XXVII

THE VEDIC AKHYANA AND THE INDIAN DRAMA

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THE chief cause of the undoubted monotony of the *Rgveda* is, of course, its essentially sacerdotal character. In the case of the vast majority of the hymns there can be, and has been, no doubt as to their purpose: they are praises of the gods who are worshipped in the ritual, and the native commentator, whose work, with all its defects, has done much to render the study of the *Rgveda* fruitful, provides us with references to the passages in the Sūtra where the ritual use of the verses is laid down. It is true that we cannot believe that the later ritual really gives us an accurate idea of the employment of the hymns which make up the Saṃhitā: without postulating any very violent change of practice, we can yet readily feel that the ritual has deviated from the form in which it must have appeared when the Saṃhitā was brought into being, but at any rate it is certain that there was a ritual, and that the hymns normally found a natural place therein. All the more interest attaches, therefore, to the comparatively small number of hymns for which Sāyaṇa gives no technical ritual employment, and which have generally a dialogue form, or may legitimately be deemed to have that form. The *Bṛhaddevatā*¹ shows that the technical term for such hymns was Saṃvāda, but there seems no doubt that

¹ Cf. ii, 88; iv, 44, 47 (dialogue of Indra and the Maruts); v, 163, 184 (a dialogue of Agastya, Vasiṣṭha, their sons, and Indra, RV. vii, 33); vi, 154 (dialogue of Yama and Yamī, RV. x, 10); vii, 29 (dialogue of the seer and Indra, RV. x, 28); 153 (dialogue of Purūravas and Urvaśī, RV. x, 95). vii, 140, given in Macdonell's Index of Words (i, 192), is an erroneous reference to *saṃvāsa*.

they could also be included in the more general term *Itihāsa* and perhaps *Ākhyāna*.¹

Now these hymns have served as a main support of the very brilliant *Ākhyāna* theory, which is associated with the name of Professor Oldenberg,² and that theory until quite recently seemed to be becoming a fixed part of the theory of early Vedic literature. Although it owed its vogue to Professor Oldenberg, it had earlier been set out by Professor Windisch,³ who has remained firm to his belief in its genuineness, and has adduced evidence from Pāli texts in its favour. Moreover, it has won acceptance by two critics who are by no means ready to accept without examination Professor Oldenberg's theories: Professor Pischel⁴ and Geldner⁵ adopt it as a basis of Vedic interpretation, and Professor Geldner, in a very careful investigation of the evidence, came to the conclusion that actually there existed at one time a literary work called the *Itihāsa*, a term which, with some justice, he preferred to the term *Ākhyāna* chosen by Professor Oldenberg to designate the literary genus which he conceived he had discovered. Mention should also be made of the careful

¹ Thus RV. x, 95 was called a *Samvāda* by Yāska, according to the *Bṛhaddevatā*, vii, 154 (though, as Macdonell points out, this view cannot be found in the *Nirukta*, v, 13; x, 46, 47; xi, 36). In iv, 46 the "Indra and Maruts" dialogue is described as an *Itihāsa*, and even if the line is of doubtful authenticity (see Macdonell, i, 138) it shows that *Samvāda* and *Itihāsa* were naturally interchangeable. So in the Epic; see Winternitz, VOJ. xxiii, 126. For *Ākhyāna* and *Samvāda* cf. *Nirukta*, xi, 25, *devaśumindreṇa prahitā paṇibhir asuraiḥ samāda ity ākhyānam*, and *Bṛhaddevatā*, i, 53, with vii, 154.

² See ZDMG. xxxvii, 54 seqq.; xxxix, 52 seqq.; *Literatur des alten Indien*, pp. 44 seq., 125 seq., 153 seq.; GGA. 1909, pp. 66 seqq.

³ *Verhandl. der 33 Philologenversammlung*, pp. 28 seqq.; *Māra und Buddha*, p. 128. On the other hand, Charpentier, VOJ. xxiii, 50, takes the *Māra* and *Bhikkunī Samyuttas* as dramatic.

⁴ *Vedische Studien*, ii, 42 seqq. (he so explains RV. iv, 18).

⁵ *Ibid.*, i, 284 seqq. (RV. x, 95); ii, 1 seqq. (RV. x, 102); 22 seqq. (RV. x, 86). It should be noted that Hertel, VOJ. xxiii, 346, claims to have converted Geldner, but the treatment of RV. x, 95 in his *Rgveda, Kommentar*, p. 191, seems hardly adequate evidence of the conversion.

work of Dr. Sieg,¹ who accepted the theory as the foundation of a valuable series of studies on the mythology of the *R̥gveda*, and in England the theory has won wide acceptance from its adoption by Professor Macdonell in his *Sanskrit Literature*.² It must suffice to add to the names of those who have adhered to the theory those of Professors Hopkins,³ Winternitz,⁴ and von Bradke.⁵ It is not without justification, then, that Professor Oldenberg claims that his theory is the generally accepted one.

Nevertheless I must admit that it has never appeared to me even plausible, although it is impossible to ignore the great ability with which it is put forward and defended by its parent. Quite recently it has been assailed more or less independently by two scholars of high standing—by Professor Leopold von Schroeder,⁶ who has rendered

¹ *Die Sagenstoffe des R̥gveda und die indische Itihāsaträdition* (Stuttgart, 1902). Sieg, at pp. 17 seq., analyses the terms used of these narrative or dialogue hymns, and discusses the question of the existence of an Itihāsa-Purāṇa as a collection, a fifth Veda, which is asserted by Geldner. He arrives at a positive result, but he admits that no such collection had a finally fixed form, and, what is much more important, it must be noted that there is nothing to hint that the form of this collection was a blend of prose and verse. The passage in favour of Geldner's view, cited by Hertel, VOJ. xxiv, 420, from the *Kautiliya Śāstra*, i, 3, is of no cogency, as it does not go beyond the expressions found in Vedic texts of much greater authority. The disputes as to the nature of a hymn as an Itihāsa or Saṃvāda are explained by him to refer to the question of the deity; see p. 27, a passage overlooked, as it seems, by Winternitz, VOJ. xxiii, 103, for it is more satisfactory than the explanation either of Oldenberg, ZDMG. xxxix, 80 seq., or of Geldner, *Vedische Studien*, i, 292 seq. It may here be noted that Professor Oertel, in a note to Dr. Hertel (VOJ. xxiv, 121), points out that A. Holtzmann in 1854 anticipated in some measure Windisch's theory, and he holds the view that there were "nicht nur vorbrahmanische itihāsa-Sammlungen, sondern auch fest redigierte exegetische Sammlungen"; see also AJP. xx, 446; JAOS. xviii, 16; xxiii, 325.

² pp. 119, 120.

³ *The Great Epic of India*, pp. 266 seqq., 386.

⁴ In his *Geschichte der indischen Literatur*, see i, 103; VOJ. xxiii, 102 seqq. See also Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, pp. 180 seqq.

⁵ ZDMG. xxxvi, 474 seqq.; xlv, 445 seqq.

⁶ *Mysterium und Mimus im R̥gveda* (Leipzig, 1908).

to Vedic scholarship the invaluable assistance of his editions of the *Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā* and the *Kāthaka*, and by Dr. Johannes Hertel,¹ who has cast quite a new light on the fable literature of India by his researches into the earlier forms of the *Pañcatantra* and his publication of the *Tantrākhyaṇikā*. But the opposition of these scholars to Professor Oldenberg is very far from being a mere negative: they object to the Ākhyāna theory—for so, in deference to Professor Oldenberg, we may continue to call it—not because it seems to them to be inaccurate, but because they think that they have a truer account to give of the hymns in question; that in short these hymns are ritual drama. Dr. Hertel² claims that already his theory has prevailed over the view of Professor Oldenberg, but, so far as I can judge, his claim to have convinced Professor Geldner is not made out, and von Schroeder's presentation of the theory has received severe criticism from Professor Oldenberg,³ while Professor Winternitz⁴ in a very careful and lucid study of the whole issue has, while admitting the validity of the new theory in certain cases, maintained that it merely provides an alternative to and not a substitute for the Ākhyāna theory, which in certain other cases he still maintains. At first sight this *via media* seems attractive and safe, but renewed study has left me still of the opinion which I expressed more than two years ago in a review⁵ of von Schroeder's *Mysterium und Mimus*, namely, that neither theory affords a satisfactory solution of the facts.

Professor Oldenberg considers that the hymns to which he applies his theory are unintelligible as they stand, and that from the beginning they must have been accompanied with prose explanations. We are not, of course, to think of the verses being composed as riddles which from the

¹ VOJ. xviii, 59 seqq., 137 seqq.; xxiii, 273 seqq.; xxiv, 117 seqq.

² VOJ. xxiii, 346.

³ GGA. 1909, pp. 66 seqq.

⁴ VOJ. xxiii, 102 seqq.

⁵ JRAS. 1909, pp. 200 seqq.

first required a comment. We are rather to conceive of a form of literature which was essentially a mixture of prose and verse, and which was narrative in character. But with the natural liking of people for direct speech, the narrative every now and then took the dialogue form, just as in the Homeric poems the poets show so marked a preference for the direct form. And in these passages verse was normally used. It was not necessarily confined to these passages, but it might occur wherever there was a heightening of the interest or of the feeling. Now originally composed thus in mixed prose and verse, the fate of the Ākhyāna was a curious one. The verses remained fixed, and were handed down with little or no change, but the prose was allowed to change, each new narrator being at liberty to alter the form while retaining the sense, and the dialogues which are found in the *Rgveda* represent the verse of these Ākhyānas, the prose having disappeared, whether before or after their incorporation in the Samhitā. But not only was there such a Vedic Ākhyāna, but it was, it is urged, probably Indo-European: there are traces of it in Celtic, there are traces of it in the Edda, and there is high authority for accepting it as explaining the genesis of the Homeric poems.

Before examining the hypothesis in the light of Indian evidence, it may be well at once to say that from any standpoint the theory of an Indo-European Ākhyāna cannot be regarded as even probable. The Celtic evidence is late, and, whatever its value, on which I am happily debarred from pronouncing an opinion, has no cogency for Indo-European times. The evidence from the Edda has been discussed by many scholars, and the result of their discussions has been made available by the care of Professor Winternitz.¹ It is clear from his review that there is great reason to doubt if there was a Norse prose

¹ VOJ. xxiii, 127, 130.

poetic Ākhyāna at all, and in any case even those who believe in its existence seem ready to admit that the theory of parallel development is far more likely than that of common ancestry. And coming to a ground on which one can speak with intelligence, I feel utterly unable to discover any evidence of a Homeric Ākhyāna in the sense ascribed to it by Professor Oldenberg.

We must indeed be careful to realize precisely what the Ākhyāna is if we are to understand the theory. That a poem should have been prefaced by a prose introduction is in itself natural enough: at the court of the Homeric chieftain the poet might well discuss what he would sing to his audience, and if he had a new song tell them briefly what he was about to recite. Nor need we wonder if after his song he explained in prose obscure parts, or answered questions regarding it. But the introduction and the explanation form no part of the poem: it is intended as a complete whole, and the poet does not interrupt his song to explain it. In the supposed Ākhyāna all is different: the substance is in prose, the prose is an essential part, and only the moments of supreme emotion are marked by outbursts of verse. That such a literary form is possible it would be idle to deny, but that it actually existed in Vedic times would, it seems to me, require cogent proof.

It is perfectly true that the mixture of prose and poetry is quite familiar to us in Indian literature. One regular path of entrance into Sanskrit is afforded by the *Hitopadeśa*, and there the mixed form exists in perfection. Moreover, we can safely accept the view that the form is quite old: without pledging ourselves to accept the views of Dr. Hertel regarding the precise age of the *Tantrākhyāyikā*,¹ it may be admitted that the prose-poetic form goes back beyond the beginning of the first century B.C., and how much earlier we cannot say. In a sense, too, the verse

¹ Cf. Kirste, VOJ. xxiii, 388 seq. ; Thomas, JRAS. 1910, p. 973.

then does mark a heightening of the interest, for the verses often contain in summary form the point of the narrative. But the real similarity to the Ākhyāna is infinitesimal: the essential nature of the verses is gnomic, anything rather than dramatic, and this dramatic quality is precisely the striking thing about the verses of the Ākhyāna.¹

It is not therefore wonderful that Professor Oldenberg does not seek in the gnomic literature the evidence for the Vedic Ākhyāna. He finds it instead in the Jātakas, that strange collection of folk-lore which has played so conspicuous a part of late in the reconstruction of Indian life, and of which it would be perfectly true to predicate the famous lines: *hic liber est in quo quaerit sua dogmata quisque invenit et pariter dogmata quisque sua*. In the Jātaka he finds the required phenomenon: they consist of verses set in a prose which is admittedly not contemporaneous; but prose was always necessary for the understanding of the verses, and we must therefore see in the Jātaka actual examples of the Ākhyāna with prose, if not indeed the older prose, still with a prose which replaces a genuine prose. But, effective as was this argument in the hey-day of the vogue of the Jātakas, it cannot now stand examination. It would, indeed, be premature to assert anything definitely of the collection as a whole: some parts may be on a par with the gnomic verse and prose of the *Tantrākhyāyikā*, but there is no cogent evidence that any part is a real Ākhyāna: there is no means of ascribing any date to the composition of

¹ Cf. Hertel, VOJ. xxiii, 296, 299. It is impossible to ignore the complete distinction of the types of the theoretic Ākhyāna and the actual Ākhyāyikā, and Winternitz, VOJ. xxiii, 126, seems to overlook the fact. The *Kāthaka Upaniṣad*, indeed, is somewhat more allied to the Ākhyāna type than to the Ākhyāyikā, but its source, the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, iii, 11. 8. 1, has no verses mingled with its prose, and so the Upaniṣad proves nothing for the early Vedic period which is the subject of this discussion.

the tales, and there is no answer to Dr. Hertel's¹ emphatic assertion that in view of our present state of knowledge of the composition of Pali texts—a question on which the comparisons of the Gāthās which Professor Franke is carrying out will ultimately throw much light—it is methodologically unsound to draw any argument from the text of the Jātakas. If we are to find any answer to the difficulties of the problem, it must be in the earlier Vedic literature, the relationship of which to the *R̥gveda* stands on quite a different footing to that of the Jātakas.

Now if we turn to the Vedic literature, it is at once worthy of notice that that literature contains no trace whatever of the recognition of the existence of the prose poetic Ākhyāna. Even in Yāska we find no hint that such a thing exists: on the contrary, when he tells us² that there was a narrative regarding Trita made up of what seems to be an ideal Ākhyāna form, he calls it a mixture of *R̥gvedic* verses, of Gāthās, and of Itihāsa. But, indeed, it is not necessary to labour the point: it is beyond all doubt clear that there is no direct evidence in the Vedic literature for the existence of the Ākhyāna. It would perhaps be unfair to argue that the silence of the literature is fatal, but when one remembers how fond of analysis

¹ See Hertel, VOJ. xxiii, 278–81, 343. Franke, ZDMG. lxiii, 13, shows in one case clearly (by a comparison of J. 507 and J. 539) that the existing prose and verse must be deemed contemporary (i.e. the verse was fitted into the existing prose when it was composed, not the prose inserted to replace a missing prose), and he thinks it was often the case. What is important, however, is that the discrepancies of prose and verse are no reasonable evidence in favour of the prose being a replacement of an older prose which really was consistent with the verse. The prose is just as probably an original composition without any predecessor, and reflects a type of literature which is seen in its perfection in the *Hitopadeśa* type; see Hertel, VOJ. xxiv, 121–3. The type of mixed prose and verse is essentially originally one of prose in which verses are quoted, whether taken from the epic or the Śāstras or perhaps the drama. The style in which verses are composed by the writer of the prose, as in the Campūs, is decidedly later.

² iv, 6. This passage clearly distinguishes *ṛc*, *gāthā*, and *itihāsa*; see Hertel, VOJ. xxiii, 284.

the later literature is, the silence of the texts becomes a very formidable fact, and one for which no very adequate explanation suggests itself. It might, indeed, be thought that the form of literature was very old and died out before the later texts came into being, but that line of argument, for which there seems to be little or nothing to say, is not of course open to Professor Oldenberg, who adduces the case of the Jātakas in his favour, and who also saw in the *Suparṇādhya* a case of the Ākhyāna.

Another objection to the theory, and a serious one, is urged by Dr. Hertel. It is an essential part of the theory that the prose in some way was lost, for obviously it is not there, and indeed has left no tradition behind it, for Professor Oldenberg, unlike some of his followers, does not believe, and in this I agree with him, that the strange rubbish which is served up by the later texts to explain Ākhyāna hymns has any traditional value. But why was it lost? It is, of course, simple and natural to answer that the verse was preserved by its form and the ease with which it could be remembered, but there is to set against these theoretical grounds the solid fact that there is a very formidable body of early prose which has not been lost. Even if the very earliest prose which really belonged to the Ākhyāna may be deemed to have disappeared, how was it that the prose which accompanied the Ākhyānas in the days of the Brāhmaṇas has not survived? Moreover, the argument can be carried further. Not only have we the texts of the Brāhmaṇas, evidently very carefully preserved from old times, but the Brāhmaṇas and the Saṃhitās of the White and the Black Yajurvedas show clear signs of descending from a common source. It is not a case merely of the handling of a common material. No one who has compared the texts can doubt that there was at one time a prose text of the Yajurveda which must have been carefully handed down until radically different schools developed their own individual texts.

We are thus carried farther than ever back to a period when prose also was carefully preserved alongside with the Mantras of the Yajurvedas. The prose, as is well known, explains the Mantras and the rites which are accompanied by the Mantras, and the question inevitably presents itself, on what grounds can we claim that the loss of the prose, which was an essential part of the Ākhyānas, was a natural thing, when the prose of the Saṃhitās and Brāhmaṇas, which is not half so closely related to the Mantras, is preserved, clearly and beyond doubt, with jealous care? Ingenuity will of course suggest possible explanations, but logically what value can we ascribe to an ingenious device to explain the non-existence of that whose existence is unknown to tradition, and which had it existed would according to a very strong parallel case have been handed down to us?

Of course, these theoretic arguments would have to yield if it were true that embedded in the Vedic literature itself there were, as Professor Oldenberg asserts, two specimens of his Ākhyāna, namely, the legend of Śunaḥśepa in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*¹ and in the *Śāṅkhāyana Śrauta Sūtra*,² and the tale of Purūravas and Urvaśī as told in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. It is, indeed, not too much to say that but for these passages the theory would never have seen the light, or at least have won any general acceptance. But what do these passages really prove? Nothing, I fear, which can help Professor Oldenberg's theory.

It will hardly be claimed by anyone that the Śunaḥśepa legend in the form in which it appears in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* is a sound old legend. The passage in which it occurs is admittedly late, and it is admittedly the case that the *Rgveda* verses which are put into the mouth of Śunaḥśepa have nothing to do with the legend in the Brāhmaṇa. It is not claimed, therefore, that the story

¹ vii, 13-18.

² xv, 19 seqq.

illustrates a Vedic hymn by showing it to be an Ākhyāna, but it is alleged that the actual narrative itself is in Ākhyāna form. But this view is not borne out by the facts. In section 13 of the seventh book of the Brāhmaṇa we find a dialogue in verse of the simplest gnomic kind. Nārada, the great sage, is asked what are the advantages of having a son, and he replies in ten verses. The ten verses are continuous, and they follow naturally on the one verse of the question, nor is there any legitimate reason for doubt that we have simply here a fragment of a gnomic poem, or rather poems,¹ taken over bodily. Similarly, in section 15, where the next verse passage occurs, another little gnomic poem regarding the excellencies of energy is presented to us. The four verses here are separated by prose which tells of the wanderings of Rohita, the son of Hariścandra, but there cannot be the slightest doubt that the separation is artificial: they are taken over from a gnomic poem addressed to one Rohita, whence it may be feared the name and existence of the elsewhere unknown Rohita are borrowed. So far there is no shadow of evidence for an Ākhyāna. Rather, we see in the Vedic text how much gnomic literature was floating about and how ready the Vedic writer was to weave it into a narrative, not indeed a beast narrative as usual later, but a narrative with human actors. In sections 17 and 18, again, we find quite a different phenomenon: the author has woven into his narrative some verses regarding Viśvāmitra's adoption of Śunaḥśepa. It is utterly needless to suppose that this is a true Ākhyāna: everything is satisfied by our supposing that it was an independent poem worked into the text. It has no connexion with Hariścandra or with Rohita, and it can safely be said that if the story of Śunaḥśepa is a genuine Ākhyāna, no more extraordinary literary type ever existed.

¹ Dr. Thomas is no doubt right in thinking that the verses are not from one poem.

To turn from the *Āitareya* to the tale of Purūravas at least brings us into a region where the idea of an Ākhyāna is more open to argument. No question here presents itself of a gnomic poem, and we have what we have not in the *Āitareya Brāhmaṇa* — a case where the Ākhyāna, if real, would be a Rgvedic one. But, again, what are the facts? Apropos of the Araṇis, or kindling sticks, whence the fire is made for the sacrifice, the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*¹ narrates to us the tale of Purūravas and Urvaśī — how Urvaśī loved Purūravas, the mortal, and dwelt with him on a condition which the Gandharvas, jealous of her preference for a mortal, induced him to break; how Urvaśī disappeared, and how Purūravas wandered distracted over Kurukṣetra until he found her with her companions at the lake Anyataḥplakṣā. Urvaśī appears to him, and then the text inserts vv. 1, 2, 14, and 15 of the hymn *Rgveda*, x, 95, with a brief word of explanation after each verse. Then follows a single verse, the sixteenth of the hymn, and then, without commenting on that verse, the text continues, “This discourse in fifteen verses has been handed down by the Bahvṛcas.” Thereafter the story pursues its way untrammelled with reference to the *Rgveda*.

Now it is right to point out that Professor Oldenberg does not hold that we have here a complete Ākhyāna; he admits² that it has been curtailed for ritual reasons by the author of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, who was not interested in the Ākhyāna at all, and merely cited it in connexion with his theme. But surely the explanation of the passage is simple enough without adopting the Ākhyāna theory. The one thing noteworthy about it, which distinguishes it from the ordinary Brāhmaṇa passage of the legendary type, and such passages are legion, is that the text on which the legend is based happens to be one taken from outside the texts of the

¹ xi, 5, 1.² GGA. 1907, pp. 69, 70.

White Yajurveda, and therefore reference has to be made to it. And reference is made by citing four lines and explaining them not at all in the manner in which a genuine Ākhyāna would have been constructed, with additional facts between the verses carrying on the narrative, but simply by paraphrases of the text of the hymn in the regular Brāhmaṇa style; nay more, in the explanation of the fourteenth verse the Brāhmaṇa seems to propose two different renderings of the original text, interpreting Purūravas' intention as being either to throw himself down, i.e. hang himself, or to start forth, presumably on his wild rushing over the earth. And it is quite in keeping with the Brāhmaṇa spirit that four verses out of fifteen should exhaust the energy of the compiler, and it may finally be noted that he emphatically refers to the Bahvrcas as handing down a hymn of fifteen verses: no hint of a prose Ākhyāna seems to have crossed his mind.¹

It seems to me, therefore, that the legend of Purūravas and Urvaśī cannot help us to a real Ākhyāna. Whether the explanation of the hymn is really given to us by the Brāhmaṇa it would be too long here to inquire, even had I any conviction of being able to solve the problem: what is sufficient for our purpose is to note that the Brāhmaṇa presents us merely with an explanation of and introduction

¹ There are several difficulties as to the *Śatapatha* passage. The mention of fifteen verses when the hymn has eighteen is very strange, and not yet fully explained. Hertel, VOJ. xxiii, 346, thinks that the present text, which mentions v. 16 without commenting on it, is interpolated, and that the fifteen verses refer to the first fifteen, the Brāhmaṇa having referred to 1, 2, 14, and 15; and this is not impossible. Winternitz' view, VOJ. xxiii, 131, that the Brāhmaṇa does not cite the verses, but that the copyists saved themselves trouble by merely referring to the RV., is certainly untenable, for Hertel points out that the Brāhmaṇa has given its summary of the omitted verses in the prelude, and that the citation of vv. 1, 2, 14, and 15 only is deliberate and artistically necessary, thus also rendering needless Oldenberg's view of a shortening of the Ākhyāna.

to the dialogue; it does not present us with a new literary type.

It is, perhaps, hardly necessary to examine one other class of evidence adduced by Professor Oldenberg in support of his theory, namely, certain passages in the *Mahābhārata*, for Dr. Hertel¹ has shown in detail that they do not in the slightest correspond with the theoretic Ākhyāna; the verses do not form points of special interest in the narrative: in one case the verse and the prose narratives simply cover the same ground, while in another, that cited also by Hopkins,² the story of the Frog girl in *Mahābhārata*, iii, 192, the version before us seems beyond all question to be merely a verse-story rewritten in part in prose. The prose is full of reminiscences of the original verses, and though it is not obvious why it should have come down to us in its present form, there are too few things known about the Epic to render the absence of a reply to such a question unnatural. There remains, therefore, but one argument of Professor Oldenberg's which seems to demand consideration, and that is his application of his theory to the explanation of *Rgveda* viii, 100. The case deserves special treatment, because it is one of the few instances which are adduced by Professor Oldenberg which von Schroeder³ regards as being a plausible argument for the theory. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, iv, 1, 3, there is told a tale of the division of speech which runs as follows. After he had hurled his bolt at Vṛtra, who in this narrative is also Soma, Indra was afraid, thinking he had missed, and he with the other gods would not go to see how the missile had fared.

¹ VOJ. xxiii, 285 seq. The Pausyākhyāna, cited by Oldenberg in favour of his theory, is all in prose—dialogue as well as narrative; only three hymns and two citations are in verse; that is, there is no Ākhyāna at all in Oldenberg's sense.

² *The Great Epic of India*, pp. 266 seqq. See Hertel, VOJ. xxiii, 286, 287, 345, and compare *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, iv, 10.

³ *Mysterium und Mimus*, p. 340.

But at their entreaty Vāyu went, and found Vṛtra dead. The dead Vṛtra gave forth an evil odour, but Vāyu purified him, and as a result of his services Vāyu became the first Vaṣaṭ of the Soma, or, in more intelligible form, obtained as his share the first cup of Soma. Indra desired to have a share of it, and Vāyu promised to give him a share if he made speech intelligible. But Vāyu only wished to give Indra a quarter, and Prajāpati, to whom they appealed for his decision, awarded one-half to Vāyu and but a quarter to Indra, who accordingly made only a quarter of speech intelligible, the part spoken by men; the remaining three-quarters, the speech of animals, birds, and reptiles, remained unintelligible. Now in the *Rgveda*, viii, 100, there is a strange hymn which seems to present nothing but a jumble of verses. The first six refer evidently to Indra and the Soma, and perhaps the next three may go with them; the twelfth, again, is clearly taken from the myth of the slaying of Vṛtra, while vv. 10 and 11 refer to Vāc, the four parts of Vāc and the noblest portion thereof, but in what sense it is impossible to say. The *Anukramaṇī* gives us, as usual, no help; and the *Bṛhaddevatā*,¹ which here is more full than the *Anukramaṇī*, is likewise useless. It asserts that the first three lines were spoken by Nema Bhārgava in praise of Indra, though without seeing him; then Indra revealed himself with vv. 4 and 5, and the sage in joy uttered the next two verses, and in v. 8 praises the bird — presumably the falcon which bears the Soma—and in v. 9 the bolt of Indra. In vv. 10 and 11 he praises speech, and in v. 12 tells of a further exploit of Indra against Vṛtra. It is only worth noting that no effort is made here to connect the passage of the *Śatapatha* with the hymn. Oldenberg² with great ingenuity reconstructs the sense: in v. 1 he sees as the speaker Vāyu, and he holds that the

¹ vi, 117-23.² ZDMG. xxxix, 58.

first nine verses show us the league of Indra and Vāyu, and the tenth and the eleventh show us the result to speech of Indra's faithlessness. The sense of the hymn was made good by the prose explanations and insertions which must be supplied before we can understand it.

Now if this theory is correct, we have indeed a real Ākhyāna. This is essentially a case where the hymn is not intelligible as it stands: the passages in prose, which we must assume to have intervened between the verses, would have given not, as in the case of the supposed Ākhyāna of Purūravas and Urvaśī, explanations of the text, but would have carried the narrative over the breaks in the sense between the verses, while at the decisive points there would occur the bursts of verse which are postulated by the theory. Von Schroeder, indeed, is so much struck by the parallelism that he is reduced first to suggesting that the theory may really be justified for once in this case as he admits it *may* be justified in the case of the Jātakas, or in the alternative he throws out the wild suggestion that perhaps the verses were added to the hymn because of the Brāhmaṇa narrative. Oldenberg is perfectly justified in thinking the explanation much more wonderful than any Ākhyāna hymn theory could ever be.

But does the Brāhmaṇa narrative really cast any light on the hymn at all? In the first place, the Brāhmaṇa clearly puts Vāyu in the position of the possessor of the Soma and Indra as him who begs for a share. In the hymn, accepting the view that the first speaker is Vāyu, and of course without that assumption the whole ground for the hypothesis of Professor Oldenberg disappears, Vāyu appears as asking Indra to secure for him his portion, precisely the reverse of the rôles in the Brāhmaṇa. Then the hymn has no hint at all of the bargain between the two: instead it deals merely with the greatness of Indra, whose existence has been questioned by some. It is from the some (*nema*) that the alleged seer Nema Bhārgava

draws his feeble life. The two verses about Vāc also fail to help: it is not said or implied that one part is intelligible. Finally, the last verse is nothing but a fragment from a speech of Indra in his fight with Vṛtra, and it can only be made a part of the narrative by the theory that Indra proceeds to slaughter Vṛtra over again, for already in v. 7 he has driven his bolt into his vital part. It seems to me, therefore, that the parallel has no cogency whatever for the interpretation of the hymn. Of course, if every *Rgveda* hymn were admittedly and beyond question a complete whole, we might be driven to invent some Ākhyāna to hold the parts together; but it is absolutely certain that verses have been added to hymns, and I do not doubt that the original hymn ended either at v. 6 or v. 9, and that the remaining three verses are waifs and strays which have been attached in late times.

It is unnecessary to review in similar detail the theory as applied to other hymns. As Professor S. Lévi¹ long ago pointed out, the difficulty in each case is that the dialogue as it stands is too clear to need the connecting remarks which the theory postulates. Yet the existence of such connecting remarks is of the essence of the Ākhyāna theory, which demands a literary type of mixed prose and verse. If the dialogue will run without any additions, then we have no right to say that there were ever any additions, or to deny that it was composed from the first as a piece of verse pure and simple and intended to stand on its own basis.

But Professor Lévi went a step further, and has claimed that already in these pieces of dialogue we are to see the signs of an Indian drama. The germ of this view is to be found in Professor Max Müller's remark apropos of the Marut hymn, *Rgveda*, i, 165, where he said² as early as 1869: "If we suppose that the dialogue was repeated at

¹ *Le théâtre indien*, p. 307.

² *Hymns to the Maruts*, pp. 172, 173; repeated in SBE. xxxii, 182, 183.

sacrifices in honour of the Maruts, or that possibly it was acted by two parties, one representing Indra, the other the Maruts and their followers, then the two verses at the beginning and the three at the end ought to be placed in the mouth of the actual sacrificer, whoever he was." Professor Lévi¹ was yet more decided: he quoted the love of the Indians for music, song, and dance; the dialogue poems were not a poetic invention, they were reproductions of scenes actually before the poet's eyes. The priests availed themselves of the drama as a means of bringing vividly before the people the majesty of the gods and their laws, and he recognizes in this primitive drama the restriction of the actors to three persons, but also the employment of a chorus, human or divine. Professor Lévi's ingenious theory was curiously unfruitful for years, and it is only now that the support of von Schroeder and Hertel have again made it an object of serious consideration.

It is, of course, essential to understand what is meant by the claim that ritual drama existed. In the first place, we must distinguish it sharply from a dramatic ritual. The ritual of the ancient Indian sacrifice was not in the least of the character of a mere series of songs of praise and prayer. It is full from first to last of ritual dialogues: sometimes they were of the simplest character. Thus in the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* the sacrificer asks the priest, as he looks at the sounding holes which have been dug under the southern cart, "Is it well?" The priest answers "Yes", and the sacrificer utters the prayer, "Be it well for us both." Besides such simple dialogue we have the elaborate dialogues in the Aśvamedha rite, dialogues the ritual purpose of which is abundantly clear.² Then there

¹ *Le théâtre indien*, pp. 333 seqq.

² e.g., the speech of the Queen in *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā*, xxxiii, 18 seqq.; cf. the speech of the Brahmin student and a hetaira in the Mahāvratā, *Kāthaka Saṃhitā*, xxxiv, 5; *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, vii, 5. 9. 4; my *Āitareya Aranyaka*, p. 277, n. 15.

are the Brahmodyas¹ of the priests, a recognized and important part of the sacrifice. But this is not drama, for drama is essentially *μίμησις*, a representation, and the dramatic ritual is a presentation pure and simple.

The point seems a simple one, but it is necessary to make it, for it at once disposes of part of the evidence for the dramatic theory which von Schroeder brings forward. Thus he claims as dramatic the famous frog-hymn of the *Rgveda*, vii, 102. He suggests that it was recited or rather sung by a party of Brahmins beside or standing in a pool or tank with frogs in it; nay, he goes further, and compares it with the *Frogs* of Aristophanes and the many other dramas of beast names of the Greek comedy, and suggests that originally the whole was derived from a mimetic frog-dance, the frog being one form of the vegetation spirit. Whatever the value of this hypothesis, the fact remains that the hymn as it stands is essentially nothing more than a rain-spell: it is not a dramatic reproduction at all, and to call it a drama is merely to confuse the issue. Then, again, as a case of drama is adduced the dialogue of Agastya and Lopāmudrā (*Rgveda*, i, 179), in which we are asked to see the old ritual for ensuring the fertility of the fields when the corn has been cut. In this case it is really impossible to agree with von Schroeder's interpretation: sufficient perhaps to condemn it is the fact that it leads him to the singular view² that Lopāmudrā means that which has the seal of disappearance upon it, doubtless a suitable name for the worn-out corn spirit, but a feat beyond the capacity of the Vedic language.³ But even if the theory were correct, there

¹ Ludwig, *Der Rgveda*, iii, 390 seqq.; Bloomfield, JAOS. xv, 172 seqq.; *Religion of the Veda*, pp. 215 seqq.

² Op. cit., p. 168.

³ Oldenberg, GGA. 1909, p. 77, n. 4. He suggests that the sense is rather "die unter Verletzung (des *vrata*) (sinnlich) Erfreuende", which is very plausible, for in RV. x, 10. 12 we have *pramūdaḥ* in this sense, and so the root *mud* in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, xiv, 7. 1. 14: *stribhiḥ saha modamānaḥ*.

would still be nothing to carry us beyond a dramatic ritual, and of that, as we have seen, there is abundant evidence in the ritual texts without excursions into the impossible. In the same spirit the harmless little hymn *Rgveda*, ix, 112, which has ever¹ been regarded as the utterance of a Brahmin while the Soma is being pressed, showing his desire to win a rich patron even as other mortals seek other things to satisfy them, becomes a wild scene of revelry by a masked crew of vegetation spirits dancing to music and singing the song.² This is a mere case of imagination run wild, but even were it not, again we have but a dramatic ritual, and not real drama.

Nor is there any proof of drama in the fact that dance was liked by the Vedic Indians. This is not denied for a moment, but von Schroeder³ seeks to go further and prove that the hymns show that the idea of a god dancing was familiar to the Indians, and further that it was derived from seeing a god portrayed as so dancing on the primitive stage. The latter part of the theory is of course pure hypothesis, but it is just worth noting how singularly few references there are to the dancing of gods. *Uṣas* is compared with a dancer, for it is only by forcing the meaning of *iva*⁴ that von Schroeder can make out that

¹ Again neatly defended by Oldenberg, GGA. 1909, pp. 79 seqq.

² Op. cit., pp. 408 seqq.

³ Op. cit., pp. 13 seqq.

⁴ RV. i, 92. 4; Schroeder, p. 44. He repeats this view in VOJ. xxiii, 8, n. 1, in respect of RV. x, 72. 6, where he seeks to show in the RV. the recognition of the cosmic power of dancing, and he compares the use of *ṛorē* or *ṛs* in Greek (e.g., *Il.* iii, 380, 381; *Soph. Oid. Tyr.* 1078) and *ut* in Latin (e.g. *Cic. Tusc.* i, 43. 104; *de Or.* ii, 1. 2). The argument is, however, very weak: in both cases *iva* naturally is a comparative particle, and there is no ground for the unusual sense ascribed to it. It is no argument for the version of von Schroeder that *nṛtau* is used of *Uṣas* in RV. x, 29. 3: the comparison shows that *Uṣas* could be conceived as a dancer, and *nṛtau* is consistent with this. Von Schroeder sees dance as the sense of *nṛt* throughout, e.g. in RV. v, 33. 6: *nṛmṇāni nṛtāmāno āmartah*, and so *nṛtu* in ii, 22. 4; vi, 29. 3; viii, 24. 9, 12, etc., but how far he is right in doing so is a question of some difficulty. That the gods danced is of course in itself probable, and x, 124. 9 seems to show it of Indra.

she herself is said to dance, and the word *nṛtu* is used occasionally of gods, but in what sense is doubtful. When it is said of Indra *nṛmṇāni nṛtamānaḥ*, it is hard to believe either that it means that he accomplishes his mighty deeds when dancing or that he acts in the dance his deeds.

If the dance is insufficient to prove a drama, can any help be derived from the question of song? Von Schroeder¹ accepts and Hertel² lays great stress upon an argument which is somewhat hard to follow. It is laid down that verses were, as nowadays is the case, always sung, that therefore it would be impossible to distinguish in the dialogue hymns the different rôles unless the verses were sung by at least two persons, and that therefore each dialogue hymn presumes that there was the element of a drama, namely, two actors, for we may willingly admit that if we are to accept the fact that the rôles were sung by two persons, there may well have been appropriate action and, as von Schroeder adds, dance, making up all the elements of a primitive drama, if once the idea were grasped of representing in this form some action. But this theory of Hertel's is open to the fatal objection that it assumes far too much. In the first place, we have absolutely no knowledge how far a distinction between the expression of different speakers was desired at the very early days when the Vedic hymns were in process of production: no doubt if a single actor nowadays produces a play he depends on his vocal abilities to render his acting the several parts effective, but we cannot interpret the *Rgveda* in the light of a modern *tour de force*. In the second place, there is no evidence whether at the time of the *Rgveda* the verses were sung at all: the theory that they were sung cannot be supported by any evidence before the Prātiśākhya and the Śrauta

¹ *Mysterium und Mimus*, pp. 11-13.

² VOJ. xviii, 64, 73, 137, 138; xxiii, 274, 275.

Sūtras, and the one thing we really do know that goes back to an early date is that there was a great distinction between Sāmans and ordinary R̥c verses. The Brāhmaṇas regularly use the word *gai*, "sing," of the former, and of the latter the term *śams*, "recite": exactly the difference between the two modes it is impossible for us to say, and it is quite unscientific to assert that in the recitation of dialogue hymns differences of speakers could not be brought out if desired by the reciter. Hertel's argument depends for its force on the hypothesis that the difference of speakers must be made clear to the audience, and that it could not be made clear save by a change of performer: we neither know nor shall we ever know whether either of the hypotheses is correct, and this argument of Hertel must definitely be abandoned as possessing any weight.¹

We are reduced, then, to inquiring whether there is anything in the dialogue hymns which suggests dramatic performance. The chief hymns which come into question are those which first gave ground for Max Müller's conjecture, namely, the dialogue of Agastya, the Maruts, and Indra, *R̥gveda*, i, 170, 171, and 165; the dialogue of Indra and Varuṇa, RV. iv, 51; the narrative of the flight of Agni and his return, RV. x, 51-3, 124; the dialogue of Saramā and the Paṇis, RV. x, 108; that of Purūravas and Urvaśi, RV. x, 95; of Yama and Yami, RV. x, 10; and that of Viśvāmitra and the streams, RV. iii, 33. Then there may be added three hymns in which Indra plays a part—the hymn of his wonderful birth, RV. iv, 18; the Vṛṣākapi hymn, RV. x, 86, and his dialogue with Vāyu, if Vāyu it be, in RV. viii, 100; and

¹ Cf. Oldenberg, GGA. 1909, p. 68. Hertel's criticisms in VOJ. xxiii, 274, 275, do not seem to me effective. They rest on modern Indian practice, and on assertions which assume that our modern musical sense is a criterion for ancient music, a view which the dispute regarding the character of Greek music would seem to render yet more dangerous where the Indian musical sense of the second millennium B.C. is in question.

finally the well-known Mudgala hymn, RV. x, 102. If these are really to be regarded as performed by several performers, who adopt the rôles of the gods celebrated, then we have a real drama, doubtless in miniature, but still a drama, to which the Aristotelian definition could without impropriety be applied. There is representation in speech and action,¹ and the real literary merit of some of the hymns and dramas is quite undeniable. Nor would there be lacking some evidence of the gradual advance of the dramatic art, for the dialogue of Agastya and the Maruts presents us with a miniature trilogy of a kind, and in the *Suparnādhya* Hertel² finds a fully developed drama, a historical link between the *Rgveda* and the later Indian world.

The hypothesis is attractive, especially when set out with all the ingenuity of Professor von Schroeder; but it must be admitted that it has one enormous difficulty to overcome, and it offers us little help to overcome it. Why is the later literature wholly silent regarding this ritual drama? Von Schroeder³ realizes the difficulty, and he finds the solution in the theory that the Vedic drama is no feeble beginning: it presents the climax of a long stage of development, and it has no connexion with the later drama of India. No doubt we see in the Yātrās the same root from which the Rgvedic drama sprung, but the one is literature, the other merely popular, and historically the Vedic drama is dying out when we find it. The refined taste of the Vedic priests who have handed us down the ritual could not bear the presence of dancing

¹ It is of course true that the drama springs from the dramatic ritual, and that there must be a stage when the two seem but one. But the essence of the two is distinct, and depends on the relation of the performers to the action. In the dramatic ritual they are actors themselves seeking some direct end; in the drama they consciously represent the actions of others: thus the Mainades who tore Pentheus to pieces performed a dramatic ritual, the actors of the *Bacchæ* represent in a higher form that ritual. As the ritual ceases to be intelligible, the possibility of drama emerges.

² VOJ. xxiii, 299 seqq.

³ Op. cit., pp. 70 seqq.

and singing gods on the stage, and only a few relics of the old literary drama have been admitted into the ritual books. The priests could, indeed, accept much that was popular, such as the chariot races,¹ the shooting of arrows,² the use of the swing,³ the popular abuse,⁴ but they could not in the long run see their way to incorporate the drama where gods appeared on the scene in their ritual. Moreover, stress must be laid on the fact that the ritual drama was in great measure a phallic drama, and phallic rites were hated of the priests. The *Rgveda*⁵ itself detests the *śiśnadevas*.

This is all very ingenious, but it is hard to accept it as at all effective. To begin with, it is difficult for any student of the Vedic ritual to think that the priests were really people who would dislike phallic rites. It is absurd to deny that in some schools they were disliked: it is notorious that the *maithuna*, which is prescribed by all the older texts for the Mahāvratā rite, and which is clearly a fertility spell, is described by the late *Śāṅkhāyana Śrauta Sūtra* as old and obsolete, and not to be performed.⁶ All honour to the school of Śāṅkhāyana, but it is a late school, and the Śaunakins do not criticize the rite. Again, the Yajurveda gives us in its fullest detail the revolting practices of the horse sacrifice.⁷ But, indeed, it would be foolish to multiply examples: the coarseness of the older ritual is unquestionable, and no strength can be laid on any argument which assures us that

¹ Cf. the Vājapeya, Hillebrandt, *Vedische Opfer*, p. 142.

² In the Vājapeya and Rājasūya, Hillebrandt, pp. 141, 145, 146; in the Mahāvratā, Keith, *Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka*, p. 82.

³ In the Mahāvratā, Keith, op. cit., pp. 77, 78.

⁴ Ibid., p. 79.

⁵ x, 99, 3; vii, 21, 5. The sense is rather "phallus worshippers" than phallic spirits or deities, as von Schroeder, pp. 63-4, would prefer to take it. His suggestion that the name Kṛkadāśu, in RV. i, 29, represents a phallus (cf. *κέρκος*) worshipper is as improbable as it is ingenious.

⁶ See my *Aitareya Āraṇyaka*, p. 277, n. 15.

⁷ Hillebrandt, op. cit., pp. 149 seqq.

modesty was the cause of the obsolescence of the drama. Besides, what ground is there for assuming that the drama was inevitably bound up with phallic practices? The finest of all the alleged dramas is, perhaps, that of Agastya and the Maruts, wholly devoid of phallic suggestion. Or again, what has the dialogue of Saramā and the Panis, or the tale of the recovery of Agni, to do with such topics, and the same remark applies to the dialogues of Varuṇa and Indra, of Purūravas and Urvaśī, of Indra and Vāyu, and in all probability to that of Yama and Yami, which seems to us an early morality, though von Schroeder¹ finds in it a variant of the fertility magic which he sees in the Lopāmudrā hymn. It may of course be said that these dialogues have survived precisely because they were different from the ordinary drama of the time, but why should they have ceased to have successors? Why did the Vedic Indians come to the opinion that to present gods dancing and singing was improper, after they had long practised it, and had produced several fine poems by aid of the convention? Surely, even if Indra and the Maruts became an unsuitable subject for the stage, Viśvāmitra and the streams might have held the boards. After all, rather than lose ourselves in this wilderness of speculation, is it not wiser to recognize that the Indian drama did not terminate, for the simple reason that it had not yet begun?

Hertel² has quite a different view of the development

¹ *Mysterium und Mimus*, pp. 275 seqq. This is a peculiarly gratuitous theory, and it is not supported in the least by the Ṛśyaśṛṅga and Śāntā story, which belongs to a totally different type of idea.

² VOJ. xxiii, 297 seq. Winternitz, VOJ. xxiii, 110, doubts the evidence of the connexion of the Vedic and the classical drama, and Hertel, VOJ. xxiv, 118–20, finds a link in the *Harivaṃśa*, ii, 91, where it is said: *tatra yajñe vartamāne sunātyena naṭas tadā | maharṣiṃs toṣayām āsa Bhadrānāmeti nāmataḥ ||* But this is a very poor piece of evidence: the *Harivaṃśa* is a late text, and undoubtedly contemporaneous with the classical drama, at least in its earlier stage, and that this text should recognize a *naṭa* (it is not clear if “actor” is really meant, but

of the drama. He finds in the *Suparṇādhyaṃya*, a late Vedic text, a drama in full form, showing in its elaboration a marked advance upon the dramas of the *Rgveda*. Indeed, if his version were accepted, the piece would be a remarkable one, and his version and explanation are really of great ingenuity. But that, I fear, exhausts all that can be said in their favour. By a plentiful supply of stage directions, by adding a complete and elaborate list of dramatis personæ, and by careful translation based on a preconceived theory, a drama *can* be made out of the *Suparṇādhyaṃya*. But, on the other hand, Oldenberg¹ with equal ease can make an Ākhyāna out of it, and in truth for his theory there speaks the fact that part of the tale is certainly narrative.² Naturally this does not trouble Hertel much, for are there not the prologues of the Greek plays and the narratives of the heralds, all mere devices of the primitive drama to avoid the necessity of explaining things which the audience must be told, but which cannot conveniently be put in dramatically? There remains the hypothesis that both are wrong, and to this view I strongly incline.

But von Schroeder³ has still an argument left. He has seen with Hertel in three hymns dramatic monologues: the first is the boast of the drunken Indra, RV. x, 119, which he imagines had a place in the performance of a Soma feast; the second is the mime of the medicine man, RV. x, 97; and the last the song of the gambler, RV. x, 34. The medicine man he imagines as coming forward in some part of a Soma festival, and the song of the gambler would find its place, accompanied by dances of the personified dice and of Apsarases at the kindling

it does not matter much) as filling up a period in the horse sacrifice really does not help us to any connexion of the secular and ritual drama, which must rest on other evidence.

¹ See GGA. 1909, pp. 71 seqq.

² See Hertel, VOJ. xxiii, 331 seqq.

³ Op. cit., pp. 361-95.

of the fire of the Sabhā, which served also as the place of dicing. It would serve as an interlude in the midst of the offering to recall the mind of the spectators to the dangers of dicing, and it would thus play the part of a morality of the middle ages. The idea is beyond question ingenious, but we can say no more. The ritual is silent, nor can we readily imagine that the Vedic stage would readily have witnessed the appearance of a drunken god, and we may be excused from belief in the dancing dice and the Apsarases, just as we may be allowed to disbelieve in the dance of the Apsarases which we are told introduced the tale of Purūravas and Urvaśī, or in the curious farrago of nonsense which is represented to us as the inward meaning of the Mudgala song.¹

What, then, are we to make of these dialogues and these monologues, and why are they found in the *Rgveda Samhitā*? Unfortunately that is a question which is much easier to ask than to answer, and it is one of those questions which seem to be likely never finally to be answered. The obscurity of the matter justifies to the full such attempts as those of von Schroeder and Hertel, but the fact that we have no certain answer must not be deemed to be a reason for accepting any answer which is utterly improbable. It must be remembered that these hymns do

¹ Winternitz, VOJ. xxiii, 137, admits the weight of Bloomfield's criticism (ZDMG. xlviii, 541 seq.) of Geldner's version (*Vedische Studien*, ii, 1 seq.) of this curious hymn, to which I called attention in JRAS. 1909, p. 207. Mr. Pargiter, JRAS. 1910, pp. 1328 seqq., has connected the hymn with the genealogy of Mudgala in the Purāṇas, and has seen in *vādhriṇā* (v. 12) and *indrasenā* (v. 2) references to Vadhryaśva, a grandson of Mudgala, and Indrasenā his daughter-in-law. The difficulties of the hymn do not, however, seem in the slightest degree to be diminished by these assumptions, and that either *vādhriṇā* or *indrasenā* is intended as a proper name seems most improbable. The whole hymn seems to me, as it did to Bloomfield, to be of mythological content, and I do not think the Purāṇic genealogy rests on any Vedic tradition. Yāska already evidently could not explain the hymn; see *Nirukta*, ix, 2, 3. Here may be noted Mr. Pargiter's attempt, JRAS. 1911, pp. 803-9, to find a rational explanation of the genesis of the Vṛṣākapi poem, RV. x, 86. I fear that the explanation is more rational than probable.

not stand alone in the *Rgveda* as being outside the ordinary category of prayer and praise. There are many hymns, certainly the overwhelming majority,¹ which were written for the ritual, but there are others which clearly are somewhat different in character. Take for example the three hymns in the seventh Maṇḍala² of the *Rgveda* which celebrate the deeds of Sudās under the guidance of Vasiṣṭha. These are beyond doubt occasional hymns, the tribe or family expression of joy over the victories of the great king, one of the few whose names are more than words to us in Vedic history. What essential difference is there between this hymn and the dialogue of Viśvāmitra and the streams?³ Each celebrates a historic event, and if Viśvāmitra himself, as may be the case, is the author of *Rgveda*, iii, 33, what difficulty is there in understanding the preservation of the hymn by his descendants? Or, again, what is there to distinguish the dialogue of Yama and Yamī from the philosophic hymns in the tenth Maṇḍala⁴ except the form? And why should the dialogues regarding the deeds of the gods be deemed any less suited for their praise in the ritual than the simple narratives which make up part of the *Rgveda*? It must be remembered also that besides the formal hymns which had fixed places in the rites there was need of other matter to fill up the pauses in the sacrifice. In the horse sacrifice Brahmin and warrior alike were called on to sing to fill up time,⁵ and ancient tales were among the things with which the period of mourning after the burial of the dead was made to pass.⁶ Nor need we deny that it may be that hymns are found in the *Rgveda* which are neither

¹ Cf. Bloomfield, JAOS. xvii, 177.

² vii, 18, 33, 83.

³ RV. iii, 33.

⁴ See x, 72, 81, 82, 121, 129, etc.; Macdonell, *Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 131 seqq.

⁵ Cf. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, xiii, 5. 3. 4; *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, iii, 9. 14. 4.

⁶ *Āśvalāyana Grhya Sūtra*, iv, 6. 6. Cf. also *Kāthaka Upaniṣad*, i, 3. 16; Winternitz, VOJ. xxiii, 132, 133.

intended for magic nor religious ends; possibly the dicer's song¹ falls within this category, though that of the medicine man is rather a magic spell.

After all, when the slow growth of the drama in Greece is remembered, it will not seem so surprising that the true drama was tardy in appearance in India. Song dance and music are not, when all is said and done, enough to produce a drama, and the further steps required to reach that end have in all countries proved hard to take. But one conjecture may be permitted as to the slow growth of the drama in India, and that because it raises a point of interest with regard to Indian religion. It is the view of von Schroeder² that the Vedic Indian was really an earnest believer in the spirits of the dead and their leader Rudra, who appeared as wind and vegetation deities, and with whom he compares the Sileni, the Satyrs, the Lemures, and so forth. The *Rgveda* ignores largely this side of religion, and in his view that is due to priestly preference for other religious manifestations. But there is possible another view: it is at least as plausible that the advance in the greatness of Rudra is due to the progressive admixture of the Vedic Indian with the aboriginal population, a fact which I conceive is hardly open to serious doubt. It may be that in the hymns of the *Rgveda* we have preserved not so much a priestly refinement as rather the expression of a less diluted Aryan belief. It is not necessary for us to deny that the Vedic Aryan did believe in vegetation spirits, but it is a perfectly legitimate hypothesis that he cared less for them than he did for other sides of religion. And the hypothesis has the advantage of explaining why the true Indian drama appears so late. Recent research has shown, it seems to me beyond serious doubt,³ that the Greek drama found its

¹ x, 34.

² Op. cit., pp. 53 seqq.; VOJ. ix, 233-52.

³ See my note in the *Classical Quarterly*, iv, 283, 284. Ridgeway's theory of the origin of the drama from the festivals in honour of the

origin in the representation in literature of the rude folk-religion which portrayed the struggle between winter and summer: such contests of the representatives of the two spirits prevail even to-day in Greece, and it seems that Athens actually took the step from dramatic ritual to the actual drama, though the details of the fundamental change from presentation to a representation are wanting. Now the first mention of drama in Indian literature is unquestionably that in the *Mahābhāṣya*,¹ where we are told how the slaying of Kāṁsa by Kṛṣṇa could be represented either in actual action or by mere words: the *granthikas* divided themselves into two parts, one representing the followers of Kāṁsa with blackened faces, the other those of Kṛṣṇa with red faces, and they expressed the feeling of both parties throughout the struggle from Kṛṣṇa's birth to the death of Kāṁsa. The mention of the colour of the two parties is most significant: red man slays black man: the spirit of spring and summer prevails over the spirit of the dark winter. The parallel is too striking to be mistaken: we are entitled to say that in India as in Greece this primitive dramatic ritual slaying of winter is the source whence the drama is derived. But these contests are in all likelihood no substantial part of the Ṛgvedic cult: when they appear as in the Mahāvratā² we are long past the time of the *Rgveda* proper, and we need not be surprised if the *Rgveda* contains no trace of drama. How far back this drama goes—for it is clearly a real drama—we cannot say, but there is much to be urged for the theory that it developed outside the Brahminical stratum of the populace. The names of player and play alike and the technical terms of the

dead is set forth at length in his work on the Origins of the Greek Drama, but his thesis seems to be still improbable as an explanation of the origin of tragedy.

¹ See Weber, *Indische Studien*, xiii, 354 seqq., 488 seqq.; my note, ZDMG. lxi, 534 seqq., and cf. JRAS. 1908, p. 172.

² See my *Sāṅkhya-yāna Āraṇyaka*, p. 78.

drama are too overwhelmingly Prākṛtic to allow us to doubt its essentially popular origin, even if the Yātrā were not there to remind us of the roots of the drama in popular life. The drama has its origin in religion, but rather in popular religion than in the higher cult: the parallel between Greece and India in this regard is too obvious to be overlooked. Dionysos is the great lord of the Greek drama, but he is no favourite in the Homeric age.