dead by cremation, but by burial.

³⁷⁰ Mahābhārata, Mausala-Parvan 7.18 and 73-74; Viṣṇu-Purāṇa 5.38.2; cf. Kane 1941: 626.

It would seem to me that at the assumed fusion of the 'R̥gvedic' and 'Proto-Epic' traditions (cf. sections 12-13), the *saṭī* practice prevalent in the pre-Yajurvedic Indus Valley was deliberately and totally abandoned by the unified Vedic culture, and did not surface again in Sanskrit literature until much later. However, it continued to be practised in the Greater Indus Valley (including Rajasthan and Gujarat) outside the Vedic sphere, where the oral tradition was not fixed as in the Vedic and Buddhist faiths, but remained in the fluid and ahistorical form of the *Purāṇas*. In the Greater Indus Valley, the *saṭī* practice may have come into being as a combination of non-Vedic Aryan traditions including cremation of the dead,³⁷¹ and possibly providing chieftains with wives to accompany them to the afterlife, and of Harappan traditions associated with the *Sāvitrī* legend.

36. *Akṣaya-vaṭa*: DEATH IN A SACRED BANYAN TREE

With regard to the probably Harappan heritage of the *saṭī* practice, I should like to underline the importance of the banyan tree in the Harappan religion and in the *Sāvitrī* legend and vow, where it is the tree of Death. The 'imperishable banyan trees' (*akṣaya-vaṭa*) at various pilgrimage sites have been notorious for the religious suicides committed at them.³⁷² The Khairha plates of Yaśaḥkarṇadeva (dated Kalacuri *saṃvat* 823, i.e. AD 1073) narrate that king Gāṅgeya 'obtained release along with his one hundred wives at the famous banyan tree of Prayāga.'³⁷³ The *akṣayya vaṭa* in Prayāga (Allahabad), according to the *Skanda-Purāṇa* (5.2.58.21), has [a temple of] *Sāvitrī* established close by.³⁷⁴ There was a sacred banyan tree

³⁷¹ In the Indus Valley, inhumation, which was the prevalent Harappan mode of disposing of the dead, gave way to cremation with the introduction of the Late/Post-Harappan Cemetery H Culture with its painted burial urns (for an attempt to interpret the painted motifs of these urns, see Parpola 1985: 71). The Cemetery H culture extended from the Pakistani Panjab to the Yamunā-Gaṅgā doab, and can be dated to c. 1900-1300 BC. It is my primary candidate for being the 'Proto-Epic' culture. Another early Indo-Aryan-speaking community of the pre-Vedic Indus Valley is that of Sindh (Sibri, Quetta Hoard, Jhukar), which is related to the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex (both with inhumation burials), and probably also with the Gangetic Copper Hoards; this is likely to be the origin of the later *Māgadī* speakers of eastern India (cf. Parpola 1988: 206f., 251ff.).

³⁷² Cf. Chattopadhyaya 1937; Dubey 1986; Thakur 1963: 84, 89, 92f., 97. In historical times, people have usually committed suicide by jumping down from a high branch of the banyan tree. The North Indian suicide at the 'eternal banyan trees' – which have a prototype in *Varuṇa*'s 'cosmic banyan' in the middle of the sky, probably associated with the 'north-star' (Tamil *vaṭa-mīn*) – might be related with the Old Tamil suicide by fasting to death by 'sitting turned towards north' (*vaṭakk' iruttal*), which George Hart (1975: 88-93) is inclined to consider a native Dravidian tradition.

³⁷³ Kane 1941: 925 with n. 2135, and Thakur 1963: 97, both quoting *Epigraphia Indica* 12: 205 at p. 211: *prāpte prayāgavaṭamūlaniveśabandhau sārḍhaṃ śatena gṛhiṇībhīr amutra muktīm*.

called Govardhana at the gate of the royal palace in Śākala, Sāvitrī's hometown (Section 14); and a banyan tree was also 'the highest abode' of God Brahmā, Goddess Sāvitrī's husband, at Puškara, his most important tīrtha.³⁷⁵ *Arundhatī-vaṭa* 'the banyan tree of Arundhatī', mentioned in the Mahābhārata (3.82.37),³⁷⁶ is another place of pilgrimage associated through its name with one of the foremost paragons of marital faithfulness.

In the very short description of the *vaṭa-sāvitrī-vrata* contained in the Agni-Purāṇa (194.4-7) there is a hitherto misunderstood passage, which supports the connection of the suicides committed at the *akṣaya-vaṭas* with the Sāvitrī legend. In all other respects, excepting the date, the account agrees with the long description of the Skanda-Purāṇa cited above (in Section 3a):

I shall tell (the vow of) the new-moon day of Sāvitrī that is auspicious and bestows enjoyment and emancipation. On the fifteenth (new moon) day of (the dark half of) the Jyeṣṭha month, after fasting for three (days and) nights, a woman who has made the vow should worship the great chaste woman (*mahā-satī*, i.e. Sāvitrī) at the foot of a banyan tree *at night with seven (kinds of) grains that have sprouted and with throatsropes along with red saffron-powder, etc., (and), after having performed the suspension from the banyan, with songs and dances.*³⁷⁷ At early dawn she should worship (the images of the couple with the mantra) 'Obeisance to Sāvitrī and Satyavat', and present the offering to a Brahmin. After going to (her own) house, she should feed Brahmins and eat herself. She should dismiss the Brahmins with this mantra: 'May Goddess Sāvitrī be pleased!', (to which they should reply:) 'Let her attain marital happiness and other good things.'³⁷⁸

The italicized passage has a counterpart in the Sāvitrī legend in one version of the Skanda-Purāṇa,³⁷⁹ which contains this verse (7.166.78): *kāṣṭhabhāraṃ kṣaṇāt*

374 Skanda-Purāṇa 5.2.58.20-21: *kāmikas tīrtharājas tu prayāgaḥ śrūyate śrutau / ahaṃ tatra gamiṣyāmi jñānaṃ samyag bhaviṣyati // naṣṭavedena raubhyeṇa prāptā siddhir anuttamā / sāvitrī śrūyate tatra akṣayyavaṭasannidhau //*

375 Cf. Viṣṇu-Purāṇa 2.4.86: 'On Puṣkaradvīpa there is a Nyagrodha tree which is Brahmā's highest abode. In that Brahmā dwells, worshipped (*pūjyamānaḥ*) by gods and demons.' (Transl. Bailey 1983: 22, n. 61.)

376 Mahābhārata 3.82.37: *arundhatīvaṭaṃ gacchet tīrthasevī narādhipa / sāmudrakam upa-sprṣya trirātroṣiṭo naraḥ / gosahasraphalaṃ vindet kulaṃ caiva samuddharet //*

377 This passage has been translated by Gangadharan (1985: 519) as follows: 'Women should deeply embrace the banyan tree (besmearing) with saffron etc. doing dancing and singing in the night...'

378 Agni-Purāṇa 194.4-7 (Venkaṭeśvara ed., fol. 129b): *vakṣye sāvitrīyamāvāsyāṃ bhuktī-muktīkarīṃ śubhāṃ // pañcadaśyāṃ vrati jyeṣṭhe vaṭamūle mahāsatīm / trirātroṣiṭā nārī saptaadhānyaiḥ prapūjayet // prarūḍhaiḥ kaṇṭhasūtraiḥ ca rajanyāṃ kunḍumādibhiḥ / vaṭāvalambanaṃ kṛtvā nṛtyagītaiḥ prabhātake // namaḥ sāvitrīyai satyavate naivedyaṃ cārpayed dvije / veśma gatvā dvijān bhojya svayaṃ bhuktvā visarjayet / sāvitrī prīyatām devī saubhāgyādīkam āpnuyāt //*

379 In the Mahābhārata version (3.281.102-103), it is Sāvitrī who after the revival of Satyavat hangs the carrying pole with fruits from the branch of a tree, to be fetched later by Satyavat: *tam uvācātha sāvitrī śvaḥ phalānīha neṣyasi... kṛtvā kaṭhinabhāraṃ sāvī vṛkṣaśākhāvalambinam.*

kṛtvā vaṭasākhāvalambanam 'after (Satyavat) in a moment suspended the load of wood (which he had made) from a branch of the banyan tree', as his last act before laying his head on Sāvitrī's lap and dying. What is the import of the load of wood in such a context? Probably it stands for the wood of the funeral pyre. Sāvitrī sitting with the head of her dead husband in her lap corresponds exactly to what the satī traditionally does on the funeral pyre.³⁸⁰

But hanging the wood of the funeral pyre on the branches of the banyan tree seems to hint to an earlier practice. The passage may represent a survival of the original satī ritual in which the woman was supposed to hang herself on the banyan tree. The word *kañṭha-* means 'throat' and *sūtra-* means 'thread, rope'.³⁸¹ It is significant that 'throat ropes' (*grīvā-sūtraka*) are prescribed for the worship of Goddess Sāvitrī at Mūlasthāna (see Section 14).³⁸² According to Hildebeitel (1991: 347), when the five young sons of the Pāṇḍavas have been murdered and revived in

380 Cf. Winternitz 1920: 73: '...Endlich besteigt sie den Scheiterhaufen. Manchmal wird die Leiche quer über sie hingelegt, oder sie sitzt auf einem Stuhl mit dem Kopf der Leiche auf ihrem Schoss.'

381 The meaning 'a particular mode of embracing' recorded for the compound *kañṭha-sūtra-* in the dictionaries from Kālidāsa's Raghuvamśa (19.32) should not mislead us (cf. note 377). – Of course *kañṭha-sūtra-* could simply mean 'collar, necklace', but it is peculiar that just the word *sūtra-* denoting 'thread, rope' is used, not e.g. *bhūṣaṇa-* or *ābharaṇa-*. Cf. further *rañjayet paṭṭasūtraiḥ* 'she should add some colour with silk threads' in the *brahma-sāvitrī-vrata* (Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.87) corresponding to *sūtrakañṭhaiḥ* in Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa 4.102.75 (see above note 102). *Sūtra-kañṭha-* is not in the dictionaries, while *sūtra-kañṭha-* is recorded from lexicographers in the meanings 'Brahmin' (lit. 'having sūtras in the throat ready to be repeated') 'pigeon, dove' (lit. 'having lines on the throat') and 'wagtail' (cf. Monier-Williams 1899:1241c). See further note 382.

382 A woman performing the *vaṭa-sāvitrī-vrata* is also supposed to wrap a thread (*sūtra*) around the banyan tree every month while watering it and worshipping it as Yama, cf. Skanda-Purāṇa quoted by Hemādri, p. 273.4-9: *jyaiṣṭhamāse tu samprāpte paurnamāsyāṃ pativratā / snātvā caiva śucir bhūtvā vaṭam sicya bahūdakaiḥ // sūtreṇa veṣṭayed bhaktiyā gandhapuṣpākṣataiḥ śubhaiḥ / namo vaivasvatāyeti bhramayanī pradakṣiṇam // rātrau kurvīta naktam cābdam ekaṃ samāhitā / tathaiva vaṭavṛkṣam ca pakṣe pakṣe ca pūjayed //*. It is likely that the thread is a substitute for the entrails of the sacrificed victims with which the tree is garlanded in the cruder varieties of banyan worship (cf. Section 40). This act could symbolize the devotee's marriage to this tree of death (the bride and bridegroom garland each other, cf. Baudhāyana-Gṛhyasūtra 1.1.24), in imitation of the incestuous marriage that may be assumed to have taken place between Sāvitrī and her father Aśvapati, whose name connects him with Varuṇa, a multiform of Yama, the god of death, the lord of the banyan tree. At Puṣkara, the sacred banyan tree was the abode of Goddess Sāvitrī's husband Brahmā (Viṣṇu-Purāṇa 2.4.86). Indeed, in the *baṭasāvitrī (balsait)* ritual celebrated in Mithila, the banyan tree (*bar*) is 'said to symbolize the husband' of newly-wed women, who 'praying for a happy marriage, perform *pūjā* using rice, flowers, sandalwood, water, parched rice (*lava*), etc.; carrying a ripe mango, they circumambulate the *bar* three times and sprinkle it with water...' (Ishii 1993: 64). – I noticed the following references that are highly important for the interpretation of the Sāvitrī legend too late to be taken into regard elsewhere in this study, but I communicate them here. According to Maitrāyaṇī-Saṃhitā 1.5.12, Yama was the first mortal to die, and he left behind his mourning twin sister and (incestuously married) wife Yamī, while according to Pañcaviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa 11.10.22, Yamī (by means of the *Yāma-sāman*) brought Yama to the world of heaven.

the ritual drama of the Draupadī cult, one of them wears a turmeric-dyed whip around his neck, identical to the whip of the Goddess with the lashes of which the other victims are awakened from their sleep-like death. The turmeric-dyed coconut-fibre whip is associated with Potu Raja (a multiform of Mahiṣa Asura) in Andhra Pradesh as well as in Tamil Nadu. 'As Biardeau has argued, the whip has its prototype in the rope that is used to tie the victim to the sacrificial stake' (Hiltebeitel 1991: 150), 'signifying its submission to sacrifice' (p. 347).³⁸³ Why should a throat-rope be so important in the worship of Sāvitṛī as *mahā-satī*? It may symbolize the air-roots of the banyan tree as an instrument of Sāvitṛī's suicide by hanging.

The red saffron powder (*kuṅkuma*) mentioned in the Agni-Purāṇa may have been applied on the forehead of the Sāvitṛī statuette, but perhaps also on the throat-ropes with which Sāvitṛī is to be worshipped. Red saffron often is a substitute for blood. Besmearing a tree with red powder replaces smearing it with the blood of a sacrificial victim. Sacred trees sometimes have had red five-finger marks (*pañcāṅgulika*) imprinted with a hand.³⁸⁴ These demand comparison with, for example, the forty or so red hand-marks on gates of the Jodhpur Palace in Rajasthan, imprinted there by *satī* queens while departing on their last journey (cf. Winternitz 1920: 79) and with the hand symbols carved on hundreds of memorial stones, at least in Central India along the Narmada river (cf. Winternitz 1920: 69). Why should a hand symbolize a *satī*? Perhaps on account of the homophony between the Proto-Dravidian word for 'hand', **kay* (Tamil *kai*),³⁸⁵ and Proto-Dravidian **kay* 'widow'.³⁸⁶

³⁸³ Reference may also be made to binding the root of the *pāṭā* plant (*Clypea hermandifolia*) around the neck: a person who wears this talisman becomes invincible (Kauśikasūtra 38.20; cf. Gonda 1980: 123, 326). 'The roots of the plants belong to the Fathers or chthonian powers' (Gonda 1980: 123, citing J. J. Meyer).

³⁸⁴ Cf. Vogel 1920.

³⁸⁵ Burrow & Emeneau 1984: 183, no. 2023.

³⁸⁶ Burrow & Emeneau 1984: 183, no. 2028: Tamil *kaintalai*, *kayini*, *kaini* 'widow', *kaimmai* 'widowhood, widow, forlorn condition', *kai-k-kiḷai* 'unreciprocated love'; Tulu *kai-ponjavu* 'a single woman'; Parji *kētal*, *kētal* 'widow', *kētub* 'widower', Gadaba (Ollari) *kētal* 'widow'. This etymon seems to be related (perhaps as 'unmarried single woman') to Proto-Dravidian **kay* 'younger sister', Burrow & Emeneau 1984: 261, no. 3015(a): Tamil *kai*, *kaiyai* 'younger sister', *taṅkai*, *taṅkaicci*, *taṅkacci* 'younger sister (or female parallel cousin)', *enkai*, *enkaicci* 'my younger sister', *unkai* 'your younger sister' (with parallels in all branches of the Dravidian family).

37. HUMAN SACRIFICE BENEATH THE BANYAN TREE IN THE VETĀLA-PAÑCAVIṂŚATIKĀ

Death by hanging in a tree reminds one of the Vetāla-Pañcaviṁśatikā, the 25 stories of *vetāla*, a 'vampire or demon occupying a dead body'. There are several versions of this ancient and very popular collection of stories, the best known being included in Somadeva's Kathāsaritsāgara, which will be used here.³⁸⁷ The hero is a brave king, called Vikramāditya, the 'sun of valour', or (in Somadeva's version) Trivikramasena. A mendicant (*bhikṣu*, *śramaṇa*) called Kṣāntiśīla donates a fruit every day to the king, who without further ado gives them to his treasurer. Ten years pass until accidentally it is found out that each fruit contains a precious jewel. The king asks the mendicant why is he giving these presents, and the mendicant replies that he needs the help of a hero in a magic ritual. The king immediately promises his help, and the mendicant asks him to come to a big cemetery (*śmaśāna*) on the 14th night of the dark half of the month. The mendicant would be waiting there beneath a banyan tree (*vaṭa*).³⁸⁸

The king does so, wraps himself in a dark blue cloak, takes his sword, and comes to the terrible cemetery full of human skeletons and skulls and teeming with ghosts, dimly lit by funeral fires, and finds the mendicant drawing a magic circle (*maṇḍala*) beneath the banyan tree. He asks the king to fetch the dead body of a man that is hanging from a sissoo tree at some distance to the south.³⁸⁹ The king agrees, and finds the corpse hanging from a tree,³⁹⁰ smelling of raw flesh and burnt by the flames of funeral fires. The king climbs the tree and lets the dead body fall

³⁸⁷ Somadeva's Kathāsaritsāgara (=KSS), taraṅgas 75-99 from the beginning of the work = Vetāla-Pañcaviṁśatikā.

³⁸⁸ KSS 75.34-39: *bhikṣo dhanavyayenaivaṃ sevase māṃ kim anvaham / nedānīṃ te grahīṣyāmi phalaṃ yāvan na vakṣyasi // ity uktavantaṃ rājānaṃ bhikṣus taṃ vijane 'bravīt / vīrasācivyasāpekṣaṃ mantrasādhanam asti me // tatra vīrendra sāhāyyaṃ kriyamāṇaṃ tvayārthaye / tac chrutvā pratipede tat tathety asya sa bhūpatiḥ // tataḥ sa śramaṇas tuṣṭo nṛpaṃ punar uvāca tam / tarhi kṣṇacaturdaśyām āgāminyaṃ niśāgame // ito mahāśmaśānāntar vaṭasyādhaḥ sthitasya me / āgantavyaṃ tvayā deva pratipālayato 'ntikam // bāḍham evaṃ kariṣyāmīty ukte tena mahābhujā / sa kṣāntiśīlaḥ śramaṇo hr̥ṣṭaḥ svanilayaṃ yayau //*

³⁸⁹ KSS 75.40-48: *atha tāṃ sa mahāsattvaḥ prāpya kṣṇacaturdaśīm / prārthanāṃ prati-pannāṃ tāṃ bhikṣos tasya nṛpaḥ smaran // pradoṣe nilavasanas tamālakṛtaśekharaḥ / niryayau rājadhānītaḥ khaḍgapāṇīr alakṣitaḥ // yayau ca ghoranibīḍadhvāntavrāta-malīmasam / citānalogranayanajvālādāruṇadarśaṇam // asaṃkhyanarakaṅkālakapālāsthi-viśaṅkiṭam / hr̥ṣyasaṃnihitottālabhūtavetālaveṣṭitam // bhairavasyāparaṃ rūpaṃ iva gambhūrabhīṣaṇam / sphūrjanmahāśivārāvaṃ śmaśānaṃ tadavihvalaḥ // vicitya cātra taṃ prāpya bhikṣuṃ vaṭataror adhaḥ / kurvānaṃ maṇḍalanyāsam upasṛtya jagāda saḥ // eṣo 'ham āgato bhikṣo brūhi kiṃ karavaṇī te / tac chrutvā sa nṛpaṃ dṛṣṭvā hr̥ṣṭo bhikṣur uvāca tam // rājan kṛtaḥ prasādaś cet tad ito dakṣiṇāmukham / gatvā vidūram ekākī vidyate śiṃśapātaruḥ // tasmīn ullambitamṛtaḥ ko 'py ekaḥ puruṣo sthitaḥ / tam ihānaya gatvā tvaṃ sānāthyaṃ kuru vīra me //*

³⁹⁰ KSS 75.51: *so 'paśyal lambamānaṃ taṃ bhūtasyeva śavaṃ taroḥ.*

down with the rope (by which it was hung) cut (*chinnarajjus*). Falling on the ground, the corpse makes a cry. Suspecting the body to be still alive, the king out of pity starts to stroke it, but then the body bursts into a loud laughter, from which the king understands it to be a vampire. When he says, 'Why do you laugh? Let's go!', the corpse flies back to the tree. With much trouble the king again climbs the tree and fetches the body, puts it on his shoulder and keeping silent, starts taking it to the banyan tree.³⁹¹

Now the vampire tells a story to entertain the king on the road. The story ends in a riddling question, and the vampire threatens the king that if he knows the answer and does not say it, then his head will burst asunder into a hundred pieces.³⁹² The king replies to the query, but when he breaks the silence, the body flies back to the tree again. The same thing happens over and over again, until the vampire asks such a question that the king cannot answer and therefore goes on in silence. Now the vampire declares to the king that he is satisfied with his courage, determination and smart replies, reveals the real intention of the mendicant, and advises the king how to deal with him.³⁹³

The king arrives at the banyan tree and sees that the mendicant has smeared the ground with blood and drawn a magic circle on it with white powder made of ground human bone, placed a pot filled with blood at each of the cardinal directions around it, and nearby a sacrificial fire flames high from rich libations of the 'great oil' (made of the fat of human victims), while all the sacrificial implements are collected in readiness for worshipping the mendicant's chosen divinity.³⁹⁴ The mendicant is overjoyed at the king's arrival and takes the dead body down from his shoulder, bathes it, binds a garland (around its neck), places the corpse inside the circle, applies sacred ashes on his own limbs, puts on a sacrificial thread made of human hair, puts on the funeral clothes of a dead person, meditates a moment, and with the power of mantras makes the vampire enter into the corpse. Then he worships the vampire by offering it guest water from a human skull with carefully cleaned human teeth (as his offering ladles), then gives flowers, incense and ointment, fumigates with human eyes, and makes a bali offering with pieces of (human) flesh. Then he asks the king to prostrate himself on the ground so that eight parts

³⁹¹ KSS 75.49-57.

³⁹² KSS 75 (Vetāla 1).188: *jānānaś ca na ced rājan mama tattvaṃ vadiṣyasi / tad eṣa śatadhā mūrdhā niścitāṃ te sphuṭiṣyati ||*. – Cf. Brhaddevatā (shorter version) 4.106ab: *śatadhā bhidyate mūrdhā*, with the following parallels collected by Tokunaga (1996: 224): Ṛgveda Khila 2.1.6cd: *śatadhā bhidyate mūrdhni śiṃśavṛkṣaphalaṃ yathā*; Śaḍguruṣiṣya on Sarvānukramaṇī 1.68.35; 1.158.47; 7.121.22, 27, 39; 7.169.10; Rāmāyaṇa 4.45.15.

³⁹³ KSS 98 (Vetāla 24).60-74.

³⁹⁴ KSS 99 (Vetāla 25).1-4: *tatas tasyāntikaṃ bhikṣoḥ kṣāntiśīlasya bhūpatiḥ / sa trivikrama-seno 'tra prāpa skandhe śavam vahan || dadarśa taṃ ca śramaṇaṃ mārgābhimukham ekakam / kṣṇapakṣakṣapāraudre śmaśāne tarumūlagam || asṛgliptast<h>ale gaureṇāsthi-cūrṇena nirmite / maṇḍale dikṣu vinyastapūrṇaśoṇitakumbhake || mahātailapradīpādhye hutapāśvāsthavahnini / saṃbhṛtocitasāṃbhāre sveṣṭadaivatapūjane ||*.

of his body will touch the earth, in adoration of the overlord of spells who is present, so that the deity will be pleased to give as a boon the success that the mendicant has been praying for the king.³⁹⁵

The king, following the advice given by the vampire, replies that he does not know how the prostration is to be done, and asks the mendicant to show him first. When the mendicant prostrates himself, the king chops his head off with a strike of his sword. He also pulls out the heart-lotus (*hṛt-padma*) that he has torn from the mendicant's stomach, and gives the head and the heart-lotus to the vampire. While pleased hosts of ghosts applaud, the satisfied vampire says to the king from the corpse: 'The overlordship of the (deities called) "wisdom carriers" (*vidyādhara*) coveted by this mendicant will be yours at the end of your enjoyment of your imperial rule on the earth. As you have been troubled by me, please choose a boon whatever you wish.' The king asks for the stories told by the vampire to be told and held in honour on the earth. The vampire grants the wish, saying that whoever tells or hears even one verse of these stories with respect, will be released from sin and obtain immunity from all sorts of demons and ghosts, including Yakṣas, Vetālas, Kūṣmāṇḍas, Ḍākinīs, and Rākṣasas.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁵ KSS 99 (Vetāla 25).5-16: *upāgāc ca sa taṃ rājā so 'pi bhikṣur vilokya tam / ānītamāṭakaṃ harṣād uthāyovāca saṃstuvan // duṣkaro me mahārāja vihito 'nugrahas tvayā / tvādṛśāḥ kva kva ceṣṭeyaṃ deśakālau kva cedṛsau // niṣkampaṃ satyam evāhur mukhyaṃ tvāṃ kula-bhūbhṛtām / evam ātmānapekṣeṇa parārtho yena sādhyate // etad eva mahattvaṃ ca mahatām ucyate budhaiḥ / pratipannād acalanaṃ prāñānām atyaye 'pi yat // iti bruvaṃ sa siddhārthamānī bhikṣur mahīpateḥ / tasyāvātārayām āsa skandhāt taṃ maṭakaṃ tadā // snapayitvā samālabhya baddhamālyāṃ vidhāya ca / maṭakaṃ maṇḍalasyāntaḥ sthāpayām āsa tasya tat // bhasmoddhūlitagātrās ca keśayajñopavītabhṛt / prāvṛtapretavasano bhūtvā dhyānasthitaḥ kṣaṇam // tasmin mantrabalāhūtaṃ praveśya nṛkalevare / taṃ vetālavaraṃ bhikṣuḥ pūjayām āsa sa kramāt // dadau tasmai kapālārghapātreṅgṛghyaṃ sunirmalaiḥ / naradantaḥ tataḥ puṣpaṃ sugandhi ca vilepanam // dattvā mānuṣanetraḥ ca dhūpaṃ māṃsair baliṃ tathā / samāpya ca pūjāṃ rājānaṃ tam uvāca sa pārśvagam // rājann ihāsyā mantrādhirājasya kṛtasamnidheḥ / prañāmam aṅgair aṣṭābhīr nipatyā kuru bhū-tale // yenābhipretasiddhim te dāsyaty eṣa varapraḍaḥ /*

³⁹⁶ KSS 99 (Vetāla 25).16-30: *śrutvaitat smṛtavetālavacā rājābravīt sa tam // nāhaṃ jānāmi tat pūrvaṃ pradarśayatu me bhavān / tatas tathāiva tad ahaṃ kariṣye bhagavann iti // tato darśayitum yāvāt sa bhikṣuḥ patito bhuvi / tāvat khaḍgaprahāreṇa sa rājāsyā śiro 'cchinat // ācakarṣa ca hṛtpadmam udarād asya pāṭitam / vetālaya ca tasmai tacchirohṛtkamalaṃ dadau // sādhuvāde tato datte prītair bhūtagaṇaiḥ tataḥ / tuṣṭo 'bravīt sa vetālo nṛpaṃ taṃ kalevarāt // rājan vidyādharendratvaṃ bhikṣor āsīd yad īpsitam / tat tāvad bhūmīsāmrājyabhogānte te bhaviṣyati // kleśito 'si mayā yat tvaṃ tad abhīṣṭaṃ varam vṛṇu / ity uktvantaṃ vetālaṃ sa rājā tam abhāṣata // tvaṃ cet prasannaḥ ko nāma na siddho 'bhimato varah / tathāpy amoghavacanād idam tvatto 'haṃ arthaye // ādyāḥ praśna-kathā etā nānākhyānamanoramāḥ / caturviṃśatir eṣā ca pañcaviṃśī samāptigā // sarvāḥ khyātā bhavantv etāḥ pūjanīyās ca bhūtale / iti tenārthito rājñā vetālo nijagāda saḥ // evam astu viśeṣaṃ ca śṛṇu vacmy atra bhūtale / yāś caturviṃśatiḥ pūrvā yaiśā caikā samāpinī // kathāvalīyaṃ vetālapañcaviṃśatikākhyayā / khyātā jagati pūjyā ca śivā caiva bhaviṣyati // yaḥ ślokaṃātram apy asyāḥ kathayiṣyati sādaraḥ / yo vā śroṣyati tau sadyo muktapāpau bhaviṣyataḥ // yakṣavetālakūṣmāṇḍadākinīrākṣasādayaḥ / na tatra prabhaviṣyanti yatraiṣā kīrtayiṣyate // ity uktvā sa yayau tasmān nirgatya nṛkalevarāt / yathābhīrucitaṃ dhāma vetālo yogamāyayā //*

38. THE SACRIFICED VICTIM AND THE SUN

The above paraphrased and partially translated frame story of the Vetāla-Pañcaviṃśatikā provides some crucial clues for understanding the Sāvitṛī legend and *sāvitṛī-vrata*. First of all, this is one of the very few texts which have preserved reminiscences of the disposal of the dead by hanging them on trees, besides the Sāvitṛī legend. The king's carrying on his shoulder a corpse that had been hanging from a rope in a tree calls to mind the Hindu myth of God Śiva's carrying on his shoulder the dead body of his wife Satī, who had committed suicide when his father Dakṣa did not invite her husband to his sacrifice.³⁹⁷ This might be a reminiscence of a ritual practice once belonging to the 'sacred marriage' ceremony: in the Vetāla, the corpse was to be worshipped as a deity under the banyan like the image of Sāvitṛī, and Satīs are worshipped as deities.

Dakṣa is a multiform of Brahmā and shares some of his common epithets such as *lokapitāmaha*, 'Grandfather of the worlds', and Sraṣṭṛ, 'Creator'.³⁹⁸

There is a myth about an incestuous relationship between Brahmā and Śiva's wife Satī, whom he has just married as the officiating priest:

After they were married Brahmā... saw Satī's feet and his mind immediately became filled with passion... he made the sacrificial fire smoky and whilst all the gods were distracted, he looked at her face. When he saw her face he became helpless (*avaśa*) and his semen spilt onto the ground. He became silent and covered up the semen so that no one would know what had happened. However, by using his divine eye Śiva discovered what Brahmā had done and was very angry. He resolved to kill him...³⁹⁹

Further, the frame story of the Vetāla-Pañcaviṃśatikā describes a ritual performed in a consecrated circular area called *maṇḍala* beneath a banyan tree, as is done in the *vaṭa-sāvitṛī-vrata*. The king is supposed to prostrate himself on the ground so that eight parts of his body (i.e. the forehead, the palms of the hands, the feet, the knees and the chest) touch the earth.⁴⁰⁰ Such a prostration is the most

³⁹⁷ For the myth of Dakṣa's sacrifice and Satī's suicide, cf. e.g. O'Flaherty 1973: 298f. (with references).

³⁹⁸ Bailey 1983: 118, n. 27, quoting Mahābhārata 1.70.4 and 6.64.5.

³⁹⁹ Summary of Śiva-Purāṇa 2.2.19.1-27 given by Bailey 1983: 120-121. This myth is clearly a variant of the *brahmaśiraścheda* myth discussed in Section 17 (cf. O'Flaherty 1973: 128-130), thereby identifying Satī as the daughter of Brahmā/Prajāpati, i.e. Sāvitṛī/Rohiṇī. This family relationship is also directly expressed by stating that Satī is the daughter of Dakṣa = Brahmā.

⁴⁰⁰ While doing the prostration with eight parts of the body, the worshipper should also fix his mind, voice and eyes on the object of worship. Cf. Vyāsa quoted in Kane 1941: 735, n. 1752: *dorbhyāṃ padbhyāṃ ca jānubhyāṃ urasā śirasā tathā / manasā vacasā dṛṣṭyā praṇāmo 'ṣṭāṅga īritāḥ //*. As Kane notes, there are also different definitions of the *aṣṭāṅga-praṇāma*. – Could there be any connection with the *aṅgapūjā* in the *sāvitṛī-vrata*?

important part of the widely practised *sūryanamaskāra* while worshipping the sun at *sandhyā*,⁴⁰¹ the number symbolism also points to the sun, which goes around the eight directions of space. The disk of the rising and setting sun is called *maṇḍala*, and it is supposed to contain Brahman in the shape of a man (cf. Section 9).

The prostrating king (who almost loses his head) is linked with the sun through his name. At the evening twilight (*sandhyā*), when the sun sets, one should worship Varuṇa with the Ṛgvedic hymns 1.24-25 (cf. Section 9) in which mention is made of the heavenly banyan tree of Varuṇa and of Śunaḥśepa, the victim of human sacrifice who was to be killed with a slaughtering knife by his own father (cf. Section 42). When the sun sets, it dies (cf. Section 16), and in the Vedic ritual, the *pravargya* pot identified with the sun is said to be the head of the sacrifice, i.e. a sacrificed human victim (cf. Section 19). Undoubtedly there once was a regular ritual practice of sacrificing a human victim in imitation of the death of the sun and the moon. Some animal victim was probably sacrificed daily, lots of animals were probably sacrificed every new and full moon (cf. the practice of ancient Śākala, cf. Section 14), and a sacred marriage with a human sacrifice and a *satī* was probably staged every year. The slaughterer of the preceding victim would be the male partner of the sacred marriage one year later (cf. Section 42).

The decapitation was done under the banyan tree, which belonged to King Varuṇa and his multiform Yama, the 'King of Righteousness', who are both armed with the 'noose' of death, i.e. the air-root of the 'rope-tree' banyan. In the Karpūra-maṅjarī, Kāla 'the black one', one of the principal names of Śiva as the god of death, is mentioned as the deity of the royal banyan tree together with his spouse Kālī (cf. Section 3b); I trust that Kāla goes etymologically back to Dravidian Kāl,⁴⁰² and that this is the original Harappan-Dravidian name of this god of death and night. In the Sāvitrī legend, Yama comes to fetch Satyavat and forcefully draws his thumb-long soul-man out of him by means of his noose. From the Upaniṣads we know that this thumb-long man (a conception created by the viewer's reflection in the eyes of another person) was supposed to dwell in the lotus-shaped human heart; it was apparently this soul-man that King Trivikramasena tore out from the chest of the mendicant as an offering to the vampire. From the story in Section 41, it appears that the heart, along with the head, was regularly offered to deities inhabiting the fig trees.⁴⁰³ The lotus is specifically the throne of the creator god

⁴⁰¹ Cf. Alter 1992: 101.

⁴⁰² *Kāl* seems to have been the original Dravidian name of the god of death, cf. Burrow & Emeneau 1984: 139, no. 1494 (Tamil *kāl* 'blackness', with cognates in this meaning in Toda, Kannada, Tulu, Manda and Kuwi); cf. Pāli *kāla* 'black' and Sanskrit *kāla* 'black' < North Dravidian **kāl* < **kāl*. In Malayalam, the god of death is not called Yaman but *Kālan*.

⁴⁰³ This gruesome practice is no mere legend, but many historical occasions of its occurrence can be documented within the framework of Tantric tradition, including its Buddhist branch; see Aalto 1996.

Brahmā, whose creation takes place at sunrise (cf. Section 15), when the day-lotus opens up its petals, as the rising sun sends out its rays.⁴⁰⁴

39. SHATTERED HEADS, VIDYĀDHARAS AND GANDHARVAS

In the classical Vedic horse sacrifice, which had replaced the earlier human sacrifice, the sacrificial victim was strangled. But the evidence from the Ṛgveda (1.162) and the Śunaḥśepa legend suggests that decapitation with a slaughtering knife was the rule in both the horse and the human sacrifice in earlier times. I suspect that this was originally the case with Satyavat as well, as he gets his lethal headache⁴⁰⁵ while chopping wood with an axe (*paraśu, kuṭhāra*), which even figures among the objects of worship in the *sāvitrī-vrata*. Several inscribed axe-heads, which for this reason are likely to have had a ritual function,⁴⁰⁶ are known from the Indus Civilization.

In the Vetāla story, the vampire challenges the king to answer his riddling questions which require knowledge and wit: if he does know the answer but does not say it, his head will burst and fly off in a hundred pieces. Michael Witzel (1987), without referring to the Vetāla story, has collected many passages from the Brāhmaṇa and Upaniṣad texts where similar challenges are made, with the threat that the head of the person challenged will burst into seven pieces if he loses the verbal contest and does not know the answer. The context often is a public verbal contest concerning the ultimate reality (*brahmodya*), arranged by a king, with a considerable prize for the winner: it could be a thousand cows with gold pieces attached to their horns.

⁴⁰⁴ A śloka quoted in Chāndogya-Upaniṣad 8.6.6 and Kaṭha-Upaniṣad 6.16 speaks of *nāḍīs* 'arteries' that are supposed to lead from the heart to the sun and immortality; it represents an early phase of the physiological speculation of the Kuṇḍalinī Yoga and Tantrism (cf. Horsch 1966: 182f.). It seems to me that the somewhat strange conception of *nāḍīs* comes from the air-roots of the banyan which in the Ṛgveda are equated with the sun's rays of light and said to be attached to living beings (Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā 1.24.7: *abudhne rājā varuṇo vanasyordhvaṃ stūpaṃ dadate pūṭadakṣaḥ / nīcīnāḥ sthur upari budhna eṣām asme antar nihitāḥ ketavaḥ syuḥ*). Elsewhere the word *raśmi* 'string, rope, cord' is used of the sun's rays; the invisible cords that bind the heavenly bodies to the pole star, called *vāta-raśmi*, appear to refer to the air-roots of the cosmic banyan (cf. Section 30). The Sanskrit word *nāḍī* could come from the Dravidian root **nāl* 'to hang, be suspended, hang oneself', whence e.g. Malayalam *nāli* 'a hanging tendril of the pepper or betel vine' (Burrow & Emeneau 1984: 252, no. 2912); cf. the hanging air-roots of the banyan as a means to commit suicide by hanging oneself.

⁴⁰⁵ Witzel (1987: 376) has discussed the possible connection of the 'splitting headache' that Indra feels according to the Vādhūla-Brāhmaṇa (4.75: *śiro me rujatīva*) with the splitting of the head, i.e. smashing it with a metal hammer. Cf. Satyavat after his revival in Mahābhārata 3.281.80: *śirorujā nivṛttā me...*

⁴⁰⁶ In Ugarit, in Syria, c. 1500 BC, inscriptions written on the axe heads can be read: 'the axe of the high priest', or, 'belonging to the high priest'.

The reality behind the threat is explained by the early Buddhist tales written in Pali. When the Buddha challenges the young Ambaṭṭha, who pretends to be of high birth while in reality his ancestors were born of a slave girl, and the youth does not yield,

at that moment, the Yakṣa Vajrapāṇī ['who has the thunderbolt in his hand'], having taken a large metal hammer, was (appeared) above Ambaṭṭha in the air, (with the intention to kill him if he did not answer...)⁴⁰⁷

Then Ambaṭṭha out of fear publicly gives in.

Similar passages occur in the Veda. In Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa 1.46, one of the seasons, with a hammer in his hand comes down along a ray of light (*raśmi*, literally, 'rope') and asks a person a question: if he does not reply correctly, he smashes his head.⁴⁰⁸ In Ṛgveda 1.24.7, the air-roots of Varuṇa's cosmic banyan tree are referred to as 'rays of light' (*ketavaḥ*).⁴⁰⁹ Yakṣas and Gandharvas are supposed to live in fig trees.⁴¹⁰ During great folk festivals, such as that of the horse sacrifice (originally performed under the banyan tree, see below), these demigods were perhaps actually seen by people as coming down in flesh and blood along the air-roots to deliver their hammer blows and fetch those who thus were to become new Gandharvas and Vidyādhara. Maybe it was these acrobats and jugglers hired by the king for the festival who developed the Indian 'rope trick'.

In a longer story in the Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa (2.269-272), Yavakrī Saumastambhi was about to sleep with an Apsaras when her husband, a Gandharva with a metal hammer in hand approached to punish him.⁴¹¹ In expiation, Yavakrī was ordered to cut off the head of all living beings belonging to his father before the next sunrise.⁴¹² This episode calls for a detailed study, for it is remarkably similar to that of the 20th Vetāla story discussed below. Its context is the horse sacrifice, which originally took place under a fig tree (see sections 40-41). The horse sacrifices were

⁴⁰⁷ Witzel 1987: 381f. Dīgha-Nikāya 3.1.20: ...*tena kho pana samayena Vajirapāṇī yakkho mahantaṃ ayokūṭaṃ ādāya... ambaṭṭhassa māṇavassa upari vehāsaṭṭhito hoti.*

⁴⁰⁸ Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa 1.46: *taṃ ha rtūnām eko yaḥ kūṭahasto raśminā pratyavetya pṛcchati: ko 'si puruṣeti, sa kiṃ vidvān pravṛṅjyāt tasya ha praharati;* cf. Witzel 1987: 383f.

⁴⁰⁹ Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā 1.24.7: *abudhne rājā varuṇo vanasyordhvaṃ stūpaṃ dadate pūṭadaḥṣaḥ / nīcīnāḥ sthur upari budhna eṣām asme antar nihitāḥ ketavaḥ syuḥ //.* King Varuṇa is the 'night sun', and the air-roots of the banyan are his 'rays' fixed to the heavenly bodies and to living beings, as well as his 'nooses', with which he 'grasps' and punishes those who do not follow his cosmic law (*ṛta*), e.g. by speaking untruth (*anṛta*). See also above Section 30.

⁴¹⁰ Cf. e.g. Taittirīya-Saṃhitā 3.4.8.4: *naiyagrodha audumbara āśvatthaḥ plākṣa itūdhmo bhavanty ete vai gandharvāpsarasāṃ grhāḥ;* cf. also Macdonell 1897: 134.

⁴¹¹ Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa 2.269: *atha hedam evāyāḥkūṭahasto gandharvo 'bhivicakrame;* cf. Witzel 1987: 384.

⁴¹² Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa 2.271: *yad eva te kiṃ ca pitu svaṃ tasya sarvasya purā sūryasyodetoś śiraś chindhi.* One cannot help being reminded of Aśvatthāman's carnage in the camp of the sleeping Pāṇḍava army.

great public festivals, which attracted people from far and wide, and they included a lot of entertainment (cf. Horsch 1966: 20-22). The *brahmodya* competitions must have belonged to these entertainments, as indeed *brahmodyas* are performed by the priest as a part of the horse sacrifice itself (cf. Section 20). There must have been many victims whose heads were smashed beneath the fig trees, and they became Vidyādhara spirits living in those trees. The Gandharvas and Apsarases also living in the sacred fig trees, I believe, were the dead and 'resurrected' partners of the sacred marriage itself. The Gandharvas and Apsarases are generally known for their love affairs as well as for their skill in music and dance. It was musicians (*māgadha*, *sūta*) and courtesans (*puṃścalī*) who (as substitute victims) performed the leading parts in the 'sacred marriage' rites of the Veda (mahāvratā, vrātyastoma, lamented slaughterer of the horse in aśvamedha). The fig leaves make a sound ('music') even when there is practically no wind at all; this is also probably one reason why the fig trees were considered to be inhabited by spirits of the dead.

40. SACRED TREES, CAITYAS, CITIS AND STŪPAS

In the Buddhist Dhonasākhā-Jātaka (no. 353), a king who wanted to conquer the city of Taxila (in the northern Indus Valley) settled under a big banyan tree. His priest advised the king to sacrifice a thousand captured princes to the deity of that tree in order to obtain victory: 'And surrounding the tree with a rimmed circumference let us fill it with blood five inches deep. And so shall the victory soon be ours.' The tree of the Harappan 'fig-deity' seal seems to have a rimmed circumference – at least many other sacred trees shown on the moulded tablets from Harappa have a railing – and, beneath is an altar with a cut-off human head of a warrior (cf. fig. 2). It is not clear whether the deity inhabiting the tree in the Dhonasākhā-Jātaka is male or female. But in the Dummedha-Jātaka, people worship a *vaṭa-yakṣiṇī*, a goddess inhabiting the banyan tree, by sacrificing to it goats, cocks, pigs and other animals and by ornamenting the tree with the entrails and blood of the victims and offering it the flesh. They wish the Goddess to grant them children, honour and wealth.⁴¹³ In the *vaṭa-sāvittī-mahūsava* described by Rājaśekhara, human flesh was offered to the deities inhabiting the royal banyan tree (Section 3b).

Reference was here made to railings. In epic and Purāṇic texts, sacred trees provided with a platform are called *caitya-vṛkṣa* or *sthala-vṛkṣa*, and it is said that not even a leaf of them may be destroyed, as these trees (including all the fig trees, śamī, and many other trees) are the abodes of gods and demons, snake deities (*nāga*) and divine maidens (*apsaras*).⁴¹⁴ The location of the banyan tree of the

⁴¹³ Cf. Dubey 1986: 47.

⁴¹⁴ Cf. Dubey 1986: 47; Coomaraswamy 1929-31; Kane 1941: 895; Mahābhārata 12.69.42: *caityānāṃ sarvathā tyājyam api patrasya pātanam*.

Vetāla story in a cemetery (*śmaśāna*)⁴¹⁵ and the connection of the banyan with Yama, the god of death, suggests that the funeral monument of the Vedic texts, called *śmaśāna-citi* 'funeral pile' (of bricks)⁴¹⁶ is of the same origin as the *caityas* associated with the sacred trees. According to Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 13.8.1.5,

the people who are godly make their burial-places four-cornered, whilst those who are of Asura nature, the Easterners and others, (make them) round (transl. Eggeling 1882-1900, V: 423f.).⁴¹⁷

The 'easterners' are the Magadhans, and their funeral monuments are the prototypes of the round Buddhist stūpas. In Ṛgveda 1.24.7, the word *stūpa* is used of the crown of Varuṇa's heavenly banyan tree.⁴¹⁸ In the lowest level of the Vedic *agni-citi* were buried the heads of five sacrificed victims, including a man and horse.

The original site of the Vedic horse sacrifice seems to have been under the aśvattha tree, i.e. the sacred pipal tree (*Ficus religiosa*), which got its name from the fact that the horse (*aśva*) was standing (*sthā-*) under it. The sacrificial horse was originally decapitated like the creator god Prajāpati, whose fifth head cut off by Śiva is linked in Purāṇic myths with the upwards direction and the bright glow of the sun. Aśvattha originates from the head of the creator god Prajāpati in his horse shape:

Prajāpati having created creatures understood that he was emptied. He became a horse [*aśva-*] and continued standing [*sthā-*] for a year with his face downwards placed on the earth. From his head an aśvattha (tree) broke forth. That is why an aśvattha has this name and why it belongs to the sphere of sacrificial worship. For it is of Prajāpati's nature. (Mairāyaṇī-Saṃhitā 1.6.12: 106.11.)⁴¹⁹

In the ritual for obtaining reliable horses (*dhruvāśvakalpa*),⁴²⁰ one should prepare a *vedi* (an altar covered with sacrificial grass) under an aśvattha tree or a banyan tree (*nyagrodha*) (Mānava-Gṛhyasūtra 2.6.4). The banyan tree belongs to Varuṇa, and Varuṇa was (before Prajāpati) the god to whom the (sacrificial) horse belonged. Moreover, both the banyan and the pipal tree are supposed to be 'eternal' (*akṣaya*) and grow in heaven.

415 Cf. also the 'cemetery scene' (*masānāhīnaa = śmaśānābhīnaya*) in the Vaḍasāvītīmāhūsava of the Karpūramañjarī (Section 3b).

416 Mādri's funeral pyre that she ascended as a satī is called *citāgni* in the Mahābhārata (1.95.65), and in the frame story of the Vetāla-Pañcaviṃśatikā, Somadeva (KSS 75.42) speaks of 'funeral fires' in the cemetery as *citānala*.

417 Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 13.8.1.5: ...*yā daivyaḥ prajāś catuḥsrakṭīni tāḥ śmaśānāni kurvate 'tha yā āsuryaḥ prācyās tvad ye tvat parimaṇḍalāni* (scil. *śmaśānāni kurvate*)...

418 Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā 1.24.7: *abudhne rājā varuṇo vanasyordhvaṃ stūpaṃ dadate pūதாக্ৰাḥ / nīcīnāḥ sthur upari budhna eṣām asme antar nihitāḥ ketavaḥ syuḥ ||*.

419 Cf. Gonda 1986: 47.

420 For this rite, see Gonda 1980: 110 and 426 with further references.

A fig tree occupies an important position in the ordinary Vedic Soma sacrifice, too. The central pillar of the sitting hall (*sadas*) of a soma sacrifice is to be made of udumbara wood (*Ficus glomerata*). In the myth of Brahmā's sacrifice at Puṣkara, *Audumbarī* plays a prominent role; here she is personified as the daughter of a Sāmaveda singer, who in her previous life was the daughter of a Gandharva (Skanda-Purāṇa 6.188.6ff.). The *audumbarī* pillar has to be raised by Sāmaveda singers, while the Adhvaryu digs the pit for it.

He then marks off the pit with, 'Herewith I cut off the necks of the Rakshas!', for the spade is the thunderbolt: it is with the thunderbolt that he cuts off the necks of the evil spirits (Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 3.6.1.5, transl. Eggeling 1885, II: 141f.)

This looks like a reminiscence of an udumbara tree that once was the site of a human sacrifice. Like the banyan tree and the pipal tree, it is associated with fertility and Prajāpati.

41. CONSUMMATION OF MARRIAGE AND HUMAN SACRIFICE UNDER A FIG TREE

The 20th story in the Vetāla-Pañcaviṃśatikā (Somadeva's Kathāsaritsāgara, taraṅga 94) also seems highly important for the interpretation of the legend of Sāvitrī (who is referred to by name in it). It strongly suggests that sacred fig trees used to be the places where the sacred marriage ritual with its sacrifice of the groom was performed. In Śākala, Sāvitrī's hometown, the sacred banyan tree stood just outside the royal place in the market square (cf. Section 14), where large crowds would have gathered to watch the main event of the yearly festival calendar. Why? Because the banyan was the abode of the deity to whom that human sacrifice was due, particularly the goddess of love and war (in the case of Śākala: Sāvitrī), and the god of death (her incestuous father-husband).

A king of Citrakūṭa called Candrāvaloka 'moon's look', or 'looking like the moon' goes on a hunting expedition, where he gets lost in pursuit of game, and finally comes to a lovely lotus pond. After letting his horse drink water and having bathed it and tethered it in the shade of a tree, he himself takes a bath, drinks water and rests. Then he looks around and sees a beautiful girl with her hair made into a *jaṭā* and wearing the bark dress of forest ascetics. Hit by Love's flower arrow he wonders 'Who is this? Is it perhaps Sāvitrī who has come to take a bath in the pond?'⁴²¹

⁴²¹ KSS 94 (Vetāla 20).17-21: *tatra gatvā ca turagaṃ viparyāṇopavartitam | snātapītaṃ tarucchāyābaddhaṃ dattatṛṇotkaram || kṛtvā svayaṃ kṛtasnātaḥ pītāmbur galitāśramaḥ | ramyeṣu tat pradēṣeṣu dadau dṛṣṭim itas tataḥ || ekatra cāśokataror adhastān muni-kanyakām | āmuktapuṣpābharaṇām valkalāṃśukaśobhinīm || mugdhābaddhajaṭājūṭasa-viṣeṣamanoramām | sakhīdvitīyām āścaryarūpām rājā dadarśa saḥ || acintayac ca puṣpeṣoḥ*

As the king approaches the girl, she wonders: 'Who is this beautiful man who has come to this forest, is it a Siddha or a "Carrier of wisdom" (*vidyādhara*)...' Her companion tells the king that she is the daughter of the great sage Kaṇva and the heavenly nymph (*apsaras*) Menakā, called Indīvarabhā 'radiance of the blue lotus'. The king rides to the hermitage, finding there Sage Kaṇva surrounded by hermits like the moon surrounded by the planets. Falling at his feet, the king greets the sage, who receives him hospitably and asks him to desist from harming living beings, who are all afraid of death. The king promises to give up hunting, and the sage is satisfied and grants him a boon. The king asks for Kaṇva's daughter, and they are married.⁴²²

Immediately after the marriage the king starts his journey back home on horseback together with his newly wedded wife. They spend the night in the forest near a pond (*vāpī*)⁴²³ under an *aśvattha* tree (*aśvatthapādapa*), consummating their marriage upon a bed of flowers. Their love-making is described at length.⁴²⁴

In the morning the king gets up from the bed and wants to continue the journey immediately after the dawn worship (*sāndhya*) is over, as is the rule. The sun throws up the tip (*agra*)⁴²⁵ of its disk (*maṇḍala*) with outstretched hands/rays, his lustre quite ruddy as if from anger: the sun seems to want to kill the lord of the night (the moon), from whom a portion of his lotus-like lustre had been stolen during the night and who as if pale from fear resorts to the cave in the mountain of (the sun's and moon's) setting.⁴²⁶

Just at that moment a Brahmin ogre⁴²⁷ unexpectedly makes his appearance. He has reddish-brown hair that gleams like lightning but is otherwise black like col-

patitaḥ śaragocare / keyaṃ syāt sarasi snātum sāvitrī kiṃ svid āgatā //... - Cf. this description of the forest hermit's daughter (wearing a jaṭā and compared to Sāvitrī) to my comments on Jaṭilā/Arundhatī in Section 30.

422 KSS 94 (Vetāla 20), 24-48.

423 The pond, which also figures in one version of the Sāvitrī legend, is an essential part of the cluster of myths and rituals associated with the 'sacred marriage' of the new year, but I must refrain from discussing this topic here.

424 KSS 94 (Vetāla 20).49-64.

425 This (tip of the sun's rising disk) seems to be the most original context in which we have to understand the Sanskrit word *agra*, 'tip, beginning', which is used in the Brāhmaṇa texts over and over again in stories of how Prajāpati created the world, and especially Agni, Fire, who is the first of beings. Cf. e.g. Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 2.2.4.2: 'He thus generated him first (*agre*) of the gods; and therefore (he is called) Agni, for *agni* (they say) is the same as *agri*. He, being generated, went forth as the first (*pūrva*); for of him who goes first, they say that he goes at the head (*agre*). Such, ten, is the origin and nature of that Agni.' (Transl. Eggeling 1882-1900, I: 323.)

426 KSS 94 (Vetāla 20).65-67: *prātaś ca muktaśayanaḥ sām̐dhyasyānantaraṃ vidheḥ / svasainyāvāptaye yātum unmukho 'bhūd vadhūsakhaḥ // tāvac ca naktam̐ luptābdakhaṇḍaśobham̐ niśāpatim / bhīyevāstādrikuharapralīnaṃ dhvastatejasam // hantukāma iva krodhād ātāmratararociṣi / prasāritakarotkṣiptamaṇḍalāgre vivasvati //*

427 *Brahma-rākṣasa* is the demoniacal spirit of a Brahmin who has suffered a violent death.

lyrium and resembles the (doomsday) cloud of death. His crest is ornamented with a garland of entrails, he wears a sacrificial thread made of (human) hair, and is devouring the flesh of a human head and drinking blood from a (human) skull. He releases a terrifying horse-laugh and angrily vomits fire from his mouth. He has terrible fangs or tusks. Menacingly, he addresses the king, telling that he is a Brahmanical ogre called Jvālāmukha 'flame-mouthed', and that this aśvattha tree is his abode. It has now been violated by the king and his wife, who will have to bear the consequences of their night of indecency. The ogre says he will split up the king, eat his heart and drink his blood. The king sees that the terrible ogre cannot be killed and that his wife quivers. Out of fear he artfully replies that he has acted unknowingly and asks for forgiveness, promising a substitute human victim for the ogre. The ogre agrees on the condition that the king within seven days procures a Brahmin boy who is about seven years old, and who out of his own free will agrees to give himself as a substitute offering for the king, and whose mother and father will agree to hold his hands and feet when he is laid down upon the ground and sacrificed with a strike of the sword by the king himself. In that case alone will the king be pardoned for his disrespect; otherwise he and his whole retinue will be destroyed at once. The king meekly agrees, and the ogre disappears instantly.⁴²⁸

The king returns to his palace, and reveals the problem to his minister. The clever minister has a golden image made of an approximately seven-year old boy, ornamented with jewels. He lets this image be shown in all towns, villages and herdsmen's camping places in the country, accompanied by public proclaimers who make the following announcement: 'The king will give this image together with one hundred villages to the parents of an approximately seven-year old boy of a resolute character who out of his own will is ready to give himself as an offering to a Brahmin ogre for the benefit of all beings, with the permission of his parents, who will agree to hold his hands and feet when he is being killed.' In one Brahmin's

⁴²⁸ KSS 94 (Vetāla 20).68-82: *akasmāj ājaḡāmātra vidyutpiṅgaśiroruhaḡ / kajjalaśyāmalaḡ kālameghābho brahmarākṡasaḡ // antramālākṡtotaṅsaḡ keśayajñopavītabhṡ / khādan naraśiromāṅsaḡ kapālena pibann asṡk // so 'ṡṡahāsaḡ vimucyograḡ mukhenāḡniḡ vaman krudhā / daḡṡṡrākārālo rājānaḡ bhartsayan nijagāda tam // pāpa jvālāmukhaḡ nāma viddhi māḡ brahmarākṡasam / nivāsaś caīṡa me 'śvattho vedair (read: devair?) api na laḡghyate // so 'yaḡ tvayā samākramya paribhuktaḡ striyā saha / rātricaryāḡgatasyādyā tad bhūṅkṡvāvinayāt phalam // eṡo 'haḡ te durācāra kāḡopahatacetasah / utpātya ḡṡdayaḡ bhokṡye pāsyāmy eva ca śoṅitam // tac chrutvaīva tathā ghorāḡ tam avadhyaḡ avekṡya ca / trastāḡganah savinayaḡ bhayāt pratyabravīn nṡpaḡ // ajānatāparāddhaḡ yan mayā te tat kṡamasva me / tavāham āśrame hy asminn atithiḡ śaraṅāśritaḡ // dāsyāmi cepsitaḡ tubhyaḡ āñīya puruṡaḡ paśum / yena te bhavitā trṡtis tat prasīda krudhaḡ tyaja // iti rājño vacah śrutvā śāntah sa brahmarākṡasaḡ / astu ko doṡa ity antar vicintyaivam abhāṡata // yaḡ saptavarṡadeśyo 'pi mahāśattvo vivekavān / tvadarthe svecchayātmānaḡ dadyād brāhmaṅaputraḡ // hanyamānaḡ ca yaḡ mātā hastayoḡ pādayoḡ pitā / avaṡṡbhyaṡtisudṡṡhaḡ saḡniveśya mahītale // tāṡṡsaḡ puruṡaḡ mahyaḡ upahārikaroṡi cet / svayaḡ khaḡḡaprahāreṅa hatvā saptadināntare // tat te kṡamiṡye nyakkāram anyathā tu mahipate / sadyo vināśayiṡyāmi tvām ahaḡ saparicchadam // śrutvaitat sa bhayād rājā pratipede tatheti tat / tiro babhūva ca brahmarākṡasaḡ so 'pi tatkṡaṅam //*

settlement one seven-year old boy, very resolute and courageous and having a beautiful appearance, who from early childhood has had the good of other persons as his main objective, hears the announcement and succeeds in getting his parents' agreement to his decision for self-sacrifice.

The boy and his parents are taken to Citrakūṭa. There the boy is decorated with garlands and with an ornamental (forehead) mark made with ointments, lifted on an elephant, and paraded to the abode of the Brahmin ogre. There a circle (*maṇḍala*) is drawn beside the *aśvattha* tree. The king's chief priest performs the usual ritual and worship and lights the sacrificial fire. Releasing a horse-laugh, the terrible-looking Brahmanical ogre Jvālāmukha appears, reciting Veda, intoxicated with blood and spirituous liquor, every now and then yawning and snorting, with flaming eyes and making the world dark with the shade of his body. The king announces to the ogre that he has brought a human victim for him, and asks him to receive this offering performed according to the rules. At the moment when the ogre, licking the corners of his mouth, looks at the boy,⁴²⁹ the boy's parents take hold of his hands and feet, and the king draws out his sword in order to kill him, the boy laughs. Why? This is the riddling question now asked by the vampire.

Here the couple can be directly compared to Princess Sāvitrī and Prince Satyavat, and Goddess Sāvitrī and King Soma (the moon), the prototypal couple of the marriage hymn. The wife is expressly compared to Sāvitrī in the story, and the king is equated with the moon through his name. In the Sāvitrī legend, Satyavat and Sāvitrī are in the forest, and Satyavat dies under a banyan tree, with his head in the lap of Sāvitrī, exactly one year after their wedding, but Satyavat escapes death through the intervention of his wife. In this passage, the king and his wife consummate their marriage beneath an *aśvattha* tree, after which the king nearly escapes from death.

The frightened king is nearly killed by a Brahmin ogre with a brownish-red hair but a black body, who appears suddenly at the moment of sunrise.⁴³⁰ The ogre is later said to recite the Veda. This is a clear reference to the Brahman in the rising sun (*Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka* 2.2) and to the sunrise as the very moment when the Brahmins have to do their *brahma-yajña* by reciting the Veda (cf. sections 9-10).⁴³¹

⁴²⁹ A later addition to the story inspired by the Buddhist bodhisattva ideal has been inserted at this juncture. The Brahmin youth (*kumāra*), who is a 'great being' (*mahāsattva*), now decides to relinquish the heaven (*svarga*) and release (*mokṣa*) that he has earned with this good deed (*sukṛtam*) of giving his own body, and instead he wants to have a body in birth after birth (that will enable him to act) for the sake of others. When he makes this decision, the sky is filled with flying chariots of gods who come in hosts and release a rain of flowers upon him.

⁴³⁰ The description of the Brahmin ogre is very similar to that of Yama in the Sāvitrī legend (Section 2); in the *Bhaviṣyottara-Purāṇa* Yama is even said to be 'exactly like the sun that has just arisen' (*sākṣāt sūryam ivoditam*).

⁴³¹ In Vedic texts Agni, the god of fire in whom the sun's essence is during the night, is Death, who tries to eat his father Prajāpati, but Prajāpati makes the sun out of himself, offers it and is saved from death. See above Section 16. The description given here, ruddy hair and black

These identities are also clearly spelled out in the simultaneous description of the cruelty of the of the rising sun, tawny-coloured out of anger, and wishing to kill the moon who is pale with fear. In fact, the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa explicitly identifies the man (*puṛuṣa*) in the circle (*maṇḍala*) of the sun with the death (*mṛtyu*).⁴³²

Citrakūṭa, 'the wonderful peak', where the story is set, is the famous sacred hill on the Basuni river in the Bandah District of Bundelkhand in Uttar Pradesh, modern Citrakote or Catarkot. This was the first place where the exiled Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa settled, and it is crowded by temples built by worshippers of Rāma.⁴³³ In the present context this location of the story is very significant, for Vālmiki's epic is the earliest testimony of the famous 'eternal banyan tree' of Prayāga.⁴³⁴ When Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa visited Bharadvāja's hermitage at Prayāga on their way to Citrakūṭa, the sage explained to them the route they should take (Rāmāyaṇa 2.49):

3. 'Now, when you reach the swift-flowing Kālindī [=Yamunā], the daughter of the sun, make a raft there and cross the river. 4. There you will come upon a great banyan tree with lush green leaves, called Śyāma. It has grown dense with its many trunks and is the haunt of perfected beings.⁴³⁵ 5. Two miles beyond it, Rāma, you will see a dark thicket, a mixture of flame-trees, jujubes, and Yamunā bamboo. 6. That is the way to Citrakūṭa. I have traveled it many times, for it is pleasant and easy, and quite safe from forest fires.' After describing the way to them, the great seer turned back. (Transl. Pollock 1986: 189.)

Sītā, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa followed his advice:

11. Then on the raft they crossed the Yamunā, daughter of the sun, a swift-flowing, wave-wreathed river with trees growing thick along her banks. 12. Once across they abandoned the raft, and setting out from the Yamunā forest they reached Śyāma, the cool, green-leafed banyan tree. 13. 'O that I may see Kausalyā again, and glorious Sumitrā.' Such was the wish Sītā made as she walked around the tree, hands cupped in reverence. 14. Proceeding two miles further... (Transl. Pollock 1986: 190.)⁴³⁶

body (coals, darkness of night) fits also Agni, who, as Death, is often equated with Rudra, described as *nīla-lohita* 'red and dark blue'. The brownish-red hair is likely to be the ruddy rays of the raising sun, but perhaps also the reddish aerial roots of the banyan, the tree of Death (cf. above, note 306).

⁴³² Cf. Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 2.3.3.7: *eṣa eva mṛtyuḥ / ya eṣa (sūryaḥ) tapati*; 10.5.2.3: *sa eṣa eva mṛtyuḥ / ya eṣa etasmin maṇḍale puruṣaḥ...*; cf. Horsch 1966: 135.

⁴³³ Cf. Awasthi 1992: 71; Monier-Williams 1899: 396b.

⁴³⁴ Cf. Dubey 1986: 49-53.

⁴³⁵ Rāmāyaṇa 2.49.3-4: *athāsādyā tu kālindīm śiḅhrasrotasamāpagām / tatra yūyaṃ plavaṃ kṛtvā taratāṃśumatīm nadīm // tato nyagrodham āsādyā mahāntaṃ haritacchadam / vivṛddhaṃ bahubhir vṛkṣaiḥ śyāmaṃ siddhopasevitam.*

⁴³⁶ Rāmāyaṇa 2.49.12-13: *te tīrṇāḥ plavam utsṛjya prasthāya yamunāvanāt / śyāmaṃ nyagrodham āseduḥ śītalaṃ haritacchadam // kausalyāṃ caiva paśyeyaṃ sumitrāṃ ca yaśasvinīm / iti sītāñjaliṃ kṛtvā paryagacchad vanaspatim //* – In the southern recension (2.55.23-25), Sītā pays obeisance to the banyan and prays that her husband shall fulfil his vow (this she did also while addressing a prayer to the Yamunā river, 2.55.19): *te tīrṇāḥ plavam utsṛjya prasthāya yamunāvanāt / śyāmaṃ nyagrodham āseduḥ śītalaṃ harita-*

Dubey (1986: 49-50) has tried to locate this banyan on the basis of the hints given by the southern recension of the Rāmāyaṇa:⁴³⁷ Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa should turn to the right from the confluence of the Gaṅgā and Yamunā and follow the bank of the Yamunā upstream towards the west some distance until coming to an old and much frequented route. According to Dubey this is likely to be the modern Kaka-rahā ghāṭ 'in the Mīrapura locality where the bank of the Yamunā is fairly firm and solid forming a ghāṭa at this spot in ancient times.' Here they should cross the river, reaching the banyan tree called 'Black' or 'Dark', which Sītā should worship with folded hands, making a wish.

In Kālidāsa's Raghuvamśa (13.53), Rāma on his journey back from Laṅkā to Ayodhyā points out this tree to Sītā:

This is the same banyan tree, known by the name of Śyāma, that was entreated by you formerly. Covered with fruits it resembles [a] heap of emeralds intermixed with rubies. (Transl. Dubey 1986: 53.)⁴³⁸

Bhavabhūti in his Uttaraṛāmacarita (c. 8th century)⁴³⁹ and Murārimiśra in his Anargharāghava (9th-10th century)⁴⁴⁰ make a similar reference.

It seems quite probable to me that in the course of time, the banyan tree has changed into an aśvattha tree in the Vetāla story, for the ogre inhabiting this tree is a *brahma-rākṣasa*, and therefore represents Brahmā, the husband of Goddess Sāvitrī, who according to Skanda-Purāṇa dwells near the 'eternal banyan tree' at Prayāga (cf. Section 36).

cchadam / nyagrodham tam upāgama (Dubey: *samupagamyā*) *vaidehī vākyam abravīt* (Dubey: *cābhayavandata*) // *namas te 'stu mahāvṛkṣa pārayen me patir vratam / kausalyāṃ caiva paśyemaṃ* (Dubey: *paśyema*) *sumitrāṃ ca yaśasvinīm // iti sītāñjalim kṛtvā paryagacchad vanaspatim //*. Cf. Dubey 1986: 49f.

437 Rāmāyaṇa (ed. Krishnacharya 1905) 2.55.4-10 (with variants appearing in Dubey's quotations): *gaṅgāyamunayoḥ sandhim āsādy manuḥjarābhau / kālindīm anugacchetāṃ nadīm paścānmukhāsritām // athāsādy tu kālindīm śiḅhrasrotasam āpagām / tasyās tīrtham pracaritam purāṇam prekṣya rāghavau // tatra yūyam plavam kṛtvā taratāṃśu-matīm nadīm / tato nyagrodham āsādy mahāntam haritacchadam // vivṛddham* (Dubey: *parītam*) *bahubhir vṛkṣaiḥ śyāmaṃ siddhopasevitam / tasmīn sītāñjalim kṛtvā prayujjītāśiṣaḥ śivāḥ* (Dubey: *prayujjītāśiṣām kriyām*) // *samāsādy tu* (Dubey: *ca*) *tam vṛkṣam vased vātikrameta vā / krośamātram tato gatvā nilam drakṣyatha kānanam // palāśabadarīmīśram rāmyam vaṃśaiś ca yāmunaiḥ / sa panthāś citrakūṭasya gataḥ subahuśo mayā // rāmyo mārdayuktaś ca vanadāvair vivarjitaḥ / iti panthānam āvedya maharṣiḥ samnyavartata //*.

438 Kālidāsa, Raghuvamśa 13.53: *tvayā purastād upayācito yaḥ so 'yam vaṭaḥ śyāma iti pratītaḥ / rāsir mañinām iva gāruḍānām sapadmarāgaḥ phalito vibhāti //*.

439 Bhavabhūti, Uttaraṛāmacarita, Act I, p. 16 (Lakṣmaṇa speaks): *ayam asau bharadvājaveditaś citrakūṭayāyini vartmani vanaspatiḥ kālindītaḥ vaṭaḥ śyāmo nāma* (quoted from Dubey 1986: 53, n. 54).

440 Murārimiśra, Anargharāghava, Act 7, verse 129: *śyāmo nāma vaṭaḥ so 'yam etasyādbhuta-karmaṇaḥ / chāyām apy adhvīstavyaiḥ padaṃ jyotir niṣevyate //* (quoted from Dubey 1986: 53, n. 55).

The fact that the Brahmin ogre demands a seven-year old Brahmin boy as the preferred victim appears to have some relationship with the equation that the Vedic texts make between the Brahmin teacher of the Veda and the death in connection with the initiation of Brahmin boys (who are then about seven years old, cf. Section 8). Perhaps there was a regular custom of sacrificing yearly one such boy. This is suggested also by the Naciketas story of the Kaṭha-Upaniṣad. The boy's own father gives him to Death, and Naciketas actually arrives at Death's house (i.e. dies). He spends there three nights, and receives boons from Death, as does Sāvitṛī (who follows her husband into death). The Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa connects both Naciketas and Sāvitṛī with a specific brick altar (*cayana, citi*), which has a relationship with the funeral monument (Section 40).

42. ROHITA, RUDRA AND THE HUMAN SACRIFICE

In the above-related 20th story of the Vetāla-Pañcaviṃśatikā, a Brahmin boy is bought to become a substitute victim for a king, and his parents have to participate in his sacrifice. We have a close parallel to this story in the almost two thousand years earlier Śunaḥśepa legend⁴⁴¹ of the Vedic texts. The Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa (7.13-18) tells the Śunaḥśepa legend in connection with the royal consecration (*rājasūya*), which is 'Varuṇa's sacrifice'. It is implied as early as Rgveda 1.24-25, where reference is made to the heavenly banyan tree of King Varuṇa.

Śunaḥśepa is a Brahmin boy who is bought for 1000 cows as a substitute victim by Rohita. It is Rohita himself who was originally to be the victim of a human sacrifice. Rohita is the first-born son of King Hariścandra ('yellow moon'), who in his childlessness prays to God Varuṇa for offspring, promising in return to sacrifice his first-born son to Varuṇa. (Why should Varuṇa be prayed to for a son? This implies, of course, that Varuṇa is a god of fertility who can grant offspring. One still much-employed and age-old method of obtaining offspring in India is to pray for children to the sacred fig trees.⁴⁴² The banyan fig plays a major role in Vedic rituals aiming at the birth of a male child,⁴⁴³ and the banyan is Varuṇa's tree.) In spite of Varuṇa's repeated demands, Hariścandra defers this sacrifice, obtaining the god's permission. Finally Rohita becomes sixteen years old⁴⁴⁴ and is invested with armour. He is now a grown-up warrior at the age of marriage. At this moment

⁴⁴¹ For the Śunaḥśepa legend, see Horsch 1966: 78ff. with further literature.

⁴⁴² Many examples especially from the Buddhist literature are cited in Coomaraswamy 1928-31.

⁴⁴³ See Gonda 1980: 369, with copious references.

⁴⁴⁴ Warriors come of age at sixteen (cf. Hopkins 1889: 53f.), which is also said to be the age of Skanda, the god of war, an eternal youth. It seems that in most ancient times, a virginal youth who had reached this age of marriage, personified Rohita/Rudra/Skanda in a sacred marriage ritual in which he was decapitated. Cf. below my remarks on Vādhūla-Śrautasūtra 11.21.

Hariścandra tells his son that he will be sacrificed, but Rohita refuses to be a victim, takes his arms (bow and arrows) and flees to the forest. As King Hariścandra does not keep his promise, in punishment Varuṇa inflicts him with dropsy (the disease of the moon!). Just as Hariścandra was supposed to sacrifice his own son Rohita, so was Śunaḥṣepa's father paid to slaughter his own son. This is connected with the idea of paternal and filial affinity prevailing between the sun and Agni, the fire as the night form of the sun, clearest expressed in the Vedic texts dealing with the agnihotra (cf. Section 16).⁴⁴⁵

The war-god Skanda is supposed to be eternally unmarried and chaste (*brahmacārin*) and eternally sixteen years old, the ideal age for a warrior. In the seventh chapter of the Chāndogya-Upaniṣad, Skanda is called Sanatkumāra 'eternal youth'.⁴⁴⁶ It seems that this ideal was lived up to in a regular yearly ritual. Each year a new virginal youth was initiated: he had to slaughter the male partner in the sacred marriage ritual, his own predecessor, whose death was lamented, but who was at the very moment of his death 'resurrected' in two ways. He lived on in his own seed, which he had emitted in the chief queen.⁴⁴⁷ Secondly, he was 'resurrected' in the form of his successor, who again was 16 years old, and was to lead the 'divine army' for one year.⁴⁴⁸ While leading the army, he had to be chaste and accumulate generative power for the sacred marriage.⁴⁴⁹ In the epics and Purāṇas, Sanatkumāra is the son of the creator god Brahmā; he is also called *pitāmahasuta*

⁴⁴⁵ In the myth where Rudra/Śiva cuts off the head of Brahmā/Prajāpati, the (instantly generated) son (the rising sun) kills his own father (the moon/the night/the 'night sun', Varuṇa). The reason is the father's incestuous union with his own daughter (the dawn/Sāvitrī): I have argued that the father, Prajāpati, of this myth is a multiform of the Buffalo Demon, the lover-enemy of the 'pure' Goddess Durgā (Parpola 1992). In the Śunaḥṣepa legend, it is conversely the father who kills the son. Logically the former myth could symbolize the 'death' of the 'old year/sun' at the vernal equinox, while the latter myth could symbolize the 'death' of the 'young sun' at the autumnal equinox. However, the autumnal festival of Durgā can also be understood as the sun's victory over the dark rainclouds.

⁴⁴⁶ Chāndogya-Upaniṣad 7.26.2 explicitly states of Sanatkumāra: 'They call him Skanda'. Cf. Horsch 1966: 437.

⁴⁴⁷ In the Śunaḥṣepa legend, which is associated with the human sacrifice, fertilization is equated with rebirth, for in this act of procreation, man is supposed to enter the womb of his wife in the form of seed and to be reborn as his own son: this, O mortals, is your immortality! Incest, too, gets its motivation in this connection. Cf. the pregnant ancient *gāthās* in Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa 7.13.9-13 (Horsch 1966: 82-85): *patir jāyām praviśati garbho bhūtvā sa mātaram / tasyām punar navo bhūtvā daśame māsi jāyate // taj jāyā jāyā bhavati yad asyām jāyate punaḥ / ābhūtir eṣābhūtir bījam etan nidhīyate // devāś caitām ṛṣayaś ca tejaḥ samabharan mahat / devā manuṣyān abruvann eṣā vo janani punaḥ // nāputrasya loko 'stīti tat sarve paśavo viduḥ / tasmāt tu putro mātaram svasāram cādhirohati //*. Cf. also the seed emitted by the dying sun/fire in the eternal rotation of the agnihotra (cf. Section 16).

⁴⁴⁸ In the Sāvitrī legend it was known in advance that Satyavat would die when exactly one year had passed since his marriage. Another similar case is the legend of Purūravas and Urvaśī, which was identified as a myth of human sacrifice by D. D. Kosambi.

⁴⁴⁹ On the accumulation of generative power, cf. Hara 1970; Bailey 1983: 207f.

(Mahābhārata 9.45.85) and *brahmaputra* (Kūrma-Purāṇa 1.16.3).⁴⁵⁰ More specifically, Rudra, Skanda and Sanatkumāra were born of Brahmā's anger (i.e. they were violent gods of war), and Skanda and Sanatkumāra remained chaste.⁴⁵¹ This connection of Brahmā and Sanatkumāra must be quite ancient, because in early Buddhist texts *gāthās* (that can be compared to the proto-epic *gāthās* of the Brāhmaṇa texts) are often proclaimed by Brahmā Sanatkumāra.⁴⁵² This warrior aspect of Brahmā seems to survive in the coastal region of Karnataka in South India, where a deity called Brahmadeva is depicted in sculpture in human shape, riding a horse and holding a sword in his right hand.⁴⁵³

When Rohita roams in the forest with his bow and arrows (undoubtedly as a looter, a Vrātya, posing riddling questions, *brahmodya*), he is incited by God Indra to wander: *cara! cara!* The root *car-* recurs many times in the old *gāthās* of Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa 7.15.1-5, and Horsch (1966: 87-90) has in this connection referred to the Carakas, wandering mendicants.⁴⁵⁴ I would like to connect the wandering of Rohita with the one-year period of chastity spent by the Brahmaputra or Sanatkumāra (in the above sense) with the term *brahmacarya*, which in addition to 'studentship, study of the Veda',⁴⁵⁵ means 'chastity'. Chastity as a means to generate creative power is close to *tapas* 'heat, asceticism'. The sun, which Rohita symbolizes, both 'wanders' and 'is hot', besides being 'ruddy' like the mendicant wanderers and the Brahmanical students, who are all dressed in orange or red

⁴⁵⁰ Cf. Bailey 1983: 122f.; Sørensen 1904-25: 615.

⁴⁵¹ Harivaṁśa 1.1.25-33: '... Wishing to emit that form of creation called *prajāpati*, he of great splendour, emitted the seven mind-born sons. These were called Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu and Vasiṣṭha... . After that, Brahmā again emitted Rudra from his own anger, then the sage Sanatkumāra, first born of the ancients. These seven and Rudra propagated creatures, O Bharata, but Skanda and Sanatkumāra abstained, restraining their fiery energy.' (Transl. Bailey 1983: 62; he adds the following in note 23: Cf. Śiva-Purāṇa 5.29.2-28; Agni-Purāṇa 17.6-17. Very similar is Manu-Smṛti 1.1-50; Chāndogya-Upaniṣad 3.19.1-4.)

⁴⁵² Cf. Horsch 1966: 368f., citing Dīgha-Nikāya I, p. 99 (= Majjhima I, p. 358; Saṃyutta I, p. 153; II, p. 284); II, p. 241, 211, 227; III, p. 97, and pointing out that *gāthās* are often recited also by Brahmā Sahampati. In the Mahābhārata, too, Sanatkumāra is said to sing *gāthās*, some of which are quoted (cf. Sørensen 1904-25: 615).

⁴⁵³ Cf. Bailey 1983: 31f., citing Settar 1971.

⁴⁵⁴ Besides warring looters, who can be equated with the 'youngest' Vrātyas, there were certainly also wandering ascetics roaming around. The 'eldest' (*jyeṣṭha*) Vrātyas are described as 'having penises that are (permanently) tranquil and hanging down' (Pañcaviṁśa-Brāhmaṇa 17.4.1 *śamanīcamedhrāḥ*), i.e. impotent. As they too roam around, these 'eldest Vrātyas' can be compared to such present-day ascetics who have in various ways made themselves impotent. This act, which has a mythical counterpart in the self-castration of Śiva (cf. O'Flaherty 1973: 130-6), 'epitomizes the anti-sexual attitude of the ascetic' (Bailey 1983: 118, n. 28).

⁴⁵⁵ In ancient times, the Sāvitrī verse was taught to the initiated students only after one year, conceived of as an embryonic period (cf. Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 11.5.4.6 cited above in Section 8).

garments (*kaṣāya* 'dyed with madder').⁴⁵⁶ The sun was very early connected with Brahman as the sacred, generative power, as well as with the sacred syllable *om* (cf. above sections 9-11, and Buitenen 1959), and with death (*mṛtyu*).

Vādhūla-Śrautasūtra (11.21) refers to an earlier stage of development in the horse sacrifice:

As the cutter of the (sacrificial) horse they adorn and bring to the place this son of a famous bard, who is still a virginal youth (*kumāram*) with unemitted seed, lamenting (*rudantaḥ*) him as if he was to die. For they say that in olden times he who first carved up (the victim), his (own) head used to fall off (or fly asunder)...⁴⁵⁷

Kumāra is another name of the youthful war-god Rudra, who is often connected with lamenting (*rud-*) in the Vedic texts: I have suggested that this young bard personified Rudra and that he is an Indian parallel to the lamented youthful god of the Near Eastern mystery cults, the groom of the Goddess, Dumuzi, Attis and Adonis (Parpola 1983). From this passage it appears that it was royal bards (*sūta*) who still acted as substitute victims for princes. In the *vṛātyastoma*, too, this part is acted by *māgadha*, a bard hailing from Magadha. Up to modern times it has been considered that youths who play the roles of gods in divine dramas, such as the Rām-līlā of Varanasi, had become too holy to be allowed to live on: traditionally they were poisoned after the play was over.

The youth (*kumāra*) thus impersonated the divine youth, Kumāra alias Rudra alias Skanda, the leader of the *vṛāta* or *gaṇa* or *saṅgha* or *senā*: he was *senāpati*, he was *gaṇānāṃ gaṇapati*, the leader of Śiva's hosts. The most knowledgeable⁴⁵⁸ youth was selected⁴⁵⁹ for this divine task.⁴⁶⁰ The Vṛātya leader would excel in *brahmodyas*, a victory in which would provide an opportunity to amass a lot of

⁴⁵⁶ A tiny fragment of madder-dyed cloth has been excavated at Mohenjo-Daro, which suggests a Harappan origin for the ascetic garb. Of course, *brahmacārins* also wore the skin of the black buck as an embryonic garment. Here too, there is parallelism with the Vṛātyas as looters, who wear a skin-dress (cf. e.g. Pañcaviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa 17.1.14-15 and Lāṭyāyana-Śrautasūtra 8.6.12-22); cf. also Rudra-Śiva as a Kirāta hunter, dressed in animal skins.

⁴⁵⁷ Vādhūla-Śrautasūtra 11.21 (ed. Chaubey 1993: 319-321; Caland 1926: 200, Chapter 94): *athāto viśasanasyaiva // ānayanty etaṁ sūtaśreṣṭhasya putraṃ kumāram asiktaretasam aśvasya viśasitāram alaṃkṛtya rudanto yathā mariṣyantam evam // yo ha smety āhur etasya purā prathama āchryati mūrdhā ha smāsy vipatīṣyatīti // ...*

⁴⁵⁸ Cf. Lāṭyāyana-Śrautasūtra 8.6.1 on the choice of the Vṛātya leader: *ya eṣām adhyayane 'bhikrāntitamaḥ syād abhijanena vā... tasya gārhapate dīkṣeran...* In the seventh chapter of the Chāndogya-Upaniṣad, it is Sanatkumāra 'the eternal youth', i.e. the war-god Skanda, who teaches Sage Nārada about 18 fields of knowledge (cf. Horsch 1966: 32). Persons unable to answer *brahmodya* questions would be slain and their property appropriated: in a way, this procedure would be 'legitimized' by their 'ignorance'. Compare Mañjuśrī – the Buddhist counterpart of Skanda – cutting 'ignorance' with his sword.

⁴⁵⁹ In the Vetāla story, the victim is also determined and beautiful. The sacrificial animals (including man) to be offered to the Goddess must have no defect; cf. Kane 1958: 165.

⁴⁶⁰ Ancient Mexico with its human victim, worshipped as a living god for one year until his sacrifice, provides a striking parallel.

riches. Besides *gaṇānām gaṇapati*, he is at the culmination of the sacrifice addressed as *nidhīnām nidhipati*, an attribute of the later god of riches, Kubera. In the epic, Kubera's son is called Nala-Kūbara,⁴⁶¹ which I think is the origin for the names of Kubera as well as of King Nala, the husband of Damayantī, and the most excellent charioteer. *Nala*, with variants *naḍa* and *naḷa*, denotes 'a species of reed' (*Amphidonax karka*), which could be bent to make a good *kūbara*, 'the pole of a carriage or the wooden frame to which the yoke is fixed',⁴⁶² an essential part of the chariot (*ratha*) that the army leader was driving. After the expedition, the loot was divided in a concluding festival.

This concluding festival also included the culmination of the foregoing ritual year and at the same time the beginning of the new ritual year (coinciding with the calendrical new year, the birthday of the sun): 'sacred marriage' and sacrifice. In the Vedic tradition this festival has come down to us in several versions, including the *vrātyastoma*, the *mahāvratā* (at the conclusion of the year), and above all, the human sacrifice⁴⁶³/horse sacrifice.⁴⁶⁴ The Tantric tradition has preserved the festival in a

⁴⁶¹ Cf. Mahābhārata 3.258.15-16: *pitāmahas tu prītātmā dadau vaiśravaṇasya ha / amaratvaṃ dhaneśatvaṃ lokapālatvaṃ eva ca // īśānena tathā sakhyaṃ putraṃ ca nalakūbaram / rājādānīniveśaṃ ca laṅkāṃ rakṣogaṇānvitām*. Because Rāvaṇa (who conquered Laṅkā from Kubera) ravished Nala-Kūbara's wife, Apsaras Rambhā, Nala-Kūbara placed a curse on him that he would not be able to have sexual intercourse with any woman against her will; otherwise his body would explode into a hundred pieces. God Brahmā had granted Rāvaṇa immunity from all beings except humans, but with this curse of Nala-Kūbara he protected Sītā from Rāvaṇa. Cf. Mahābhārata 3.264.58-59: *mā ca te 'stu bhayaṃ bhīru rāvaṇāl lokagarhitāt / nalakūbaraśāpena rakṣitā hy asy anindite // śapto hy eṣa purā pāpo vadhūṃ rambhām parāmṛṣan / na śakto vivaśāṃ nārīm upaitum ajitendriyaḥ //* – Mahābhārata 3.275.30-33: *śatru eṣa tvayā vīra devagandharvabhoginām / yakṣāṇām dānavānām ca maharṣiṇām ca pātitaḥ // avadhyaḥ sarvabhūtānām matprasāsāt purābhavat / kasmāc cit kāraṇāt pāpaḥ kaṃ cit kālam upekṣitaḥ // vadhārtham ātmanas tena hṛtā sītā durātmanā / nalakūbaraśāpena rakṣā cāsyāḥ kṛtā mayā // yadi hy akāmām āsevet striyam anyām api dhruvam / śatadhāsyā phaled deha ity uktaḥ so 'bhavat purā //*. Cf. Sörensen 1904-25: 499. Nala-Kūbara's curse sounds very much like the challenges in *brahmodyas* and riddles.

⁴⁶² Attested as early as Maitrāyaṇī-Saṃhitā 2.1.11, and very frequently in the epic.

⁴⁶³ By the time the surviving descriptions of it were written, the human sacrifice (*puruṣamedha*) had become obsolete and replaced by the largely parallel horse sacrifice (*aśvamedha*).

⁴⁶⁴ For a fine description and analysis of the passages relating to the 'sacred marriage' at the horse sacrifice, see Jamison 1996: 65-88. – In the Sāvitrī legend, a possible reminiscence of Satyavat's original connection with the victim of the horse sacrifice is his other name Citrāśva '(possessing a) speckled or spotted horse' (the sacrificial horse should have a spotted mark on its forehead, cf. Parpola 1994a: Chapter 14); this name, however, is understood in the text to mean '(possessing) painted horses', for as a boy, Satyavat liked horses and fashioned horses out of mud and drew pictures of horses, and was therefore called Citrāśva. Cf. Mahābhārata 3.278.13: *bālasyāśvāḥ priyāś cāsyā karoty aśvāś ca mṛṇmayān / citre 'pi vilikhaty aśvāś citrāśva iti cocyate //*. Skanda-Purāṇa 7.1.166.31 (not in Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa 4.102): *nityaṃ cāśvāḥ priyāś tasya karoty aśvāś ca mṛṇmayān / citre 'pi ca likhaty aśvāś citrāśva iti cocyate //*. The name must have a special significance in this context, since 'this entirely irrelevant statement [concerning the prince's childhood] is not omitted in the two versions [quoted by Hemādri and in the Vratārka] which elsewhere sacrifice so much to brevity' (Allen 1901: 57).

form which is not so anciently attested, but purer from 'Vedic contamination': this is the navarātri festival ending in the 'tenth day of victory' (*vijaya-daśamī*), marking Durgā's victory over Mahiṣa Asura. The Vedic tradition also testifies to the originality of this pattern: on the tenth day of *daśarātra*, Prajāpati is reviled for his evil deed, his incestuous marriage with his own daughter, for which he has to suffer death at the hands of his own son. Prajāpati (replacing the older Varuṇa)⁴⁶⁵ is the 'old year' killed by the 'new year', the army leader of the starting year, Rudra. In the daily cycle of the sun, the setting sun becomes Varuṇa/night, who in turn is 'killed' by the rising sun/day. The gender of these divine forces can vary in mythology: the 'demon' of night can be killed by his son (Kumāra = Rudra) as well as by his daughter (Kumārī = Durgā), who is also his wife through incest.⁴⁶⁶

There have earlier been two navarātri festivals, not only in the autumn but also in the spring, corresponding to the mahāvratā and viṣuvat festivals of the Veda (cf. Parpola 1992: 277f.). The two halves of the Vedic ritual year, summer and winter, spent in raiding and agriculture respectively (Parpola 1992: 277), correspond to day and night in the daily cycle. The summer/day and winter/night seem to represent the 'young sun' (Rudra) and the 'old sun' (Varuṇa) respectively, or 'son' and 'father', who as solar divinities are supposed to [re]generate and kill each other. It is possible that these two yearly navarātri festivals each involved a human sacrifice, the victim being a youth in the autumn navarātri and an old man in the spring (beginning of the new year).

43. SEVERED HEADS AND RITUALS OF REVIVAL

From the Vedic texts it appears that the sun and the (full) moon, which have a globular form, were conceived of as (severed) heads floating in the sky without a body (cf. Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 14.1.1.6ff in Section 19). The Vedic ritual also contains various rites purporting to restore the cut-off head of the (divine) victim and thus to resurrect him.⁴⁶⁷ The exchange of heads in connection with the revival may

⁴⁶⁵ Cf. Gonda 1986: 74-79, where the horse's and Prajāpati's relation to Varuṇa is also discussed.

⁴⁶⁶ This eternal 'fertile contest' between the dualistic forces of nature (sun/moon, fire/water, light/darkness, life/death, male/female, and so on), seems to be symbolized in ancient art and myth through the fight between the lion and the bull, or in South Asia, between the lion/tiger and the water buffalo. See Parpola 1994a: Chapter 14.

⁴⁶⁷ Various Indian folk traditions comprise resurrection rituals associated with the head. Cf. for example Bhattacharyya 1982: 140f.: 'The death and resurrection theme also finds expression in the ritual of an actual dead body which is connected with the popular [Bengali] *gājana* and *caḍaka* festivals of Dharma. In this ritual a game is played with the head of a dead person... The concluding function of the *caḍaka* ritual is the resuscitation of the dead. The chief devotee cooks a *sol* fish, roasting it in embers. Some parboiled and husked rice is also cooked and rice-wine is poured on the fish and the rice, which are placed in an earthen pot. These are taken at midday to a tree standing in some lonely meadow, and the food is placed

be understood with reference to the cosmic model: when the moon 'dies' in the morning, this deity is 'revived' while his head is exchanged with the head of the sun. The (rising) sun has the head of the (sacrificial) horse in the beginning of the Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka-Upaniṣad.⁴⁶⁸

The early pre-classical Vedic ritual seems to have included a revival act that involved an exchange of the heads of sacrificed victims, including man. In the case of a horse sacrifice, such an operation would have provided the human body with a horse's head, and vice versa. The exchange of heads is implied by the legend relating to Dadhyañc Ātharvaṇa, who is referred to as a horse-headed being in ṚS 1.116.12.⁴⁶⁹ According to Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 14.1.1.18-24, Dadhyañc knew the secret of 'how this head of the sacrifice [i.e. the sacrificed victim] is put on again, how this sacrifice becomes complete'.⁴⁷⁰ Indra forbade him to teach it to anyone else, threatening to cut off his head.⁴⁷¹ But the Aśvins, the divine healers, who wished to learn the secret, persuaded him with this offer:

When you will have received us as your pupils, we shall cut off your head and put it aside elsewhere; then we shall fetch the head of a horse, and put it on you: therewith you will teach us; and when you will have taught us, then Indra will cut off that head of yours; and we shall fetch your own head, and put it on you again. (cf. Eggeling 1882-1900, V: 444-445).

The result of such an exchange will produce mixed creatures accurately corresponding to the conception of Kiṃpuruṣas and Kinnaras as half-man, half-horse, in classical Hinduism. It is significant that these mythical creatures having a sacrificial background are musicians like the Gandharvas, sūtas and māgadhas.⁴⁷²

It can hardly be a mere coincidence that the exchange of severed heads, often together with the restoration of life, is repeatedly recorded to take place in the cult of

on a plantain leaf and left for the ghosts to devour. This offering is sometimes made in the meadow where the village dead are cremated.' On the Dharma *gājan(a)s* of Bengal, see also Hildebeitel 1991: 373-375.

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. BĀU 1.1: *oṃ uṣā vā aśvasya medhyasya śiraḥ / sūryaś cakṣur vātaḥ prāṇo vyāttam agnir vaiśvānaraḥ saṃvatsara ātmāśvasya medhyasya...* 'Dawn is the head of the sacrificial horse, the sun its eye, the wind its breath, Agni Vaiśvānara its open mouth, the year is the body of the sacrificial horse...'

⁴⁶⁹ On the Dadhyañc myth, see now especially Tokunaga 1997: 186-196. The head bones of Dadhyañc became a mighty weapon: it is the *aśvaśiras* 'horse-head' (and *brahmaśiras* 'Brahmā's head', cf. above Section 17) as a 'doomsday weapon' in the epic; this weapon owes its almighty power to the light symbolism of the sunrise (cf. Section 15). According to the earliest version of the Skanda-Purāṇa (5.42), the fifth head of Brahmā cut off by Śiva resembled the Mare's Head (*vaḍavāmukha*); cf. above n. 232.

⁴⁷⁰ Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 14.1.1.21 *...yathaitad yajñasya śiraḥ pratidhīyate yathaiṣa kṛtsno yajño bhavātīti*.

⁴⁷¹ Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 14.1.1.19: *sa hendreṇokta āsa: etaṃ ced anyasmā anubrūyās tata eva te śiraś chindyām iti*.

⁴⁷² For a preliminary version of this explanation, see Parpola 1983.

Durgā. Thus in the sixth chapter of the *Vetāla-Pañcaviṃśatikā*, two men behead themselves in the temple of the Goddess, who eventually revives them, but with their heads interchanged. In a well known myth associated with the Goddess, her son Gaṇapati 'the leader of (Śiva's demoniac) troops'⁴⁷³ is beheaded and revived with an elephant's head. The elephant is yet another beast noted for its virility and prominently associated with war. Elephants are also actually sacrificed to the Goddess.⁴⁷⁴ In the Vedic ritual, the sacrificial horse (the subject of the head-exchange operation) is called *gaṇānām gaṇapati* 'the host-leader of (divine) hosts' in a verse (*Vājasaneyi-Saṃhitā* 23.19, originally *Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā* 2.23.1) addressed to it by the wives of the sacrificing king when they lament the death of the horse (*Śatapatha-Bṛāhmaṇa* 13.2.8.4).

Legends and customs current in Karnataka connect an exchange of severed heads with the human sacrifices that used to be performed on the 'tenth day of victory' at the autumnal feast of Durgā:

Human beings were sacrificed on the stone by cutting through their necks and separating the head from the body. The bodies were kept together at one place, but the three heads were picked up and arranged in the form of a hearth, thus:

o o
o

Food was cooked on this hearth. Later the heads were picked up again and reunited with the bodies to which they belonged, while an oblation... was made... of the food that had been cooked over the three heads. It seems that on one occasion the men were unable to rejoin two of the heads to their respective bodies as the heads had been interchanged. From this time the sacrifice was given up. (Silva 1955: 580.)

44. SPROUTING OF GRAINS AND THE 'ADONIS GARDEN'

Finally, I would like comment on the cane-basket with seven different kinds of grain, over which the images of the two couples to be worshipped are placed in the *vaṭa-sāvitrī-vrata* (Section 3). The South Asian sprouting rites correspond to the so-called 'Adonis garden' of the Near East and Greece, where they are associated with the resurrection cults. There can hardly be doubt about the similarity, also in function, between these two traditions, and if the South Asian rites are of Near Eastern origin, they must have been borrowed in pre-Vedic times.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷³ In my opinion, Gaṇapati originally is a multiform of the war-god Skanda, the divine army-leader (*senāpati*), who in turn originally is a multiform of Vedic Rudra (Śiva).

⁴⁷⁴ Cf. Hildebeitel 1988: 321 and 323, n. 8 with further references.

⁴⁷⁵ In Hildebeitel's view (1991: 371), 'Ancient Near Eastern, Dravidian, and tribal continuities are possible, but are yet to be made compelling. However, it is possible to identify significant continuities within Hinduism... it is not just a matter of classical and folk forms, but of Vedic ones.'

The number of different grains (seven) suggests that the *sāvitrī-vrata* has not obtained it as a recent borrowing from other goddess traditions, but that this practice has its own background and is an integral part of the rite. In South India, Tamil Nadu in particular, such 'sprouting' (*ankurārpaṇa*) of nine different kinds of grain (*navadhānya*) is a regular part of the marriage ceremony, but also occurs in many other contexts.⁴⁷⁶ The number nine points to the nine-day navarātri festival which celebrates Goddess Durgā's victory over the Buffalo Demon (Mahiṣa Asura), and at navarātri this sprouting is performed in the Deccan, in Gujarat and Saurashtra, as well as in Bengal.⁴⁷⁷ Hildebeitel has noted that the navarātri is an 'implicitly if not explicitly royal festival', and sees in it the link to the Vedic predecessor of this sprouting of nine grains, which he has discovered in the *devasū* offerings of the royal consecration (*rājasūya*), which purports to be the 'rebirth' of this husband of the earth.⁴⁷⁸ here nine cakes are made of nine different grains or seeds, and offered to nine different male deities who are invoked to 'quicken' or 'impel' (*sū-*)⁴⁷⁹ the (young) king's assorted powers (cf. Hildebeitel 1991: 56f., 75). The quick sprouting appears to symbolize the rapid growth of a young god. On the other hand, in several South Indian rituals, the premature withering of the sprouts coincides with the death of the groom at whose marriage with the Goddess they are sown. This is the case with Pōttu Rāja, the 'Buffalo King', who is sacrificed at the end (cf. Mahiṣa Asura's death at the end of navarātri). (Cf. Hildebeitel 1991: 61-65.)

In Raipur in Central India, the bhojalī seedlings grow in the dark for nine days (which links it with navarātri) and acquire a yellow-green colour, from which the goddess with whom they are identified is called Pīlī Bāī 'the yellow woman', most probably (according to Flueckiger 1983) also a reference to the bride, who is bathed in turmeric and oil before her wedding day, leaving a golden hue on her skin. The seedlings are tended mainly by married women, but on the final day they are carried to the village pond by unmarried girls, and after immersion distributed as sanctified offerings (*prasād*) to the worshippers.⁴⁸⁰ The sprouting is perceived as a cere-

⁴⁷⁶ For these rituals, see especially Hildebeitel 1991: 53-78 with further literature.

⁴⁷⁷ Cf. Kane 1958: 183f., where it is observed that 'in Bengal nine jars are established in a figure (*sarvatobhadra*) filled with coloured powders at prescribed places and these are decorated with nine differently coloured flags. But in some parts of India only one *ghaṭa* is established.'

⁴⁷⁸ I should like to point out that Śunaḥśepa, the liberated victim of a human sacrifice, was intended to be the main offering to King Varuṇa on the unction day of the royal consecration; cf. e.g. Eggeling 1882-1900, V: xxxiv-xxxv.

⁴⁷⁹ It is from this verb *su-/sū-* 'to impel, instigate' that Sāvitrī's father's name Savitr̥ is derived; cf. sections 8 & 11 (on the Brahmā's *sava/prasava* in the Vedic ritual). As noted by Whitney (1885: 188) – who records '*sū-*, *su-*, 'generate, enliven, impel'' as one root – this is 'usually divided into two roots, 1 *su/sū* 'impel', and 2 *su/sū* 'give birth'...; but their forms and meanings are mixed beyond the possibility of successful separation'. In any case, the meanings 'to generate, procreate, give birth, beget, bear, bring forth' are implied both in the case of Savitr̥ (see Section 15) and Sāvitrī (cf. her epithet *prasavitrī* in note 65).

mony through which the goddess grants fertility 'both to the land (in the form of abundant crops) and to the participating women' (Hiltebeitel 1991: 72-73, quoting Fluckiger 1983).

Very instructive is the Tamil ritual drama, where the sixteen year old Kūttāṇṭavar sacrifices himself on the battlefield as a 'battlefield sacrifice' (*kaḷa-p-pali*) to Kālī, by cutting himself in 32 places, thereby securing the victory for his army.⁴⁸¹ This mutilated hero is identified with the epic Arjuna's son Aravān (by the serpent princess Ulūpī), whom God Kṛṣṇa, assuming his female shape of Mohinī 'enchantress', quickly marries on the battlefield 'to secure him the proper funeral and after-life that he would be denied as an unmarried child'. Kūttāṇṭavar's death is lamented by his widows at the 'weeping ground' (*aḷu-kaḷam*). At this site the nine grains are sown at the time of his 'marriage', the bride being impersonated by eunuchs, who come from far and wide, and in addition by thousands of local farmers, who fulfil their vow by observing chastity, wearing a sari and putting on bangles and a necklace of marriage (*tāli*). After their husband has been killed, these transvestites pull his chariot over the high grown sprouts, weep for him intensely, cut their *tālis* and break their bangles, throwing them on the navadhānya sprouts that they have been so far watering but which are now left to dry and wither. Then they leave the 'weeping ground', donning the white dress of a widow.

At each festival, the day on which the sprouting rites conclude coincides not only with the god's death, but also with his revival at a nearby Kālī temple (cf. Hiltebeitel 1991: 65-67, 75).

45. CONCLUSION

The Sāvitrī legend has often been praised as one of the most charming episodes of the great epic of India, but it appears to reflect mythical beliefs and cultic practices that once had a rather grim reality. The heroine of the story is Princess Sāvitrī, who decides to marry Prince Satyavat though he is predestined to die when exactly one year has passed from their marriage. Sāvitrī is a paragon of womanly virtue, a

⁴⁸⁰ Cf. Hiltebeitel 1991: 74: 'In cults and festivals (like Dasarā [concluding the navarātri]) that link sprouting rites with possession, and with real or symbolic animal sacrifice, the goddess who is tenderly placed in the water in the form of sprouts seems to be the *virgin* goddess who has withstood the heated dangers of demonic forces, and who must now yield to her *married* form as sovereign of true and fertile agriculture. And in marriage itself, the discarded sprouts seem to symbolize the abandonment of the chastity (and precocity?) of youth for either or both partners as they assume the full sexual potential and responsibility of marriage.'

⁴⁸¹ As noted by Hiltebeitel (1988: 318ff.), such head offerings are known in the Tamil tradition as early as the Cilappatikāram, 'where the forest warrior Maṇavars are exhorted to cut their necks for Koṇṇavai. As the goddess of Victory in the early Tamil classics, Koṇṇavai is already assimilated to Durgā in this text... this Aravān-Kūttāṇṭavar cult may well be older than the Draupadī cult and was almost certainly independent of it, as it still largely is today.'

supreme manifestation of *satī* or *sādhvī*, 'good wife', who is ready to follow her husband even into death. She provides a model imitated by countless Hindu women for whom the husband is or has been the only god to be worshipped, and many of whom have likewise been ready for the ultimate sacrifice, ascending the husband's funeral pyre. By means of this unswerving loyalty to her husband, Sāvitrī wins him back from death: he is revived. A determined *satī* likewise is thought to save her husband from the realm of death, even hell, and to live happily with him in heaven.

The Sāvitrī legend and the accompanying ritual vow of *vaṭa-sāvitrī-vrata* (primarily performed to avert widowhood) underline the identification of the human couple (Sāvitrī and Satyavat) with a divine couple, Goddess Sāvitrī and her husband Brahmā, god of creation. In a myth with Vedic roots, Goddess Sāvitrī is instrumental in bringing about the revival of Brahmā after he was decapitated in punishment for his sin of incest, committed with his own daughter. In the Ṛgveda, Sāvitrī is the prototypal bride married by her father, the sun-god, to the moon-god: this husband of Sāvitrī dies and is resurrected every month. Sāvitrī is the goddess of dawn or morning light, corresponding in this respect to the Mesopotamian goddess Inanna-Ishtar. But while Inanna-Ishtar is identified with the planet Venus as the morning star, Sāvitrī as the beloved wife of the moon is identified with the calendrical star Rohiṇī 'the red female' (Aldebaran), the most ancient new year star. Originally, until the late third millennium BC, this probably was the only calendrical star that mattered, and time-reckoning was based on observing its heliacal rise at the vernal equinox. This yearly union of the sun with Rohiṇī in the spring marked the death of the old year and the birth of the new year. The sun was supposed to be reborn in his own seed, symbolized by the planet Venus, the morning star, harbinger of the (reborn) sun (and as the evening star, as harbinger of the moon). The sun is the father of Sāvitrī, and his union with the daughter (Rohiṇī 'red female, girl of marriage age' = Sāvitrī) at this 'sacred marriage' brings about his death through his own instantly born son, the baby sun of the new year. This reborn sun is the ever young war-god (Kumāra = Rudra/Skanda), who leads a victorious expedition while observing chastity. After six months, at the autumnal equinox, this youthful sun becomes 'the old year' and eventually dies when exactly one year has passed from his birth/marriage. The two halves of the year, summer and winter, are equated to the day and night, and represent two aspects of the sun conceived of as son and father.

This eternal daily, monthly and yearly cycle of solar and lunar deaths and revivals, understood in terms of repeated decapitations and restorations of exchanged severed (solar and lunar) heads, were acted out in royal rituals. They culminated in a 'sacred marriage' in which the male victim, a virginal youth, had sexual intercourse with a queen representing the Goddess before his head was cut off. Originally the 'marriage' and sacrifice seem to have taken place under the banyan tree, a tree sacred to both the 'old' or 'night' aspect of the sun, the god of death and creation, and to the Goddess. This tree figures prominently in the Sāvitrī legend and ritual, as

well as in the early folk religion of South Asia. The *satī* may have originally committed suicide by hanging herself on the air-roots of this tree, the 'nooses of death', but from 1900 BC onwards increasingly on a funeral pyre, after cremation burial was introduced into South Asia by the Post-Harappan Cemetery-H culture. Another major cultural shift took place around perhaps 1300 BC, when people associated with the old 'family hymns' of the *Ṛgveda* arrived from the north and took control of the northern Indus Valley, introducing the Vedic period there. Human sacrifice as well as the *satī* practice were abolished from the 'orthodox' Brahmanical religion, but were continued in regions where this superstratum did not prevail or lost power, including the Madra country in the northwest, *Sāvitrī*'s domicile. In regions such as eastern India that were long without a Brahmanical superstratum these pre-Vedic cults have survived in a 'purer' form, in the 'left hand' tradition of Śākta Tantrism dominated by Goddess *Durgā* (the morning dawn = *Sāvitrī*) and Goddess *Kālī* (the evening dusk = *Sāvitrī*'s 'dark sister').

The mystery cults of the ancient Near East, which aimed at conquering death, go back to the myths and rituals connected with *Inanna-Ishtar*, the goddess of love and war, and the youthful shepherd *Dumuzi-Tammuz*. The love affair of this couple was celebrated in a 'sacred marriage'; the marriage was followed by the death and resurrection of the male partner (identified with the king), both resulting from the actions of the Goddess. When searching for her dead husband, this mistress of heaven descended to the realm of death ruled by her sister. These conceptions and rituals have been very central in Near Eastern religions, and the same must be said of their parallels in the earliest reconstructable forms of Indian religion. Specific similarities comprise, among other things, the character of the Goddess (including her association with the first light of the morning), lamentation of the dead husband (in India, in the slaughterer of the horse; *svāmibharṭṛhatā* of the Madra country in the *Mahābhārata*; modern Tamil folk cults) and even such a cultic practice as the sprouting of grain during the marriage. It is difficult to believe that the convergence is purely coincidental, particularly in view of the clearly documented trade connections between these two regions in Harappan times. Near Eastern ideological influence upon the Indus Civilization is evident from Harappan glyptics. Among the several borrowed motifs is the 'contest', in all likelihood connected with the fight between Goddess *Durgā* and the Buffalo Demon (the principal enemy but also the lover/husband of the Goddess). In South Asia, several components of these 'resurrection cults', including the banyan tree and the 'red spot on the forehead' as a sign of marriage, can be traced back to the Harappan/Dravidian layer with the help of iconographic and linguistic evidence.

REFERENCES

- AALTO, Pentti, 1996. Herz und Blut. *Zentralasiatische Studien* 26: 172-217.
- ADRIANSEN, R., H. T. BAKKER & H. ISAACSON (eds.) 1998. *The Skandapurāṇa, I: Adhyāyas 1-25*. Critically edited with prolegomena and English synopsis. (Supplement to Groningen Oriental Series.) Groningen: Egbert Forsten.
- Agni-Purāṇa*: Introduction by R. N. Sharma. Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1985. (See also Gangadharan 1985.)
- ALLEN, A. H. 1901. The Vāja-sāvitrī-vrata, according to Hemādri and the Vratārka. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 21(2): 55-66.
- ALSTER, Bendt 1985. Sumerian love songs. *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale* 79(2): 127-159.
- ALTER, Joseph S. 1992. *The Wrestler's Body. Identity and Ideology in North India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Arrian: See Brunt 1983; Wirth & Hinüber 1985.
- AWASTHI, A. B. L. 1992. *Purāṇa Index*. New Delhi: Navrang.
- BAILEY, Greg 1983. *The Mythology of Brahmā*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- BECK, Brenda E. F. 1981. The goddess and the demon. A local South Indian festival and its wider context. In: Madeleine Biarreau (éd.), *Autour de la Déesse hindoue. Études réunies* (Puruṣārtha, 5): 83-136. Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.
- BEYER, Stephan 1973. *The Cult of Tāra. Magic and Ritual in Tibet*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- BHATT, G. H. & U. P. SHAH (General eds.) 1960-75. *The Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*. Critical edition, I-VII. Baroda: The Oriental Institute.
- BHAṬṬĀCHARYA, Yogeśvara & Kāmākhyānātha TARKARATNA (eds.) 1878-79. *Chaturvarga Chintāmaṇi by Hemādri, II.2; III.1*. (Bibliotheca Indica, 72.) Calcutta: The Asiatic Society of Bengal.
- BHATTACHARYYA, N. N. 1982. *History of the Tantric Religion. A Historical, Ritualistic and Philosophical Study*. New Delhi: Manohar Publications.
- Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa*: Pothi form, I-II. Bombay: Venkaṭeśvara Press, 1879. Reprinted, with an introduction by R. N. Sharma and with a śloka index by Nagasara Sinha (vol. III). Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1984.
- BIARREAU, Madeleine 1981. L'arbre śamī et le buffle sacrificiel. In: Madeleine Biarreau (éd.), *Autour de la Déesse hindoue. Études réunies* (Puruṣārtha, 5): 215-243. Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.
- BLACKBURN, Stuart 1989. Patterns of development for Indian oral epics. In: Stuart H. Blackburn, Peter C. Claus, Joyce B. Flueckiger & Susan Snow Wadley (eds.), *Oral Epics in India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- BLOOMFIELD, Maurice (tr.) 1897. *Hymns of the Atharva-Veda*. Together with extracts from the ritual books and the commentaries. (The Sacred Books of the East, 42.) Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- BODEWITZ, H. W. (tr.) 1973. *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa I, 1-65. Translation and Commentary, with a Study Agnihotra and Prāṇāgnihotra*. (Orientalia Rheno-Traiectina, 17.) Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- 1976. *The Daily Evening and Morning Offering (Agnihotra) According to the Brāhmaṇas*. (Orientalia Rheno-Traiectina, 21.) Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- BÖHTLINGK, Otto 1870-73. *Indische Sprüche*. Sanskrit und Deutsch herausgegeben, I-III. 2. Aufl. St. Petersburg: Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften.

- BÖHTLINGK, Otto & Rudolph ROTH 1855. *Sanskrit-Wörterbuch*, I. St. Petersburg: Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- Brahmavaivarta-Purāṇa*: Brahmavaivartapurāṇa of Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, I. Ed. by J. L. Shastri. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984.
- BROUGH, John 1951. *Selections from Classical Sanskrit Literature with English Translation and Notes*. London: Luzac & Co.
- BRUNT, P. A. (ed. & tr.) 1983. Arrian, *Anabasis Alexandri & Indica*, I-II. (The Loeb Classical Library, 236, 269.) London: William Heinemann Ltd. – Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- BRUSCHWEILER, Françoise 1987. *Inanna. La déesse triomphante et vaincue dans la cosmologie sumérienne*. (Les cahiers de CEPOA, 4.) Leuven: Éditions Peeters.
- BÜHLER, Georg (tr.) 1886. *The Laws of Manu*. (Sacred Books of the East, 25.) Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- BUITENEN, J. A. B. van 1955-56. Notes on akṣara. *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute* 17: 204-215.
- 1959. Akṣara. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 79: 176-187.
- (tr. & ed.) 1975. *The Mahābhārata*, II: *The Book of the Assembly Hall; The Book of the Forest*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- BURROW, Thomas & M. B. EMENEAU 1984. *A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- CALAND, Willem (ed.) 1917. Sāvitrī und Nala: *Zwei Episoden aus dem Mahābhārata*. Text mit kurzen erklärenden Noten und Glossar. Utrecht: A. Oosthoek.
- (ed. & tr.) 1922. *The Jaiminigrhyasūtra Belonging to the Sāmaveda*. With extracts from the commentary, edited with an introduction and translated for the first time into English. (Punjab Sanskrit Series, 2.) Lahore.
- 1926. Eine dritte Mitteilung über das Vādhūlasūtra. *Acta Orientalia* 4(1): 1-41 & 4(2): 161-213. Copenhagen.
- CHATTOPADHYAYA, Ksetreschandra 1937. Religious suicide at Prayag. *Journal of the U. P. Historical Society* 10: 65-79.
- CHAUBEY, Braj Bihari (ed.) 1993. *Vādhūla-Śrautasūtram*. Critically edited with introduction and indices. Hoshiarpur: Katyayan Vaidik Sahitya Prakashan.
- COOMARASWAMY, Ananda K. 1928-31. *Yaksas*, I-II. (Smithsonian Institution Publications, 2926 & 3059.) Washington, D.C.: The Smithsonian Institution.
- COOPER, Jerrold S. 1972-75. Heilige Hochzeit: B. Archäologisch. In: *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, IV: 259-269. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- CROOKE, William 1926. *The Religion and Folklore of Northern India*. Prepared for the press by R. E. Enthoven. London: Oxford University Press.
- DANGE, Sadashiv Ambadas 1963. Sāvitrī and the banyan. *Purāṇa* 5(2): 258-266.
- 1986-1990. *Encyclopaedia of Puranic Beliefs and Practices*, I-V. New Delhi: Navrang.
- 1987. *Glimpses of Puranic Myth and Culture*. Delhi: Ajanta Publications.
- DELLA CASA, Carlo 1954. L'episodio di Sāvitrī ricostruito sulle recensioni del Matsya- e del Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa. *Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Memorie delle Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche*, anno 351, Serie 8.5:1 (1952): 1-36.
- 1986. Contatti tra popoli e scambi culturali: La leggenda dell'unicorno. In: *Contributi de orientalistica, glottologia e dialettologia* (Quaderni di Acme, 7): 11-24. Milano: Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università degli Studi di Milano.
- DEPPERT, Joachim 1977. *Rudras Geburt. Systematische Untersuchungen zum Inzest in der Mythologie der Brāhmaṇas*. (Beiträge zur Südasienforschung, 28.) Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag.

- DESHPANDE, N. A. (tr.) 1988. *Padma Purāṇa*, I. (Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology, 39.) Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- DIKSHITAR, V. R. Ramachandra (tr.) 1939. *The Śilappadikāram*. Translated with an introduction and notes. London: Oxford University Press.
- DUBEY, Devi Prasad 1986. The historicity of Akṣayaṇa at Prayāga. *Purāṇa* 28(1): 45-78, with 2 figs.
- EGGELING, Julius (tr.) 1882-1900. *The Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*. According to the text of the Mādhyandina school translated, I-V. (Sacred Books of the East, 12, 26, 41, 43, 44.) Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- EMENEAU, Murray B. 1949. The strangling figs in Sanskrit literature. *University of California Publications in Classical Philology* 13: 345-370. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- ERNDL, Kathleen M. 1993. *Victory to the Mother. The Hindu Goddess of Northwest India in Myth, Ritual, and Symbol*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- FLUECKIGER, Joyce Burkhalter 1983. *Bhojalī*: Song, goddess, friend – a Chhattisgarhi women's oral tradition. *Asian Folklore Studies* 42: 27-43.
- GANGADHARAN, N. (tr.) 1985. *The Agni-Purāṇa*, II. (Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology, 28.) Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- GODE, P. K. 1957. The history of the akṣayaṇa (undecaying banyan tree) at Prayāga and Gayā as revealed by some Sanskrit texts between the first century A.D. and 1900. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 38: 82-92.
- GONDA, Jan 1977. *The Ritual Sūtras*. (A History of Indian Literature, 1.2.) Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.
- 1980. *Vedic Ritual: The Non-solemn Rites*. (Handbuch der Orientalistik, 2.4.1.) Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- 1984. *Prajāpati and the Year*. (Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde, NR 123.) Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company.
- 1986. *Prajāpati's Rise to Higher Rank*. (Orientalia Rheno-Traiectina, 29.) Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- GUBERNATIS, Angelo de 1898. Brahman et Sāvitṛī, ou l'origin de la prière. In: *Actes du Onzième Congrès International des Orientalistes, Paris – 1897*, I: 9-44. Paris: Ernest Leroux.
- GUPTA, B. A. 1902. Notes on female tattoo designs in India. *The Indian Antiquary* 31: 293-298.
- 1906. The symbolism of the Sāvitṛī-vrata. *The Indian Antiquary* 35: 116-119.
- 1919. *Hindu Holidays and Ceremonials. With Dissertations on Origin, Folklore and Symbols*. 2nd rev. ed. Calcutta: Thacker.
- HARA, Minoru 1970. Tapodhana. *Acta Asiatica* 19: 58-75.
- HART, George L. 1975. *The Poems of Ancient Tamil. Their Milieu and their Sanskrit Counterparts*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- HAUER, J. W. 1927. *Der Vṛātya. Untersuchungen über die nichtbrahmanische Religion Altindiens*, I. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer.
- HEESTERMAN, J. C. 1967. The case of the severed head. *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens* 11: 22-43.
- HILLEBRANDT, Alfred 1897. *Ritual-Litteratur, vedische Opfer und Zauber*. (Grundriss der Indo-Arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde, 3.2.) Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner.
- HILTEBEITEL, Alf 1988. *The Cult of Draupadī, I: Mythologies: From Gingee to Kurukṣetra*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- 1991. *The Cult of Draupadī, II: On Hindu Ritual and the Goddess*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- 1997. Orders of diffusion in two Mahābhārata folk cults. *South Asian Folklorist* 1: 9-36.

- HOPKINS, Edward W. 1889. The Social and Military Position of the Ruling Caste in Ancient India. As Represented by the Sanskrit Epic. With an appendix on the status of woman. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 13: 179ff. (Reprinted as a separate book with pagination 1-320.)
- 1915. *Epic Mythology*. (Grundriss der Indo-Arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde 3.1.B.) Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner.
- HORSCH, Paul 1966. *Die vedische Gāthā- und Śloka-Literatur*. Bern: Francke Verlag.
- ISHII, Hiroshi 1993. Seasons, rituals and society. The culture and society of Mithila, the Parbate Hindus and the Newars as seen through a comparison of their annual rites. In: Yasuhiko Nagano & Yasuke Ikari (eds.), *From Vedic Altar to Village Shrine. Towards an Interface between Indology and Anthropology* (Senri Ethnological Studies, 36): 35-84. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology.
- JACOBSEN, Thorkild 1970. *Toward the Image of Tammuz and Other Essays on Mesopotamian History and Culture*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- 1976. *The Treasures of Darkness. A History of Mesopotamian Religion*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- 1987. "The Harps that Once..." *Sumerian Poetry in Translation*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- JACOBSON, Doranne 1978. The chaste wife. Cultural norm and individual experience. In: Sylvia Vatuk (ed.), *American Studies in the Anthropology of India*: 95-138. New Delhi: Manohar.
- JAMISON, Stephanie 1996. *Sacrificed Wife / Sacrificer's Wife. Women, Ritual, and Hospitality in Ancient India*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- KANE, Pandurang Vaman 1941. *History of Dharmasāstra. Ancient and Mediaeval Religious and Civil Law in India*, II.1-2. (Government Oriental Series, B6.) Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.
- 1958. *History of Dharmasāstra. Ancient and Mediaeval Religious and Civil Law in India*, V.1. (Government Oriental Series, B6.) Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.
- KARTTUNEN, Klaus 1989. *India in Early Greek Literature*. (Studia Orientalia, 65.) Helsinki: The Finnish Oriental Society.
- KISHWAR, Madhu & R. VANITA (eds.) 1984. *In Search of Answers. Indian Women's Voices from Manushi*. London. (Quoted from Leslie 1989.)
- KONOW, Sten & C. R. LANMAN 1901. *Rāja-Çekhara's Karpūra-Mañjarī. A Drama by the Indian Poet Rājaçekhara (about 900 A.D.)*. Critically edited in the original Prakrit, with a glossarial index, and an essay of the life and the writings of the poet by Sten Konow, and translated into English with notes by Charles Rockwell Lanman. (Harvard Oriental Series, 4.) Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- KOOIJ, Karel van 1972. *Worship of the Goddess according to the Kālikāpurāṇa*, I: A translation with an introduction and notes of chapters 54-69. (Orientalia Rheno-Traiectina, 14.) Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- KRAMER, Samuel Noah 1969. *The Sacred Marriage Rite. Aspects of Faith, Myth, and Ritual in Ancient Sumer*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- KRICK, Hertha 1982. *Das Ritual der Feuergründung (Agyādheya)*. Hrsg. von Gerhard Oberhammer. (Sitzungsberichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Klasse, 399; Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Sprachen und Kulturen Südasiens, 16.) Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- KRISHNACHARYA, T. R. (ed.) 1905. *The Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa According to Southern Recension*, I-II. [Reprinted with a] preface by J. W. de Jong. (Sri Garib Dass Oriental Series, 2-3.) Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1982.
- KSS = Kathāsaritśāgara. See Somadeva.

- KUMAR, Savitri V. 1983. *The Pauranic Lore of Holy Water-places. With Special Reference to Skanda Purāna*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.
- LAW, B. C. 1960. The ancient city of Sakala. *Journal of Indian History* 38: 533-545.
- LESLIE, I. Julia 1989. *The Perfect Wife. The Orthodox Hindu Woman According to the Strīdharmapaddhati of Tryambakayajvan*. (Oxford University South Asian Studies Series.) Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- LIMAYE, V. P. & R. D. VADEKAR (eds.) 1958. *Eighteen Principal Upaniṣads*, I. Poona: Vaidika Saṃśodhana Maṇḍala.
- LOMMEL, Herman 1955-58. Die aufopferungsvolle Gattin im alten Indien. *Paideuma* 6: 95-109.
- LOSCH, Hans 1935. Totenwiedererweckungsgeschichten in Indien. In: *Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Nahen und Fernen Ostens. Paul Kahle zum 60. Geburtstag*: 173-180. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- MACDONELL, A. A. 1897. *Vedic Mythology*. (Grundriss der indo-arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde, 3.1.A.) Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner.
- MCGEE, Mary 1991. Desired fruits. Motive and intention in the votive rites of Hindu women. In: Julia Leslie (ed.), *Roles and Rituals for Hindu Women*: 71-88. Rutherford: Farleigh Dickinson University Press.
- MACLEAN, C. D. (ed.) 1893. *Glossary of the Madras Presidency*. (Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency, 3.) Madras: Government Press.
- Mahābhārata*: See Sukthankar et al.
- MALIK, Aditya 1993. *Das Puṣkara-Māhātmya. Ein religionswissenschaftlicher Beitrag zum Wallfahrtsbegriff in Indien*. Erörterung, Text, Übersetzung. (Beiträge zur Südasienforschung, 155.) Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- MANI, Vettam 1975. *Purānic Encyclopaedia*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Matsya-Purāna*: Text in Devanagari, translation and notes in English, I-II. Ed. by Nag Sharan Singh. Foreword by Horace Hayman Wilson. Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1983.
- MONIER-WILLIAMS, Monier 1899. *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. New ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- MOOR, Edward 1810. *The Hindu Pantheon*. London: J. Johnson.
- NAIDU, M. Paupa Rao 1900. *The History of Railway Thieves in India. With Illustrations and Hints on Detection*. Madras: Higginbothams Limited.
- OBEYESEKERE, Gananath 1984. *The Cult of the Goddess Pattini*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- O'FLAHERTY, Wendy Doniger 1973. *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva*. London: Oxford University Press.
- 1981. *The Rig Veda: An Anthology*. One hundred and eight hymns, selected, translated and annotated. (The Penguin Classics.) Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Padma-Purāna*: Poṭhi form, I-IV. Introduction by Charudeva Shastri. Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1984. (See also Deshpande 1988-92.)
- PARPOLA, Asko 1975. Isolation and tentative interpretation of a toponym in the Harappan inscriptions. In: Jean Leclant (éd.), *Le déchiffrement des écritures et des langues. Colloque du XXIX^e Congrès International des Orientalistes*: 121-143. Paris: L'Asiathèque.
- 1980. Review of Buitenen, The Mahābhārata, I-II. *Acta Orientalia* 41: 85-95.
- 1981. On the primary meaning and etymology of the sacred syllable *ōm*. *Studia Orientalia* 50: 195-213.
- 1983. The pre-Vedic Indian background of the śrauta rituals. In: Frits Staal (ed.), *Agni. The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, II: 41-75. Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press.
- 1984. On the Jaiminiya and Vādhūla traditions of South India and the Paṇḍu/Pāṇḍava problem. *Studia Orientalia* 55: 429-468.

- PARPOLA, Asko 1985. *The Sky-Garment. A Study of the Harappan Religion and its Relation to the Mesopotamian and Later Indian Religions.* (Studia Orientalia, 57.) Helsinki: The Finnish Oriental Society.
- 1988. The coming of the Aryans to Iran and India and the cultural and ethnic identity of the Dāsas. *Studia Orientalia* 64: 195-302.
- 1992. The metamorphoses of Mahiṣa Asura and Prajāpati. In: A. W. van den Hoek, D. H. A. Kolff & M. S. Oort (eds.), *Ritual, State and History in South Asia. Essays in Honour of J. C. Heesterman*: 275-308. (Memoirs of the Kern Institute, 5.) Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- 1994a. *Deciphering the Indus Script.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 1994b. Harappan inscriptions. An analytical catalogue of the Indus inscriptions from the ancient Near East. In: Flemming Højlund & H. Hellmuth Andersen, *Qala' at al-Bahrain, I: The Northern City Wall and the Islamic Fortress.* (The Carlsberg Foundation's Gulf Project.) (Jutland Archaeological Society Publications, 30.1.): 304-315 & 483-492 (bibliography). Aarhus: Jutland Archaeological Society.
- 1995. The problem of the Aryans and the Soma. Textual-linguistic and archaeological evidence. In: George Erdosy (ed.), *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia. Language, Material Culture and Ethnicity* (Indian Philology and South Asian Studies, 1): 353-381. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- 1999. Formation of the Aryan branch of Indo-European. In: Roger Blench & Matthew Spriggs (eds.), *Language and Archaeology, III: Combining Archaeological and Linguistic Aspects of the Past*: 180-207. London: Routledge.
- , in press 1. Conceptual categories and their classification in Middle Vedic texts. A review of Brian K. Smith's two recent books. In: Folke Josephson (ed.), *Categorisation and Interpretation. Indological and Comparative Studies from an International Indological Meeting at the Department of Comparative Philology, Göteborg University. A volume dedicated to the memory of Gösta Liebert*: (Meijerbergs arkiv för svensk ordforskning, 24): 5-22. Göteborg.
- , in press 2. The iconography and cult of Kuṭṭiccātan. Field research on the sanskritization of local folk deities in Kerala. In: Johannes Bronkhorst & Madhav M. Deshpande (eds.), *Aryan and Non-Aryan in South Asia. Evidence, Interpretation and Ideology.* (Harvard Oriental Series, Opera Minora, 3). Cambridge, Mass.: Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Harvard University.
- PARPOLA, Simo (ed.) 1997. *Assyrian Prophecies.* Illustrations edited by Julian Reade and Simo Parpola. (State Archives of Assyria, 9.) Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- PEARSON, Anne Mackenzie 1996. "Because it Gives Me Peace of Mind". *Ritual Fasts in the Religious Lives of Hindu Women.* (McGill Studies in the History of Religions.) Albany: State University of New York Press.
- POLLOCK, Sheldon I. (tr.) 1986. *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki. An Epic of Ancient India, II: Ayodhyākāṇḍa.* Introduction, translation and annotation by Sheldon I. Pollock. Ed. by Robert P. Goldman. (Princeton Library of Asian Translations.) Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- POPE, G. U. 1886. *The 'Sacred' Kurraḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva-Nāyanār.* With introduction, grammar, translation, notes (in which are reprinted Fr. C. J. Beschi's and F. W. Ellis' versions), lexicon, and concordance. London: W. H. Allen & Co.
- Rāmāyaṇa.* See Bhatt & Shah 1960-75; Krishnacharya 1905; Pollock 1986.
- RENGER, J. 1972-75. Heilige Hochzeit: A. Philologisch. In: *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, IV: 251-259. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- RODHE, Sten 1946. *Deliver us from Evil. Studies on the Vedic Ideas of Salvation.* (Skrifter utgivna av Svenska sällskapet för missionsforskning, 2.) Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup.

- SEFATI, Yitschak 1998. *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature. Critical Edition of the Dumuzi-Inanna Songs*. (Bar-Ilan Studies in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures.) Ramat Gan (Israel): Bar-Ilan University Press.
- SETTAR, S. 1971. The Brahmadeva pillars. *Artibus Asiae* 18: 17-38.
- SHULMAN, David D. 1980. *Tamil Temple Myths. Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Śaiva Tradition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- SILVA, Severine 1955. Traces of human sacrifices in Kanara. *Anthropos* 50: 577-592.
- SINGH, Nag Sharan (ed.) 1983. *The Matsyamahāpurāṇam*, I-II. Text in Devanagari, translation and notes in English. Foreword by Horace Hayman Wilson. Delhi: Nag Publishers.
- Skanda-Purāṇa*: Poṭhi form, I-VII. Bombay: Venkaṭeśvara Press, 1908-09. Reprinted, with an introduction by R. N. Sharma and a śloka index by Nagasara Sinha (Vol. VIII). Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1980. (See also Tagare 1995.)
- SMITH, Brian K. 1989. *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- 1994. *Classifying the Universe. The Ancient Indian Varṇa System and the Origins of Caste*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Somadeva, *Kathāsaritsāgara* [=KSS]: *Kathāsaritsāgaraḥ kaśmīrapradeśavāsīnā śrīrāma-bhaṭṭatanūdbhavena mahākaviśrīsomadevabhṭṭena viracitaḥ, sa cāṣṭādaśalambakātma-kaḥ madhyapradeśāntargatamahākośalaviṣayāntaḥpāṭijālāvīpuravāsīnā saṃskṛtācāryeṇa paṇḍitajagadīśalāśāstrīṇā bhūmikānukramaṇibhyām alankṛtya saṃpāditāḥ*. Dillī: Motilāl Banārsīdās, 1970.
- SÖRENSEN, Sören 1904-25. *An Index to the Names in the Mahābhārata*. With short explanations and a concordance to the Bombay and Calcutta editions and P. C. Roy's translation. (Edited after the author's death by Elof Olesen.) London: Ernest Benn.
- SRIMANNARAYANA MURTI, M. 1988. Position and status of women in the age of the liturgical Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads (c. 1500 to c. 500 B.C.). In: L. K. Tripathi (ed.), *Position and Status of Women in Ancient India (Seminar Papers)*, I: 8-32. Varanasi: Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, Banaras Hindu University.
- STAAL, Frits (ed.) 1983. *Agni. The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, I-II. Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press.
- STIETENCRON, Heinrich von 1966. *Indische Sonnenpriester: Sāmba und die Śākadvīpiya-Brāhmaṇa. Eine textkritische und religionsgeschichtliche Studie zum indischen Sonnenkult*. (Schriftenreihe des Südasien-Instituts der Universität Heidelberg, 3.) Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.
- SUKTHANKAR, Vishnu S. (ed.) 1942. *The Āraṇyakaparvan (Part 1-2). Being the Third Book of the Mahābhārata*. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.
- SUKTHANKAR, V. S., S. K. BELVALKAR & P. L. VAIDYA (eds.) 1933-59. *The Mahābhārata*. Critically edited, I-XIX (in 21 parts). Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.
- TAGARE, G. P. (tr.) 1995. *The Skanda-Purāṇa*, VIII. (Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology, 56.) Delhi: Motilal Banarsidās.
- TARKĀLĀNKĀRA, Chandrakānta (ed.) 1899. *Parāśara-Smṛti. With the Gloss by Mādhavācāryya*, II. (Bibliotheca Indica, 298.) Calcutta: The Asiatic Society.
- TEWARI, Laxmi G. 1991. *A Splendour of Worship. Women's Fasts, Rituals, Stories and Art*. New Delhi: Manohar.
- THAKUR, Upendra 1963. *The History of Suicide in India. An Introduction*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.
- THURSTON, Edgar 1906. *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India*. Madras: Government Press.
- TOD, James 1835. Comparison of the Hindu and Theban Hercules. Illustrated by an ancient Hindu intaglio. *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 3: 139-159.

- TOKUNAGA, Muneo (ed.) 1997. *The Bṛhaddevata. Text Reconstructed from the Manuscripts of the Shorter Recension*. With introduction, explanatory notes, and indices. Kyoto: Rinsen Book Co.
- TURNER, Ralph L. 1966. *A Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages*. London: Oxford University Press.
- VARENNE, Jean 1960. *La Mahā Nārāyaṇa Upaniṣad, I: Édition critique, avec une traduction française, une étude, I*. (Publications de l'Institut de Civilisation Indienne, Série in-8:o, 11.) Paris: Institut de Civilisation Indienne de l'Université de Paris.
- VERMASEREN, Maarten J. 1977. *Cybele and Attis. The Myth and the Cult*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa*: Poṭhi form. Introduction by Charudeva Shastri. Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1985.
- VOGEL, J. Ph. 1920. The sign of the spread hand or the 'five-finger token' in Pali literature. *Verslagen en Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde 5.4.*: 218-235. Amsterdam: Johannes Müller.
- WEBER, Albrecht 1873. Zur Kenntniss des vedischen Opferrituals (Fortsetzung). *Indische Studien* 13: 217-292.
- WHITNEY, William Dwight 1885. *The Roots, Verb-forms, and Primary Derivatives of the Sanskrit Language. A Supplement to his Sanskrit Grammar*. (Bibliothek indogermanischer Grammatiken, 2.2.) Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel.
- (tr.) 1905. *Atharva Veda Samhita, I-II*. Edited by C. R. Lanman. (Harvard Oriental Series, 7-8.) Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- WINTERNITZ, Moriz 1920. *Die Frau in den indischen Religionen, I: Die Frau im Brahmanismus*. (Sonderdruck aus dem Archiv für Frauenkunde und Eugenetik 2-3, 1915-1917.) Leipzig: Verlag von Curt Kabitzsch.
- WIRTH, Gerhard & Oskar VON HINÜBER (Hrsg. & übers.) 1985. Arrian, *Der Alexanderzug: Indische Geschichte*. Griechisch und Deutsch herausgegeben und übersetzt. (Sammlung Tusculum.) München: Tusculum-Verlag.
- WITZEL, Michael 1987. The case of the shattered head. *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 13-14 (Festschrift Wilhelm Rau): 363-415.
- ZVELEBIL, Kamil V. 1973. *The Smile of Murugan. On Tamil Literature of South India*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- 1974. *Tamil Literature*. (A History of Indian Literature 10.1.) Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.
- 1975. *Tamil Literature*. (Handbuch der Orientalistik, 2.2.1.) Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- 1992. *Companion Studies to the History of Tamil Literature*. (Handbuch der Orientalistik, 2.5.) Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- 1995. *Lexicon of Tamil Literature*. (Handbuch der Orientalistik, 2.9.) Leiden: E. J. Brill.