

# Akhenaten, Sūrya, and the Ṛgveda

Subhash Kak

July 17, 2003

A sad consequence of the colonialist historiography of the 19th century Indologists is the comparative neglect of India's interaction with Africa. Cyril Hromnik's *Indo-Africa*<sup>1</sup> (1981) is the only book on the Indian contribution to the history of sub-Saharan Africa that I am aware of, but it is just an exploratory study. The story of India's interaction with Egypt is better known, if only to scholars. Two important figures in this story are the Mitanni king Tushratta and the New Kingdom pharaoh Akhenaten. But even this encounter between the Indoaryan speaking Tushratta and the Egyptian Pharaoh is not well understood although it was to have far-reaching implications for world history.

The Sun King Akhenaten of Egypt (ruled 1352-1336 BC according to the mainstream view) was a son-in-law of Tushratta, the Mitanni king of North Syria, through queen Kiya.<sup>2</sup> (The name Tushratta is spelled Tuišrata in the Hittite cuneiform script, which does not distinguish between “d” and “t” very well. Some have suggested that the Sanskrit original is *Daśaratha*, a few others that it is *Tveṣaratha* (having splendid chariots), a name which is attested in the Ṛgveda. Letters exchanged between Akhenaten and Tushratta have been found in Amarna in Egypt<sup>3</sup> and other evidence comes from the tombs of the period, which have been discovered in excellent condition.

The Amarna age is one of the best-known and most romantic periods of ancient Egypt. Akhenaten was revolutionary in his religious beliefs, and many argue that his ideas mark the beginnings of the Western monotheistic tradition. This period also saw the fabulously beautiful Nefertiti, Akhenaten's first queen who came from a mixed Mitanni family, palace intrigues, artistic triumph and great personal tragedy.

In this essay, I shall investigate the question whether the worship of the

Sun introduced by Akhenaten might have had connections with the Indic beliefs of the Mitannis. Implications of this early encounter between the Indic and the Western worlds will also be examined in view of the widely accepted opinion amongst biblical scholars that Akhenaten's beliefs were the model for the later Jewish and Christian beliefs.<sup>4</sup> I shall present evidence indicating that the famous hymn to Aten by Akhenaten which is seen as a precursor to Psalm 104 of the Bible was influenced by the "Vedic" hymns that were a part of the Mitanni heritage.

In view of the important role that biblical ideas have played in history, the question of the relationship between Akhenaten's monotheism and Vedic ideas is of great significance. It provides a lesson that the past consists of unexpected complexity and that influences have flowed in different directions. I am not suggesting that the encounter between India and West Asia was one-sided; India must also have been changed in many ways.

## The Mitanni

The Mitanni, who worshiped Vedic gods, were an Indic kingdom that had bonds of marriage across several generations with the Egyptian 18th dynasty to which Akhenaten belonged. The Mitanni were known to the Egyptians as the Naharin (N'h'ryn'), connected to the river (nahar), very probably referring to the Euphrates. At its peak, the Mitanni empire stretched from Kirkuk (ancient Arrapkha) and the Zagros mountains in western Iran in the east, through Assyria to the Mediterranean sea in the west. Its center was in the region of the Khabur River, where its capital, Wassukkani was probably located (Figure 1).

The first Mitanni king was Sutarna I (good sun). He was followed by Baratarna I (Paratarna, great sun), Paraśukṣatra (ruler with axe), Saus-tatar (Saukṣatra, son of Sukṣatra, the good ruler), Paratarna II, Artadāma (Ṛtadhāman, abiding in cosmic law), Sutarna II, Tushratta (Daśaratha), and finally Matiwazza (Mativāja, whose wealth is thought) during whose lifetime the Mitanni state appears to have become a vassal to Assyria.

The early years of the Mitanni empire were occupied in the struggle with Egypt for control of Syria. The greatest Mitanni king was Saukṣatra who reigned during the time of Tuthmose III. He was said to have looted the

Assyrian palace at Ashur. Under the reign of Tuthmose IV, more friendly relations were established between the Egyptians and the Mitanni.

The daughter of King Artadāma was married to Tuthmose IV, Akhenaten's grandfather, and the daughter of Sutarna II (Gilukhipa) was married to his father, Amenhotep III, the great builder of temples who ruled during 1390-1352 BC ("khipa" of these names is the Sanskrit *kṣipā*, night). In his old age, Amenhotep wrote to Tushratta many times wishing to marry his daughter, Tadukhipa. It appears that by the time she arrived Amenhotep III was dead. Tadukhipa was now married to the new king Akhenaten, becoming famous as the queen Kiya (short for Khipa).

The Egyptian kings had other wives as well. Akhenaten's mother, Tiye, was the daughter of Yuya, who was a Mitanni married to a Nubian. It appears that Nefertiti was the daughter of Tiye's brother Ay, who was to become king himself. The 18th dynasty had a liberal dose of Indic blood.

But how could an Indic kingdom be so far from India, near Egypt? A plausible scenario is that after catastrophic earthquakes dried up the Sarasvati river around 1900 BC, many groups of Indic people started moving West.<sup>5</sup> This idea of westward movement of Indic people is preserved in the Vedic and Purāṇic texts.<sup>6</sup>

We see Kassites, a somewhat shadowy aristocracy with Indic names and worshipping Sūrya and the Maruts, in Western Iran about 1800 BC. They captured power in Babylon in 1600 BC, which they were to rule for over 500 years. The Mitanni, another group that originated thus, ruled northern Mesopotamia (including Syria) for about 300 years, starting 1600 BC, out of their capital of Vasukhāni. (For Mitanni names, I give standard Sanskrit spellings rather than the form that we find in inscriptions in the inadequate cuneiform script, such as Wassukkani for Vasukhāni, "a mine of wealth".) Their warriors were called *marya*, which is the proper Sanskrit term for it.

In a treaty between the Hittites and the Mitanni, Indic deities Mitra, Varuṇa, Indra, and Nāsatya (Aśvins) are invoked. A text by a Mitannian named Kikkuli uses words such as aika (*eka*, one), tera (*tri*, three), panza (*panca*, five), satta (*sapta*, seven), na (*nava*, nine), vartana (*varṭana*, round). Another text has babru (*babhru*, brown), parita (*palita*, grey), and pinkara (*piṅgala*, red). Their chief festival was the celebration of *viśuva* (solstice) very much like in India. It is not only the kings who had Sanskrit names;

a large number of other Sanskrit names have been unearthed in the records from the area.

Documents and contract agreements in Syria mention a warrior caste that constituted the elite in the cities. The ownership of land appears to have been inalienable. Consequently, no documents on the selling of landed property are to be found in the great archives of Akkadian documents and letters discovered in Nuzi. The prohibition against selling landed property was dodged with the stratagem of "adopting" a willing buyer against an appropriate sum of money.

Information of the mythology of the Hurrians of the Mitanni is known from related Hittite and Ugaritic myths. The king of the gods was the weather god Teshub who had violently deposed Kumarbi paralleling the killing of Vṛtra by Indra. Major sanctuaries of Teshub were located at Arrapkha (modern Kirkuk) and at Halab (modern Aleppo) in Syria. Like Indra, Teshub also had a solar aspect. In the east his consort was the goddess of love and war Shaushka (Venus), and in the west the goddess Hebat (Hepat). In addition, a considerable importance was attributed to impersonal gods such as heaven and earth as well as to deities of mountains and rivers. Temple monuments of modest dimensions have been unearthed.

The general Indic influence in the area may also be seen in the comprehensiveness of the god lists. The most "official" god list, in two Ugaritic copies and one Akkadian translation, consists of 33 items,<sup>7</sup> exactly as is true of the count of Vedic gods. These gods are categorized into three classes, somewhat like the three classes of the Vedic gods, although there are difference in details.

Greek accounts tell us that the Ugaritic believed in a cosmic egg out of which the earth emerged which is reminiscent of brahmāṇṇa of the Vedic view.

How do we know that the Mitanni were Indic and not Iranian? There are several reasons, but to be brief, I shall only give three: 1. the deities Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, and Nāsatya are Indian deities and not Iranian ones, because in Iran Varuṇa is unknown and Indra and Nāsatya appear as demons; 2. the name Vasukhāni makes sense in Sanskrit as a "mine of wealth" whereas in Iranian it means "good mine" which is much less likely; 3. satta, or sapta, for seven, rather than the Iranian word hapta, where the initial 's' has been

changed to ‘h’.

Why could not the Mitanni be the descendents of a pre-Vedic people as in the Gimbutas model<sup>8</sup> of the spread of the Indo-Iranian people from the Kurgan culture of the steppes of Central Asia? They would then have had no particular affinity for Indic deities. If the pre-Vedic people in Central Asia already had Indic deities, how would these small bands of people impose their culture and language over what was perhaps the most densely populated region of the ancient world. Furthermore, that view does not square with our knowledge of the astronomical tradition within India. The Vedic Saṃhitās have very early astronomical and its geography is squarely within India. The Vedāṅga Jyotiṣa, a late Vedic text, already belongs to the middle of the second millennium BC. The earlier texts remember events within the Indic geographical area going back to the third and the fourth millennia BC.<sup>9</sup> The theory of a proto-Indoaryan people in Iran from whom the Aryans of India descended<sup>10</sup> in the second millennium BC does not work for the same reasons.

The idea of invasion or large-scale immigration of outsiders into India displacing the original population in the middle of the second millennium BC has been rejected since it is not in accord with archaeological facts, skeletal records, and the continuity of the cultural tradition.<sup>11</sup> In a recent synthesis<sup>12</sup>, it was concluded that “there is no archaeological or biological evidence for invasions or mass migrations into the Indus Valley between the end of the Harappan Phase, about 1900 BC and the beginning of the Early Historic period around 600 BC.” Other scholars see no break in the cultural tradition between 4500 BC and 600 BC.

The Indian textual tradition also does not permit us to accept the Gimbutas model because of the length of time required for the rise of the voluminous Indian literature.<sup>13</sup> Pāṇini already in the 500 BC knows<sup>14</sup> of the Bhārata and the Mahābhārata in one of his sūtras (6.2.38). This means that the epic was substantially complete by 500 BC, although it may have undergone further modifications and interpolations in subsequent centuries. The evidence of the sūtra by Pāṇini seems to have escaped most historians although V.S. Agrawala did call attention to it decades ago.<sup>15</sup>

The Mahābhārata tradition itself acknowledges that the text was originally 8,800 verses, composed by Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, when it was still called Jaya. Later, it was enlarged to 24,000 verses and came to be called

Bhārata. It was transmitted by Vyāsa to Vaiśampāyana and finally recited by Ugraśravas as the familiar Mahābhārata of the 100,000 verses; the two latter bards appear thus to be responsible for its enlargements. Since the enlargements of the Mahābhārata are likely to have stretched over several centuries, it is unlikely that the text would not remember the migrations out of Central Asia as is required in the Gimbutas model.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, the astronomical references<sup>17</sup> related to the Aśvamedha rite in the Mahābhārata point to its extreme antiquity going back to the 4th millennium BC, which cannot be squared with the Gimbutas model.

## Indic Names in West Asia

Over fifty years ago, Roger T. O'Callaghan and W.F. Albright published in *Analecta Orientalia* of Rome a list of 81 names (13 from the Mitanni, 23 from the Nuzi, and 45 from the Syrian documents) with Indic etymologies. Out of this list, Dumont provided the etymology of 45 names in the much more readily available *Journal of the American Oriental Society* of 1947.<sup>18</sup> A few of these names with the Sanskrit cognates in parentheses are:

Abirata (Abhirata, pleased, contented)

Aitagama (Etagama, with the gait of an antelope)

Aitara (the son of Itarā)

Artamanyu (Ṛtamanyu, revering the divine Law)

Ardzawīya (Ārjavīya, straight, honest)

Bīrasēna (Vīrasena, possessing an army of heroes)

Biridāśwa (Bṛhadaśva, possessing great horse)

Bardaśwa (Vārdhāśva, the son of Vṛddhāśva)

Bāyawa (Vāyava, the son of Vāyu)

Bīryaśura (Vīryaśūra, the hero of valour)

Bīryawādza (Vīryavāja, owning the prize of valour)  
Bīryasauma (Vīryasoma, the moon-god of valour)  
Bīrya (Vīrya, valour)  
Indarota (Indrota, upheld by Indra)  
Kalmaśūra (Karmaśūra, the hero of action)  
Purdāya (Purudāya, giving much)  
Ručmanya (Rucimanya, revering light)  
Satuara (Satvara, swift)  
Šaimaśūra (Kṣemaśūra, the hero of security)  
Subandu (Subandhu, being good kinsmen)  
Sumāla (having beautiful garlands)  
Sumīda (Sumīḍha, bountiful)  
Swardāta (Svardāta, given by heaven)  
Tsitriyara (Citrya-rai, having distinguished property)  
Urudīti (Urudīti, having wide splendour)  
Warasama (Varasama, equal to the best)  
Wāsasatta (Vāsasāpta, possessing seven dwellings)  
Wasdāta (Vasudāta, given by the Vasus)  
Yamiuta (Yamyūta, favoured by Yamin)

Analyzing the names, Dumont concludes that the names are clearly Indic and not Iranian. The initial *s* is maintained and the group *śv* is represented by the similar sounding *św* and not the Avestan *aspō*. Also, most of the names are bahuvrīhi or tatpuruṣa compounds.

Considering the language, it is clearly an Indic dialect because the initial *v* is replaced by *b*, while medial *v* becomes the semivowel *w*. Like Middle Indic (Prakrit) dialects, the medial *pt* transforms into *tt*, as in *sapta* becoming *satta*.

Dumont stresses its relationship to Sanskrit in the characteristic patronymic names with the vṛddhi-strengthening of the first syllable, like in *Saumati* (the son of *Sumati*) or *Sauṣapti* (the son of *Suṣapti*). The worship of the Vedic gods like *Indra*, *Vāyu*, *Svar*, *Soma*, *Ṛta*, *Vasus* has already been noted.

The fact the the Mitanni names suggest a Middle Indic dialect is supportive of the thesis that the emigration of the various groups from India took place after the early Vedic period had come to an end.

## Vedic Religion in West Asia

Our argument actually goes beyond the presence of people in West Asia whose languages were Indic, as was the case with the Mitanni. There is evidence that Indic religion and culture had adherents even outside of groups with Indic speech.

The Avesta speaks of the struggle between the worshipers of *Ahura Mazdā* and the *daevas*. This opposition in the Zoroastrian texts is expressed as one between the *Mazdayasnas* and the *Daēvayasnas*. It is a conflict in which Zoroaster wished to defeat and convert the worshipers of the *daēva* religion. The *Yašts* speak of legendary heroes and kings who participated in this struggle. The wars against the *Daēvayasnas* by *Vištāspa* (Yt. 5.109, 113; 9.30-31), *Jāmāspa* (Yt. 5.68-70), and *Vistaru* of the *Naotara* family (Yt. 5.76-77) represent this ongoing conflict in the historical period.<sup>19</sup>

In the *Vendidad*, the Zoroastrians are encouraged to take possession of the lands, waters, and harvests of the *daēva* worshipers (Vd. 19.26). Elsewhere (Vd. 7.36-40), it is recommended that the art of medicine should be first tried on the *daēva*-worshipers and if they survive then it should be attempted on the *Mazdayasnians*.<sup>20</sup>



Although the Zoroastrian heresy triumphed in Iran and the great Persian kings of the middle of first millennium BC followed the religion of Ahura Mazdā, the *daēva* worshipers survived, especially in the West, in the Mesopotamian religion.

Whether Zarathuštra belonged to the second millennium BC or later,<sup>21</sup> it is clear that the Vedic gods survived for a pretty long time in corners of Iran. The evidence of the survival of the Vedic gods from the *daiva*-inscription of Xerxes (ruled 486-465 BC). The revolt by the *daēva* worshipers in West Iran is directly referred to:

Proclaims Xerxes the King: When I became king, there is among these countries one which was in rebellion. Afterwards Ahuramazda bore me aid. By the favor of Ahuramazda I smote that country and put it down in its place.

And among these countries there was a place where previously *daiva* were worshiped. Afterwards, by the favor of Ahuramazda I destroyed that sanctuary of *daiva*, and I made proclamation: 'The *daiva* shall not be worshiped!' Where previously the *daiva* were worshiped, there I worshiped Ahuramazda at the proper time and in the proper manner. And there was other business that had been done ill. That I made good. That which I did, all I did by the favor of Ahuramazda. Ahuramazda bore me aid until I completed the work.

The analysis of early Persian history has shown that the Māzandarān, the region south of the Caspian sea and the Alburz mountain range, remained for long a centre of *daēva* worship. It has been suggested that the Xerxes inscription refers to the suppression of these people.

Burrow takes the *daēva* worshiping people to be proto-Indoaryans and sees them as the remnants of a population that stretched from West Asia to India. The Iranians coming down from the northeast drove a wedge between this belt, leading to the eventual assimilation of the western *daēva* worshipers in the course of centuries.

Irrespective of what the original movement of the Indoaryans was before the fourth or fifth millennium BC, it is clear that since their Indian branch recognizes the geography of only their region, it is either necessary to push

back the proto-Indoaryan phase to the fourth or the fifth millennium BC or to postulate their movement out of India as is suggested in the Purāṇas.

## **Akhenaten's Rule**

Akhenaten (“glory of the Aten”) ascended the throne as Amenhotep (“Amun is content”) IV but he changed his name to honour Aten (“One god” represented as the solar disk) in his sixth regnal year. Aten is the deification of the disk of the sun god, Ra, who was also represented by the eye.

Akhenaten moved his capital from Thebes to Akhetaten (“Horizon of Aten”), now known as Amarna, where palaces and buildings were built from mud brick, and in which he built a splendid temple to Aten filled with religious art.

After his father's death, he built temples on the perimeter of the famous Temple of Amun at Karnak and dedicated them to Aten, rather than Amun (“the Hidden One”, the principal deity at the time, also known as Amen). He erased the names of other gods, particularly Amun, and he also erased his father's name wherever he found it.

Some argue that Akhenaten introduced monotheism by the banishment of all deities excepting his chosen one. He has been seen as a precursor to the Old Testament prophets, and thus to the Abrahamic religions.<sup>22</sup> But it is equally plausible that he was influenced by the belief in “One Truth” behind appearances of the Vedic system through the three generations of queens in his family from the Mitannis.

The importance of the Vedic element appears to be reflected in the mysticism of the Egyptian Book of the Dead (from 1600 BC on). Nevertheless, the cult of the dead and resurrection remained the most important element of the Egyptian religion. This cult continues to form the cornerstone of the three Abrahamic faiths.

Akhenaten was succeeded by Smenkhkara, believed by some to be Nefertiti herself, and soon afterwards by Tutankhaten, Akhenaten's son by Tadukhipa (Kiya) under the regentship of Ay. Akhenaten was a fanatic and the country had suffered a great deal during his reign. The nobles now reversed course. Tutankhaten changed his name to Tutankhamen (to invoke Amun), but before he could consolidate power he was dead at the age of

sixteen after a rule of just nine years. His tomb was discovered intact in 1922, and now he is widely known as the Boy-King.

Tutankhamen was followed by Ay, Nefertiti's father, who ruled for four years. He, in turn, was followed by the general Horemheb, who now erased all records of Akhenaten, and his successors. The new city was abandoned, and worship of the Amun was reestablished. Akhenaten's disappeared from Egyptian history, and he was referred to as "that heretic" or "rebel", until the reconstruction of the history in modern times. Yet, his idea of a jealous god lived on, and prospered.

## Letters, Religion, and the End of Tushratta

The context to the Amarna correspondence, in which there are letters between the Egyptian, Mitanni, and other neighbouring kings, is provided in the book edited by Cohen and Westbrook.<sup>23</sup> These diplomatic letters, totalling nearly 400, were written in a space of about thirty-five years from about 1370 to 1335, from the end of the reign of Amenhotep III to the death of Tutankhamen. The texts were written in a dialect known as Western Peripheral Akkadian which was the lingua franca of the Near East, though one letter from Tushratta, is written in Hurrian.

Here is an extract from a letter by Tushratta to Amenhotep III, Akhenaten's father: "My father loved you, and you loved my father still more. And my father, because of his love, has given my sister to you... Behold, one chariot, two horses, one male servant, out of the booty from the land of Hatti I have sent you. And as a gift for my brother, five chariots and five teams of horses I have sent you. And as a gift for Gilukhipa, my sister, one set of gold pins, one set of gold earrings, one gold idol, and one container of sweet oil I have sent her." Another letter accompanies the image of goddess of Shaushka of Nineveh (Ishtar), Tushratta's *iṣṭa-devī*, sent to Amenhotep III to restore him to health during illness. Ishtar is Venus, and the Vena hymn of the Rigveda (10.123) anticipates her Mesopotamian mythology.<sup>24</sup>

A message of greetings from Tushratta to Akhenaten: "To Napkhuria (Akhenaten), king of Egypt, my brother, my son-in-law, who loves me and whom I love, thus speaks Tushratta, king of Mitanni, your father-in-law who loves you, your brother. I am well. May you be well too. Your houses, Tiye

your mother, Lady of Egypt, Tadukhipa, my daughter, your wife, your other wives, your sons, your noblemen, your chariots, your horses, your soldiers, your country and everything belonging to you, may they all enjoy excellent health.”

The Vedic presence via the Mitanni in Egypt and West Asia occurs several centuries before the exodus of the Jews. This presence is sure to have left its mark in various customs, traditions, and beliefs. Small Indic groups remained in the general area for centuries after the disappearance of the Mitanni. Thus Sargon defeats one Bagdatti of Uišdiš in 716 BC. The name Bagdatti (Skt. Bhagadatta) is Indic and cannot be Iranian because of the double ‘t’.

It may be that the continuing encounter between Indic and West Asian groups explains some parallels in mythology and ritual, such as worship of the goddess, circumambulation around a rock or the use of a rosary of 108 beads.<sup>25</sup> These practices are easily understandable within the Vedic system, whereas they are remembered as commandments to be believed without understanding in the Western faiths.

This encounter was facilitated by the trade that continued between these two regions of Asia. There is ample evidence for this trade during the Harappan period and earlier. Harappan objects have been found in numerous places in West Asia. Weights of the highly accurate Harappan system, which was different from the one in use in Mesopotamia, have been found in Dilmun in West Asia.<sup>26</sup> It is likely that such trade continued in the second and first millennia BC.

In the Amarna Letters, the correspondents are from Egypt, Mitanni, Babylonia, Hatti, and Assyria. Mitanni was also called Hanigalbat and Naharin; Babylonia is also named Karaduniyash or Shanhar; Hatti (of the Hittites) was sometimes named after its capital of Hattusha. In the Letters, Amenhotep III is called Mimmureya or Nimu’wareya or Nibmureya, while Akhenaten is also called Naphurureya.

The Hittite king Suppiluliumas launched a surprise attack on the Mitanni kingdom. In the course of his victorious march, Mitanni began to crumble and Tushratta was assassinated. His son fled through various lands, returning at long last to Vasukhāni as a vassal. Mitanni as an independent kingdom ceased to exist. As the vassal of the Hittites, the rump state was called Hanigalbat. Soon afterward, however, it was captured by the Assyrian

Adad-nirari I (probably during the reign of Horemheb) and later by Shalmaneser I (during the reign of Ramesses II), at which time the area east of the Euphrates was turned into an Assyrian province.

## Hymns to the Sun/Yahweh

I shall now present a partial translation of the *Great Hymn to the Aten*,<sup>27</sup> attributed to Akhenaten, from the Amarna tomb of Ay. This hymn is one of the most important early markers of the Western monotheistic tradition because of the manner in which it presents the Sun as the master and lord of human destiny. According to most biblical scholars, Psalm 104 of the Old Testament to *Yahweh* is derived from this hymn. To see the continuity with the Ṛgveda it may be noted that *Yahvāḥ* is a Vedic epithet associated with movement, activity, heaven and earth; it means the sacrificer and Agni, the chief terrestrial god.<sup>28</sup> *Yahvāḥ* as an epithet occurs 21 times in the Ṛgveda. It may be compared to *Śivaḥ*, an epithet for auspiciousness in the Ṛgveda that later is applied regularly to Rudra.

### Hymn to the Aten

Your dawning is beautiful in the horizon of heaven,  
O living Aten, creator of life!

When you set in the western horizon,  
Earth falls into a deathly darkness.  
People sleep in chambers, heads covered,  
oblivious of the world,  
the possessions in their head stolen.

Every lion comes forth from its den,  
the serpents sting.  
Darkness reigns, earth is silent,  
as their maker rests in heavens.

Earth brightens when you rise in the horizon,

when you shine as Aten of daytime.  
As you cast your rays,  
the Two Lands are in festivity.  
Awake, the people are on their feet.  
Cleansed and clothed,  
their arms adore your appearance.

The entire land sets out to work,  
The beasts browse on their herbs,  
trees and plants flourish.  
The birds fly from their nests,  
their wings greeting you,  
as the sheep frisk on their feet,  
and the insects flutter.  
All live when you dawn for them.

Boats travel north and south,  
and roads lie open when you dawn.  
The fish in the river leap up before you,  
your rays are in the midst of the sea.

You are the one who makes the seed in men,  
who feeds the son in the mother's womb,  
who soothes him that he may not weep,  
a nurse even in the womb.  
You give him breath when he is born,  
you open his mouth in speech.

When the chick in the egg cries in the shell,  
you give him breath to sustain him.  
You have perfected him  
to break out from the egg,  
chirp and run around on his two feet.

Your works are manifold,

though hidden from sight,  
O One Aten, beside whom there is no other.  
You created the world as you wished,  
you alone –  
all people, herds, flying creatures,  
the reckoning of their days.

You make the heavens  
to see your creation.  
You make the beauty of form,  
through yourself, alone.

You are in my heart,  
there is no other who knows you.  
Save your son, Akhenaten.  
You have taught him your ways,  
your might.

The world is in your hand,  
you are duration,  
beyond mere limbs.  
Man lives by you,  
and eyes look upon your beauty.

You established this world  
for your Son,  
who came from your body,  
the King, the Lord of the Two Lands,  
and Nefertiti, chief wife,  
living and youthful forever.

The relationship of this hymn to Psalm 104 of the Old Testament becomes striking when “Lord” of the King James version is changed into the proper “Yahweh”. There is mention in both of the absolute power over the life of animals and man, of the providing of natural bounties, and the responsibility

over personal destiny. It is also significant that the Sun is also supposed to be in the poet's heart.

It should be remembered that Yahweh assimilated the characteristics and epithets of previous gods of the region. For example, El was the chief god at Ugarit. Yet El is also the name used in many of the Psalms for Yahweh.

In 2 Kings 22:19-22 we read of Yahweh meeting with his heavenly council. The Ugaritic texts have a similar account, with the difference that the "sons of god" are the sons of El. Other deities worshipped at Ugarit were El Shaddai, El Elyon, and El Berith. Since all these names are applied to Yahweh by the writers of the Old Testament, it means that the Hebrew theologians assimilated the earlier mythology into their system.

Besides the chief god at Ugarit there were also lesser gods and goddesses. The most important of these lesser gods were Baal, the goddess Asherah, Yam (the god of the sea) and Mot (the god of death). It is interesting that Yam and Mot are the Hebrew words for sea and death, respectively. It is less well-known that Yam may be connected to the Vedic Yama who in RV 10.10.4 is seen as being born from the waters, and Mot to the Vedic Mr̥tyu, death.

We have mentioned the Vedic *Yahvāh* before; one may also note that *Īā* represents Agni as in Yajurveda (VS) 2.3; *Īlā* represents Earth, speech, and flow. These parallels indicate a shared history and these names may have entered the Ugaritic religion through the Mitannis.

The idea of the goddess was central to the West Asian people until the end of the first millennium BC. Asherah, a very important character in the Old Testament, is called the wife of Baal, although she is also known as the consort of Yahweh. Inscriptions found at Kuntillet 'Ajrud (dated between 850 and 750 BC) say: "I bless you through Yahweh of Samaria, and through his Asherah!" And at 'El Qom (from the same period) this inscription: "Uriyahu, the king, has written this. Blessed be Uriyahu through Yahweh, and his enemies have been conquered through Yahweh's Asherah." The Elephantine Papyri inform us that the Hebrews worshiped Asherah until the 3rd century BC.

Baal's name occurs frequently in the Old Testament. Some Israelites viewed Yahweh as a God of the desert and so when they arrived in Phoenicia they thought it only proper to adopt Baal, the god of fertility. One of the



central Ugaritic myths was the story of Baal's enthronement as king. In this story, Baal is killed by Mot (in the Fall of the year) and he remains dead until the Spring of the year. His victory over death was celebrated as his enthronement over the other gods. The Old Testament also celebrates the enthronement of Yahweh. As in the Ugaritic myth, the purpose of Yahweh's enthronement is to re-enact creation. That is, Yahweh overcomes death by his recurring creative acts.

The major difference between the Ugaritic myth and the Biblical hymns is that Yahweh's kingship is eternal and uninterrupted while Baal's is interrupted every year by his death. Since Baal is the god of fertility the meaning of this myth is quite easy to understand. He dies with the vegetation and he is reborn with it. Christianity took an element from Baal's death and made it a singular event.

When one reads the Psalms and the Ugaritic texts one finds that Yahweh is acclaimed for things previously associated with El. These Psalms appear to have been originally Ugaritic or Phoenician hymns to El which were adopted by the Jews. El is called the "father of men," "creator," and "creator of the creation," attributes also granted Yahweh by the Old Testament.

This discussion tells us how the hymns of the second millennium BC became a part of the Old Testament and thus can be close the older texts in style and form, even though the language may have changed.

### **Psalm 104, Old Testament**

Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, thou art very great;  
thou art clothed with honour and majesty.

Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest  
out the heavens like a curtain:

Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh  
the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the  
wind:

Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire:

Who laid the foundation of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever.

Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains.

At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away.

They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them.

Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.

He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills.

They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst.

By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches.

He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.

He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth;

And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.

The trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted;

Where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house.

The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies.

He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.

Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.

The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God.

The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens.

Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening.

O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.

So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts.

There go the ships: there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein.

These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season.

That thou givest them they gather: that openest thine hand, they are filled with good.

Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.

Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.

The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever: the Lord shall rejoice in his works.

He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke.

I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.

My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord.

Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked  
by no more. Bless thou the Lord, O my soul. Praise ye the  
Lord.

Scholars point to several similarities. Here, we list just a few. “When you set in the western horizon. earth falls into a deathly darkness... Every lion comes forth from its lair, the serpents sting.” (Hymn to Aten, stanzas 2-3). “Thou makest darkness, that it is night; wherein all beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from god.” (Psalm 104: 20-21)

“Your works are manifold, though hidden from sight, O One God, beside whom there is no other. You created the world as you wished, you alone.” (Hymn to Aten) “O Yahweh, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.” (Psalm 104: 24)

In 1937, Freud published his essay, *Moses and Monotheism*, in the journal *Imago*<sup>29</sup> proposing that the biblical figure of Moses was an Egyptian linked to the court of Akhenaten. Freud provided much stimulating evidence to support his argument, including the fact that the Jewish word for “Lord”, “Adonai”, becomes “Aten” when its letters are written in Egyptian.

The other details of Freud’s reconstruction are disputed but they are significant for estimating the importance of the Egyptian ideas within the Judeo-Christian tradition. According to Freud, Moses was a believer in the monotheism associated with Aten, but with the death of Akhenaten the successor Pharaohs reverted to their old religion. Moses (from *mose*, Egyptian for “child”) now went to exile as the head of an oppressed Semitic tribe and in order to set these people apart, he introduced the Egyptian custom of circumcision. His unruly followers killed Moses, and the tribesmen now adopted the volcanic deity, Yahweh of another tribe, as their national god. Yahweh was now endowed with the universal and spiritual qualities of the Moses’s god, though the memory of Moses’s murder remained repressed amongst the Jews, reemerging in a very disguised form with the rise of Christianity.

There is general agreement that Moses - who is said to have lived a staggering 120 years - was a composite character created out of the faded

memories of a variety of different individuals, some Hebrews, others Egyptian in origin. The Egyptian component included the memory of Akhenaten's worship of the single god in the sky.

According to Freud, the death of Moses became central to the experience of the Jews and it defined the structure of Christianity as well. Says Freud:<sup>30</sup> "Original sin and salvation through sacrificial death became the basis of the new religion founded by Paul. After the Christian doctrine had burst the confines of Judaism, it absorbed constituents from many other sources, renounced many features of pure monotheism, and adopted in many particulars the ritual of the other Mediterranean peoples. It was as if Egypt had come to wreak her vengeance on the heirs of Ikhnaton [Akhenaten]. The way in which the new religion came to terms with the ancient ambivalence in the father-son relationship is noteworthy. Its main doctrine, to be sure, was the reconciliation with God the Father, the expiation of the crime committed against him; but the other side of the relationship manifested itself in the Son, who had taken the guilt on his shoulders, becoming God himself beside the Father and in truth in place of the Father."

## **Sūrya in the Vedas**

The Rigvedic hymns 1.50, 4.13, 10.37, all addressed to Sūrya provide fascinating counterpoint and parallels to the Aten hymn and Psalm 104. These parallels include viewing the Sun as superintending each creature's welfare. For example, RV 1.50.6 says: "You keep strict watch upon the man who moves among the peoples." In contrast, the Atharvavedic Sun hymns of Book 13 are strictly solar.

The eye of Sūrya is mentioned and he is himself called the eye of Mitra, Varuṇa and Agni as in RV 1.115.

Although, hymns to the Sun from independent sources can be expected to have inevitable parallels relating to the motion in the sky and the warmth that it offers, the idea of the Sun superintending individual lives is surprising enough to have had the same source.

It is also noteworthy that in the Vedic view the universe has a tripartite division and the objective of human life is to reach the heaven, which is equated with the Sun. The representation of the Sun is in the form of a disk.

## Vedic Hymns to the Sun

For the sake of easy comparison, I reproduce RV 10.37 in R. Panikkar's translation.<sup>31</sup>

Homage to the Eye of Mitra and Varuṇa!  
To the mighty God offer this worship  
to the farseeing emblem, born of the Gods.  
Sing praise to the Sun, the offspring of Heaven. [1]

May this word of Truth guard me on all sides,  
while earth and heaven and days endure.  
To its rest goes all else that moves, but never  
do the waters cease flowing or the sun rising. [2]

From ancient days no godless man  
obstructs your path when you drive the winged sun-horse.  
Your one dark side is turned eastward; with the other  
the light-filled side, you arise, O Sun. [3]

By your light, O Sun, which scatters gloom,  
by your rays which arouse the whole creation,  
dispel from our hearts all languor, all neglect  
of worship, all grief and evil dreams. [4]

Sent forth as an envoy upon your course,  
you superintend each creature's welfare,  
rising with calm unvarying. May the Gods  
grant us to achieve your goal today! [5]

This prayer of ours may Heaven and Earth,  
the Waters, Indra, and the Maruts heed!  
May we never be deprived of the Sun's shining,  
may we attain old age in happiness! [6]

Keen of mind and keen of sight,  
free from sickness, free from sin,  
rich in children, may we see you rise  
as a friend, O Sun, till a long life's end! [7]

O farseeing Sun, the bearer of Light,  
the joy of every single eye,  
may we live to see your glorious radiance  
flooding in as you ascend on high! [8]

You shine, all living things emerge.  
You disappear, they go to rest.  
Recognizing your innocence, O golden-haired Sun,  
arise; let each day be better than the last. [9]

Bless us by your gaze, your brightness and shining.  
Bless us in cold and in heat, O Sun,  
grant us blessings at home and, when we are traveling,  
bestow upon us your wonderful treasure. [10]

Protect both our species, two-legged and four-legged.  
Both food and water for their needs supply.  
May they with us increase in stature and strength.  
Save us from hurt all our days, O Powers. [11]

Whatever grave offense we have committed against you,  
by our tongue, O God, or by carelessness of mind,  
lay the burden of this sin on the one who plans evil,  
on him, O Vasus, who wishes us ill. [12]

It is clear from this hymn that Sūrya is not only the outer Sun, but also the source of life and warmth and the overseer of the individual's personal life. This latter conception is Sun as Lord who resides within the individual. In the Vedic view, the inner Sun is ātman who is the same as Brahman, as in the Upaniṣadic *ayam ātma brahma*. The double reference to the inner Sun

is clear in Ṛgveda 1.50 where it is stated: “O Sun, maker of the Light, who illumine all the radiant sky. You shine upon the host of Gods and likewise on the race of men, that all may see the heavenly Light.”

The similarities between these three important compositions are striking. The imagery has many parallels. The Lord or the Sun is not only a distant object that provides light and warmth with ceaseless punctuality, it also rules our individual destinies. The Sun is in the sky and also within the heart.

Another interesting Ṛgvedic hymn describing Sūrya is 7.63. Here it is in the Griffith translation:<sup>32</sup>

Common to all mankind, auspicious Sūrya, he who beholdeth all,  
is mounting upward; The God, the eye of Varuṇa and Mitra, who  
rolled up darkness like a piece of leather. [1]

Sūrya’s great ensign, restless as the billow, that urgeth men to  
action, is advancing: Onward he still would roll the wheel well-  
rounded, which Etaṣa, harnessed to the car-pole, moveth. [2]

Refulgent from the bosom of the Mornings, he in Whom singers  
take delight ascendeth. This Savitar, God, is my chief joy and  
pleasure, who breaketh not the universal statute. [3]

Golden, far-seeing, from the heaven he riseth: far is his goal, he  
hasteth on resplendent. Men, verily, inspirited by Sūrya speed to  
their aims and do the work assigned them. [4]

Where the immortals have prepared his pathway he flieth through  
the region like a falcon. With homage and oblations will we serve  
you, O Mitra-Varuṇa, when the Sun hath risen. [5]

Now Mitra, Varuṇa, Aryaman vouchsafe us freedom and room,  
for us and for our children. May we find paths all fair and good  
to travel. Preserve us evermore, ye Gods, with blessings. [6]



Some hymns to the Ādityas stress the conception of personal overlordship even further. For example, AV 4.16 speaks thus:

The mighty overseer on high  
espies our deeds, as if he were  
quite close at hand.  
The Gods through him know all men do.. [1]  
...Two men may hatch a plot together;  
Varuṇa knows it all, being present  
as the third one. [2]  
Varuṇa contains  
within his body both the oceans,  
and yet he also is contained  
within one droplet. [3]  
Seize and bind with a hundred cords,  
O Varuṇa, the one who utters falsehood...[7]  
Varuṇa is the warp of the loom,  
Varuṇa is the woof of the loom  
of this universe.  
Varuṇa is of us, Varuṇa is foreign,  
Varuṇa is divine, he is also human,  
Varuṇa the King. [8]

It is also notable that the Sun was represented as a golden disk (rukma) with a golden image of the puruṣa on it in the Agnicayana ritual which forms a large part of the Yajurveda. This was the period when the Vedic religion did not have monumental images of divinity.

It is not impossible that the poetic imagery associated with the Sun in the Sūrya and the Aten hymns was conceived independently, but it is unlikely. The idea of the Sun somehow appearing within the heart of the individual is a revolutionary one, and since we do know of the presence of a people (the Mitanni) who believed in the Vedic pantheon together with its sophisticated understanding of the inner world, it is more likely that the genetic relationship of the idea is as follows:

Ṛgvedic Sūrya ⇒ Aten ⇒ Yahweh of Psalm 104

We are not suggesting here that the Ṛgveda as it has come down to us was carried to the West Asia by the Mitannis, although that cannot be ruled out; rather that hymns with similar themes must have been a part of the Mitanni culture as they went westwards from India. During this passage to and sojourn in West Asia, their religion is bound to have been affected by the local beliefs. The worship of Ishtar points to a Babylonian gloss over their original Vedic system.

It is clear that all aspects of the Vedic conception of Sūrya could not be a part of the idea of Aten. In the Indic view, cosmic law (*ṛta*) and a personal God are intertwined together through the mystery of sacrifice. In the later amplification of the Vedic ideas, Puruṣa is apart and the unfolding is a consequence of the law acting through Prakṛti. In the Aten hymn the idea of personal God is the predominant one although it is clear that the cosmic law is also implied. The hymn appears perfectly consonant with the conception of Sūrya. Nevertheless, from Akhenaten's banishing of other gods in his rule suggests that he was inspired by an incomplete idea.

It is possible that the parallels between Sūrya and Aten are entirely coincidental due to the similarities between the Egyptian and Vedic conceptions about the universe and divinity. The pre-Akhenaten religion had a spiritual basis and the Egyptians formed several syncretisms between the sungod Re and other gods, resulting in such names as Re-Harakhty, Amon-Re, Sebek-Re, and Khnum-Re. The Vedic gods, being projections of the One Divinity, also are combined together. But there was one distinct difference of emphasis between the Vedic system where the gods were more heard than seen whereas in Egypt system their representation in images was the predominant expression. If the seen was accorded the most significance in Egypt; in India, the heard (*śruti*) was likewise supreme. The conceptions of paradise were different. In Egypt, the body was raised to it upon death; in India, the body in paradise was a subtle golden body, unconnected to the life on earth. The difference was, no doubt, due to a difference in the underlying cosmologies of the two cultures. It was reflected in the different funerary practices in the two regions.

Given the matrimonial alliance across several generations between the "Vedic" Mitanni (whose fondness for monumental representation of gods must have been limited) and the Pharaohs, it is plausible that many elites

in the court had become favourable to the Mitanni religion. This is likely to have made it possible for Akhenaten, early in his reign soon after his marriage to the Mitanni princess Kiya, to declare his religion, which had much similarity to the Mitanni.

This also explains why, after his death, the religion, being of foreign origin and popular only with a minority, was suppressed violently and successfully.

## Conclusions

There are important lessons to be drawn from the study of Akhenaten and his hymn to Aten. Scholars see in Akhenaten the beginning of the Judaic monotheistic tradition. Our examination of the facts shows that it might, equally plausibly, be a retelling of the improperly understood ideas, or ideas modified by the prevailing ones in their new land, in the journey to West Asia by the Mitannis. We are basing our conclusions not only on the connection to the Mitanni through Akhenaten's wife but also on the pervasiveness of the Vedic concepts in West Asia as in the notion of 33 gods, the use of the disk to represent the sun exactly as is done in Vedic ritual, and the conception of the sun who superintends personal destiny which is perhaps the central idea of Vedic thought. We have also alluded to the similarity between the Vedic *Yahvāḥ* and the Hebrew *Yahweh* and between other gods. These parallels are significant enough to demand a thorough investigation of the 2nd millennium BC connections between India and the West.

The interaction between the Indic (Mitanni and other groups) and the Egyptian and West Asian can help us in understanding the evolution of the Western religions. It may also help us understand the parallels between Indic and Babylonian and Greek sciences. For example, if the early Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa gives centrality to the number 432,000 (also the supposed number of syllables in the Ṛgveda) then one can understand how this may have been adopted by the Babylonians as a count for their Great Year. Both India and Babylon divide the civil year into 360 equal parts. This is seen in India in the Ṛgveda itself and in Babylon in the middle of the first millennium BC. Likewise, it may help us understand the Babylonian adoption of the idea of *tithi* of Indian astronomy which is mentioned in the Ṛgvedic Brāhmaṇas.

An interesting question related to the spectrum of religious belief rang-

ing from India to Egypt is the split between the Vedic and the Zoroastrian religion. The Zarathustrian demonization of Indra and the Nāsatyas was a rejection of the interiorization of divinity since Indra is the lord of the senses and the Nāsatyas are the rulers of hearing. In the Vedic system elements of materiality and divinity are in a hierarchical system: the physical body (ruled by the Asura) comes first and the spiritual body (ruled by Indra, the senses) comes later which is why the Devas are younger to the Asuras.<sup>33</sup> Zarathuštra's innovation was to create a system that was midway between the Vedic with its emphasis on the spirit and the West Asian/Egyptian which is body-centered (with its visions of being raised to life in one's body in paradise). But the system brought in the devas through the backdoor as the *yazatas* (Skt. *yajata*).

It is also possible to see Zarathuštra as providing a synthesis in terms of just two categories as was done in a different way in the Purāṇas. The Vedic view is to see the world in triple categories. Later Purāṇic gloss simplified this into dichotomies like that of deva versus asura (including rākṣasa). Zarathuštra made a similar simplification using the dichotomy of asura (including deva under the label yazata) and daeva. The asuras are the ground on which the devas emerge; likewise, without proper action one can slip into the false path. The term daeva as a synonym for rākṣasa survives in Kashmir.

Within the Indo-Iranian world, the memory of India's interaction with Egypt persisted. In Chapter 48 of his book on India<sup>34</sup> written in 1030, al-Bīrūnī, speaking of chariots of war, mentions the Greek claim that they were the first to use them and insists they are wrong because "they were already invented by Aphrodisios the Hindu, when he ruled over Egypt, about 900 years after the deluge." This reference cannot be taken to be literally true but it is, nevertheless, significant. It preserves the memory of a "Hindu" (Indic-inspired) king of Egypt prior to the Greek state. The reference to the chariots of war of this king (Akhenaten) seems to remember the foreigner warlords Hyskos who ruled Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period just before the New Kingdom to which Akhenaten belonged.

## Notes

1. Hromnik, *Indo-Africa*.
2. Hornung, *Akhenaten and the Religion of Light*.
3. Moran (ed.), *The Amarna Letters*.
4. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*; Redford, *Akhenaten, The Heretic King*.
5. Kak, *The Astronomical Code of the Ṛgveda*.
6. Talageri, *The Rigveda, A Historical Analysis*; Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture*; Frawley, *The Rig Veda and the History of India*. In any event, the idea of the Indic connection is not the central point of the essay; rather it is the connection of the Akhenaten innovation with the Vedic tradition of the Mitannis.
7. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1999; essay on Middle Eastern Religions, page 115. See, also, Aubet, *The Phoenicians and the West*. 1993.
8. Mallory, *In Search of the Indo-Europeans*.
9. Kak, *The Astronomical Code of the Ṛgveda*.
10. Burrow, 1973.
11. Feuerstein, Kak, Frawley, *In Search of the Cradle of Civilization*; Kak, *The Wishing Tree*.
12. Kenoyer, *Ancient Cities of the Indus Valley Civilization*.
13. Kak, *The Astronomical Code of the Ṛgveda*.
14. *mahān vr̥hyaparāhṇa-gr̥ṣṭīśvāsa-jābāla-bhāra-bhārata-hailihila-raurava-pravṛddheṣu* (6.2.38); apart from this 4.3.98 mentions Vāsudeva and Arjuna and 8.3.95 mentions Yudhiṣṭhira. The significance of the sūtra 6.2.38 consists of the fact that the term Mahābhārata is a technical term implying the 100,000 verse epic and not the story which undoubtedly was an old one.

15. Agrawala, *India As Known to Pāṇini*.
16. See the Introduction by G.C. Pande and the article by Susmita Pande in Pande (ed.), *Life, Thought and Culture in India (from c 600 BC to c AD 300)*.
17. Kak, *The Aśvamedha: The Rite and its Logic*.
18. Dumont, 1947.
19. Burrow, *op cit.*, page 134.
20. Burrow, *op cit.*, page 134.
21. Boyce, *Zoroastrians*; Herzfeld, *Zoroaster*.
22. Freud, *op cit*; Osman, 2002.
23. Cohen and Westbrook (eds.), *Amarna Diplomacy*.
24. Kak, “Vena, Veda, Venus.”
25. Kak, *The Wishing Tree*.
26. Lal, *The Earliest Civilization of South Asia*.
27. For the full text of the hymn, see Pritchard, 1958, pages 227-230. The Aten (also spelled Aton) had a dogmatic name written within a royal cartouche and including the three old solar deities, Re, Har, and Shu. Re is the Egyptian sun god and creator god, usually depicted in human form with a falcon head, crowned with the sun disk encircled by the uraeus (a stylized representation of the sacred cobra). The sun itself was taken to be either his body or his eye. He was said to traverse the sky each day in a solar barque and pass through the underworld each night on another solar barque to reappear in the east each morning. Har (Horus) is the Egyptian sky god, usually depicted as a falcon or in human form with the head of a falcon. The sun and the moon are said to be his eyes. Son of Isis and the dead Osiris, he was born at Khemmis in the Nile Delta, and Isis hid him in the papyrus marshes to

protect him against Seth, his father's murderer. Shu is the primordial Egyptian god of the air and supporter of the sky. In the Heliopolitan creation myth, Shu was, with his sister Tefnut, one of the first deities created by the sun god Atum.

The preamble of the hymn is: "Praise of Re Har-akhti, Rejoicing on the Horizon, in His Name as Shu Who Is in the Aton-disc, living forever and ever; the living great Aton who is in jubilee, lord of all that the Aton encircles, lord of heaven, lord of earth, lord of the House of Aton in Akhet-Aton; (and praise of) the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, who lives on truth, the Lord of the Two Lands: Nefer-kheperu-Re Wa-en-Re; the Son of Re, who lives on truth, the Lord of Diadems: Akh-en-Aton, long in his lifetime; (and praise of) the Chief Wife of the King, his beloved, the Lady of the Two Lands: Nefer-neferu-Aton Nefert-iti, living, healthy, and youthful forever and ever; (by) the Fan-Bearer on the Right Hand of the King ... Eye." (Preamble translated by John Wilson in Pritchard, 1958)

28. Note that Biblical Yahweh is also spelt Yehweh or Yahvah; in Hebrew only the consonants YHWH are used. For its Indic usage: *yahva* occurs in RV 10.110; *yahváh* in RV 3.1, 3.5, 4.5, 4.7, 4.58, 5.1, 7.6, 7.8, 9.75, and 10.11; *yahvám* in RV 1.36; 3.3; 4.5; 5.16; 8.13; 10.92; *yahváśya* in RV 3.2 and 3.28.
29. Freud, *op cit.*
30. Freud, *op cit.*, page 175.
31. Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience.*
32. Griffith, *Hymns of the Rigveda.*
33. Kak, *The Gods Within.*
34. Sachau, *Alberuni's India*, vol 1, page 407.

## References

- V.S. Agrawala, 1953. *India As Known to Pāṇini*. University of Lucknow, Lucknow.
- M.E. Aubet, 1993. *The Phoenicians and the West*. Cambridge University Press, New York.
- M. Boyce, 2001. *Zoroastrians*. Routledge, London.
- E. Bryant, 2001. *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- T. Burrow, 1973. The proto-Indoaryans. *J. of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 2: 123-140.
- R. Cohen and R. Westbrook (eds.), 2000. *Amarna Diplomacy*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- P.-E. Dumont, 1947. Indo-Aryan names from Mitanni, Nuzi, and Syrian documents. *Journal of American Oriental Society*, 67: 251-253.
- G. Feuerstein, S. Kak, David Frawley, 2001 (1995). *In Search of the Cradle of Civilization*. Quest Books, Wheaton.
- D. Frawley, 2001. *The Rig Veda and the History of India*. Aditya Prakashan, New Delhi.
- S. Freud, 1987 (1934). *Moses and Monotheism*. Random House, New York.
- R.T.H. Griffith, *Hymns of the Rigveda*. Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1987 (1889).
- E. Herzfeld, *Zoroaster and His World*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1947.
- E. Hornung, 2001. *Akhenaten and the Religion of Light*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.
- C. Hromnik, 1981. *Indo-Africa*. Juta & Company, Cape Town.



- S. Kak, 1996. Vena, Veda, Venus. *Adyar Library Bulletin*, 60: 229-239.
- S. Kak, 2000. *The Astronomical Code of the R̥gveda*. Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi.
- S. Kak, 2001. *The Wishing Tree: The Presence and Promise of India*. Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi.
- S. Kak, 2002. *The Aśvamedha: The Rite and its Logic*. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi.
- S. Kak, 2002. *The Gods Within*. Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi.
- N. Kazanas, 1999. The R̥gveda and Indo-Europeans. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 80: 15-42.
- J.M. Kenoyer, 1998. *Ancient Cities of the Indus Valley Civilization*. Oxford University Press, Karachi.
- B.B. Lal, 1997. *The Earliest Civilization of South Asia*. Aryan Books International, Delhi.
- J.P. Mallory, 1989. *In Search of the Indo-Europeans*. Thames and Hudson, London.
- W.A. Moran (ed.), 2002. *The Amarna Letters*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- A. Osman, 2002. *Moses and Akhenaten: The Secret History of Egypt at the Time of the Exodus*. Inner Traditions, Rochester.
- G.C. Pande (ed.), 2001. *Life, Thought and Culture in India (from c 600 BC to c AD 300)*. Centre for Studies in Civilizations, New Delhi.
- R. Panikkar, 1983. *The Vedic Experience*. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi.
- J.B. Pritchard (ed.), 1958. *The Ancient Near East - Volume 1: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

D.B. Redford, 1984. *Akhenaten, The Heretic King*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

E. Sachau, 1989 (1910). *Alberuni's India*. Low Price Publications, Delhi.

S.G. Talageri, 2000. *The Rigveda, A Historical Analysis*. Aditya Prakashan, New Delhi.

©Subhash Kak