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[PARTS I-IV

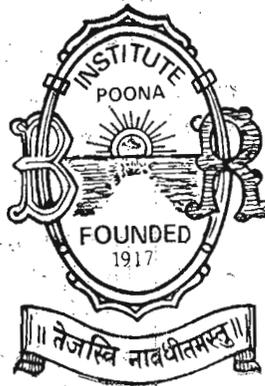
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INTRUDERS INTO THE PANTHEON : ŚIVA AND DIONYSOS

BY

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This paper aims at tracing the mythological career of two gods, Dionysos and Śiva, and at bringing out some similarities in the manner of their entrance in a hostile pantheon and society. At the end, a parallel from a medieval Bengali myth is discussed for establishing a pattern common to the stories of gods forcing their way into the pantheon.

Dionysos, son of Zeus and Semele was resented by Zeus' jealous wife Hera even when he was a foetus in his mother's womb. Zeus snatched him from the devouring flames in which his mother perished. Hermes took the infant to Semele's sister Ino, but the irate Hera visited Ino's husband Athamus with madness, so that the child had to be transferred again, this time to the care of some nymphs in Mt Nysa in Asia.¹ This particular part of transference of the foetus which² at six months was stitched into Zeus' thigh³ before being handed over to Ino or to the nymphs. This part of Dionysos' bears similarity to the career of the infant Kārttikeya⁴ who in the *Mahābhārata* was created from the fire-god Agni's seed deposited in the Gaṅgā and afterwards taken care of by the six nymphs, the Kṛttikās. Still later, he came to be known as Śiva's and Pārvati's son. The motif of the transference of the foetus is thus common to both the gods. Another common characteristic is the presence of the river in both myths : Śiva's seed was deposited in the Gaṅgā and Zeus' in the Achelous.⁵ In *Bibliothèque* III: 321 Zeus turned these nymphs into stars, the Hyades, just as Kārttikeya's foster-mothers were the stellar Kṛttikās.⁶

¹ Possibly in Arabia, according to J. G. Frazer's footnote on III: 321 of the Loeb edn. of the *Bibliothèque*. Derivatively, the god's name means 'the god ('dio', from 'theos') of Nysa.

² According to Apollodoros.

³ *Bibliothèque* III: 319.

⁴ Partially an *alter ego* of Śiva himself, although in later literature he becomes Śiva's son.

⁵ *Bacchae*, Loeb edn., l. 521.

⁶ Frazer's footnote on this text says, "Nothing could be more appropriate than that the god of Vine should be nursed by the nymphs of rain." Let us remember that the Kṛttikās also are the constellation of the rain.

After an uneventful childhood⁷ spent in the company of shepherds and satyrs, especially of the satyr Silenus to whom Dionysos was particularly attached, he eventually attained manhood and discovered the art of making wine from wild grapes. Apollodoros says that⁸ and had a large following who were drawn to him chiefly because of the intoxicating properties of the new drink. His symbol was the thyrsus, a staff entwined with the vine branches and surmounted by fir-cones.⁹ He went out at the head of an army in his "triumphal march through Syria, Egypt, Arabia, India, etc."¹⁰ conquering all before him, founding cities and establishing on every side a more civilized and sociable mode of life. We notice the role of the culture-hero who, as Liber, the vine-god, gave wine to his people and acquired land, prosperity and fame on their behalf.¹¹

After his eastern conquest Dionysos returned to Greece but faced fierce opposition from Lycurgus in Thrace and from Pentheus in Thebes. Now Pentheus was Dionysos' cousin, son of Semele's sister Agave. The *Bibliothèque* says that Hera drove Dionysos mad so that he went out with his followers and roamed in Egypt and Syria. On his return he was insulted by Lycurgus and driven from the town. He took to the sea in the company of Thetis and his own followers, the Bacchantes, who served him. Dionysos drove Lycurgus mad so that in his madness he struck his own son Dryad with an axe taking him for a vine branch, but recovered his senses shortly before Dryad died. His land remained barren and the gods ordained that it would not regain fertility until Lycurgus was slaughtered. So the Edomians bound him to a rock and, through the supernatural intervention at Dionysos' instance, wild horses killed him.

⁷ And he is also worshipped as the divine child, Dionysos Liknetes.

⁸ Qeneus, king of Calydon, was the first to receive the vine plant from Dionysos. *Bibliothèque* I : 63-65.

⁹ Dionysos killed Eurytus with his thyrsus, *Bibliothèque* I : 45. One remembers Siva's three-pronged spike, the *triśūla*, which he used as a weapon for destruction.

¹⁰ Bérrens, E. M. : *Myths of ancient Greece and Rome*. London, 1892, p. 126.

¹¹ Cf. " For the people of Attica he comes from Boeotia, a country of northern marsh and mist but from whose sombre black marble towns came also the vine; the musical reed cut from its sedges and the worship of the Graces, always so closely connected with the religion of Dionysos." Walter Pater : *Greek Studies*, Macmillan Co., 1901, pp. 23-24.

The ambivalent relation between the epic-Purānic Siva and *soma*, the intoxicating ritual drink, is an interesting case in point. Siva is by no means the discoverer of *soma* but his habitat is. mt. Mūjavat where *soma* grew; his followers are drunken, and later, when *soma* came to mean the moon, it found a place on Siva's head.

Then, after traversing Thrace and the whole of India and setting up pillars of victory there he came to Thebes where his cousin Pentheus¹² prohibited participation by his subjects in the wild revellings of the Bacchantes. Dionysos, wishing to spare him Lycurgus' fate, disguised himself as a young man in the king's train and warned him against such denunciation of his cult. He was cast into prison and when preparations were afoot for his execution he appeared as a bull to the king's servants and managed to escape. The Bacchantes went on with their wild ritual, Pentheus intending to spy on them came and hid himself. But the women who solemnized the orgies saw him, and his own mother Agave in a fit of frenzy took him for a wild beast and tore him limb by limb.¹³ Women at the Theban palace who refused to recognize his divinity and to honour him properly were driven mad so that they killed their own children at their breasts and ate their flesh.

Dionysos then wished to be ferried across from Icaria to Naxos. On the seat some pirates bound him and took him to their ship intending to sell him as a slave. But his fetters fell off, the pilot was alarmed and asked the pirates to take him back. When they refused, the ship stood still and all its masts and sails were found to be covered with vines and clusters of grapes,¹⁴ and sweet music was heard. Dionysos assumed lion shape,¹⁵ and tore the captain to pieces. But the crew jumped into the sea and became dolphins; the pilot, however, escaped and was taught by Dionysos his cult. This pilot arrived in Thebes and taught the people, especially the women, the cultic practices which Dionysos had taught him. But Pentheus, king of Thebes, prohibited the cult, proclaimed that Dionysos was an imposter, and was torn limb from limb by his own mother Agave.

Women of Boiotia, especially the daughters of Minyas, resisted the new cult. When all the people of their city (Orchomenos) had gone forth to celebrate the new festival, Minyas' daughters sat at home weaving. Dionysos advised them to join the throng but they refused. Suddenly phantoms of wild beasts filled the room and the women's web turned into vines, and invisible

¹² Who had succeeded Dionysos' grandfather Cadmus on the throne of Thebes.

¹³ Dionysos also drove the women of Argos mad, *Bibliothèque* 1 : 91.

¹⁴ Cf. Ovid's *Fasti* VI, 483 — "O Bacchus whose locks are twined with clustered grapes and ivy." Also in the *Metamorphoses* bk III. But in the *Bibliothèque* Apollodoros says that the masts turned into snakes; this is also borne out by the Homeric hymn to Demeter.

¹⁵ Cf. "In his hand he flourished a wand (the thyrsus) draped with vine leaves. All around him lay phantom shapes of wild beasts — tigers, lynxes and panthers." *Metamorphoses* Bk III. These bring out Dionysos' close association with wild beasts.

worshippers of the new god made wild music.¹⁶ The daughters of Minyas went mad¹⁷ and casting lots decided that Leukippe had to offer a sacrifice. The other votaries tore her son Hippasos to pieces. Then they ran out and were turned into bats and other nocturnal flying things.¹⁸ The women of Argos who resisted the new cult were driven mad by Dionysos; they left their homes and roamed over the whole of Argos, and passed through Arcadia and the Peloponnesse in mad frenzy.¹⁹

Certain features of Dionysos' career strike us :

(1) He is a culture hero who invented the vine and taught his followers the art of making wine. His thyrsus was entwined with the vine; when he is threatened on the sea by wicked sailors the ship's mast and sails turn into vine.

(2) He has association with the goat esp. in his connection with the half-goat satyrs, one of whom, Silenus, son of the half-goat Pan, became his protector, when Zeus deposited him with different people to shelter him from Hera's wrath. He was much attached to Silenus. Satyrs and goats also belong to his retinue when his cult flourished. At one point Zeus had also turned him into a kid to deceive Hera's eyes. The reverse relationship i. e. his enmity to goats is also recorded : Bacchus is a foe of the goat. The sacrificial animal in the cultic worship of Dionysos is also a goat.²⁰

(3) Snakes are also associated with Dionysos, for, according to Apollodoros, Dionysos turned the Tyrrhenian ship's masts, sails and oars

¹⁶ In *Metamorphoses* Bk IV we read : " harsh throbbing of unseen drums and the sound of the curved flute was heard accompanied by the clashing of cymbals. The scent of myrrh and saffron filled the air. Then looms began to grow green ... the fabric which the sisters were weaving put forth leaves like ivy. Suddenly ... the rooms were agleam with ruddy fire and ghostly effigies of wild beasts howled around." Penguin transl., p. 104. Then the women turned gradually into bats.

¹⁷ Madness is a recurring motif in the history of the resistance to the new cult, and in a strange binary relation the god's own votaries acted as lunatics during their frenzied cultic practice, presumably, in honour, and therefore, in ritual empathy of a 'mad' god, Dionysos Mainamenos.

¹⁸ Hesiod, fragment 27, *The Proitides*. See also in the *Catalogue of Women and Eoiae*, 18.

¹⁹ Frazer in his footnote on *Bibliothèque* I : 19, says : " Eratostheues or rather the writer who took that name ... says that Orpheus did not honour Dionysos but esteemed the sun, the greatest of gods. ... This angered Dionysos and he stirred up the Bassarids or Bacchanals to rend the bard limb from limb. "

²⁰ Ovid : *Fasti*, Loeb edn. I : 360; Also Ampelus, son of a nymph and a satyr, was loved by Bacchus on the Ismarian hills. *Fasti* III : 410.

into snakes.²¹ While describing the female votaries, the Maenads, Euripides says : " They whose bands had fallen loose ... and girt the dappled fells / Round them with snakes that licked their cheeks the while. " ²²

(4) Bulls are another of Dionysos' animal associates with chthonic bearings. While horses are mythologically associated with the sun, bulls are essentially pre-solar and have lunar and chthonic bearings. The binary relations between horses and bulls are well-known in mythology.²³ Lycurgus who opposed the Dionysian cults was destroyed by horses. Again, when the daughters of Minyas in their madness cast lots to find who should sacrifice to appease Dionysos' wrath, the lot fell upon Leukippe who had to sacrifice her son Hippasos; both the names, Leukippe and Hippasos, are connected with 'hippos', the horse. When Pentheus imprisoned Dionysos and sought to kill him his servants did not find the god but saw only a bull — Dionysos Taumorphos.²⁴ Minyas' daughters turned into bats, creatures with chthonic and nocturnal associations.²⁵

(5) Apart from specific animal associations like goats, bulls, snakes etc. we notice Dionysos' mythological connections with wild beasts in general : he rides on a panther; in the room where Minyas' daughters sat weaving ignoring Dionysos' call to join in the Bacchic festivals — " was agleam with ruddy fire, and ghostly effigies of wild beasts howled around. " ²⁶ Also, Dionysos is described : " Around him lay phantom shapes of wild beasts, tigers and lynxes and panthers with dappled skin. " ²⁷ Sculptural representations also show him as seated on lions, panthers or lynxes.

(6) The god's cult was most popular among women and was connected with music, dance, wild revelries and drama. In Thebes the women abandoned their homes and followed the god ; he drove the Argive women with a frenzy ; the Maenads were all women.

(7) The Dionysiac cult entailed, at least occasionally, human sacrifice — a practice quite abhorrent to the orthodox religion, Plutarch tells us how

²¹ *Bibliothèque*, Loeb edn. I : 333 ff.

²² *Bacchae*, Loeb edn. 697-99. Ovid, too, describes the Maenads with spiky snake-like hair, *Metamorphoses*, Bk IV. Penguin Tr., p. 107.

²³ The opposition between the chthonic and Mediterranean bull and the Indo-European horse symbol seems to be at the bottom of these mythological traits.

²⁴ Euripides, *Bacchae*, Loeb edn. 618, 1016 ff. Cf. also Dionysos described as a bull-horned god, *op. cit.*, 920-923.

²⁵ Hesiod, fragment 27, *The Proitides*, Ovid in *Metamorphoses*, Penguin tr., pp. 104-5, Bk IV describes the change into bat shape in some detail.

²⁶ *Metamorphoses*, Bk IV.

²⁷ *Op. cit.*, Bk III.

shortly before the battle of Salamis, three Persian captive youths were offered to Dionysos (Omophagos, the Devourer); Themistocles himself approved of this. In all the accounts of the frenzied cultic practices we have references to men and animals being torn limb from limb. Surely this proves that the votaries are said to have worked under the delusion that these were animals. It also hints at the cultic practice of eating raw flesh in *imitatio dei* of Dionysos Omophagos.

(8) The other important association of this cult is the drama of which Dionysos is a patron. The drama festival of Athens is called after him and dramatic festivals are not only held in his honour but they are an important part of the rite. "Comedy had its origin in the jokes and funny songs of the carriers of the phalli. Tragedy also originated in the cult of Dionysos — the cult of Dionysos of Eleutherai ... We ought to keep in mind that in the cult Dionysos was called Melanaigis (he with the black goat-skin) and that there was a myth which proves that a combat between "the Light One" and "the Black One" was enacted"²⁸

(9) The Maenads who sang, played on musical instruments, performed plays and generally made merry were an eminently noisy group, votaries of a noisy god, Dionysos Bromios. The noisy rites may also have been a ritual *imitatio dei* i. e. a primitive noisy ritual created its patron figure in Dionysos Bromios. In this troupe were animals — wild and domestic — of different species, while the god is also associated with nymphs and satyrs. As Liber, culture hero who discovered the wild vine and taught his followers the art of making wine, drunken revelry with loud shouts and music was also part of the cultic orgy. Some parts of these orgies are connected with fertility rites. "The Selenoi and the satyrs have intercourse with the nymphs and very often they appear dancing and frolicking with the Maenads, for they were made companions of Dionysos."²⁹ Presumably, because the Dionysiac cult had overtones of fertility and vegetation myths and rites³⁰ it became, at least for some time in a later age, a mystic and ecstatic movement. Even in the Eleusinian mysteries a figure "Iacchos" was represented in the likeness of Dionysos. Dionysos' popularity "was based on the longing of humanity for mystic and ecstatic experiences."³¹ Among the god's followers are included the nymphs, satyrs, Maenads, Kouretes, Selenoi and Korybantes, all of whom indulged in loud, unorthodox, revelries and ecstatic cultic practices.

²⁸ Nilsson, M. P., *Greek Folk Religion*, Harper, 1961, p. 36.

²⁹ Nilsson, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

³⁰ Cf. the maybough, hygeis also called "bacchos",

³¹ Nilsson, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

(10) The last point in connection with Dionysos that is of interest here is the worship of the phallus as the god's emblem which "was carried in all Dionysiac processions (mentioned by Plutarch) ... comedy had its origin in the jokes and funny songs of the carriers of the phalli."³²

II

Bearing these outlines of Dionysos' career and cultic characteristics in mind let us now turn to the Indian god Rudra-Śiva. He was Rudra in the earliest part of his career and became Śiva in a later period. Rudra in the *Rgveda* is an extremely minor god with only three hymns to his credit. He begins growing in stature in the *Yajurveda*.³³ where in the Śatarudriya hymn various popular and dark associations slowly begin to be accreted to his mythological personality. This process continues through the Purāṇas and stops around the tenth or ninth century B. C. when his figure assumes the dimensions which have persisted down the ages. In the *Yajurveda* he is an angry god who carries the bow and arrows, has an inauspicious form — copper, red and dappled — as also a benign form. He is the blue-throated one, who has a turban on his head or is tousled-haired and has golden arms. The hymn says, "I bow to his warriors" and mentions thousands of Rudras all around and prays for averting their attacks. The hymn also presents him as a homunculus, and bears evidence of a process of syncretism with many local, pre-Aryan and non-Aryan gods who are subsumed in the resultant Śiva complex.

Rudra was an archer even as early as the *Rgveda* but now in the *Yajurveda* he is mailed and cuirassed, bears a sword and is armed with a bolt; he is even said to lead an army, as also many hordes and tribes. Now he has a distinct relationship with animals: on the one hand, he is a hunter and, like a hunter leads dogs;³⁴ on the other, he is the lord³⁵ of animals, *paśupati*, which he was also even in the *Rgveda*.³⁶ One remembers the Mohenjo Daro seals where his prototype is surrounded by an elephant, a tiger, a rhinoceros and a buffalo. We also have an inverse association of Rudra with cattle, "he who practises witchcraft should offer a red cow to Rudra ... it has Rudra as its deity."³⁷

³² Nilsson, *op. cit.*, p. 361.

³³ *Taittirīya Samhitā* IV : 5, and *Vājasaneyi Samhitā* XVI.

³⁴ *Vāj. Sam.* XVI : 4, also *Tāṇḍya Mahābrāhmaṇa* VI : 9 : 7.

³⁵ Literally, protector.

³⁶ Cf. I : 114 : 1, *et al.*; also *Atharvaveda* II : 34.

³⁷ *Taittirīya Samhitā* II : 1 : 7. His relation with cattle in general is found in *Tait. Sam.* III : 1 : 9 ; V : 14 ; VI : 2 : 3, in *Maitrāyaṇī Sam.* II : 6 : 6, in *Tait. Brāhmaṇa* II : 2 : 5 : 2 ; III : 9 : 12:3 and in the *Chāndogya Br.* II : 4 : 3 *et al.*

Rudra has been associated with various aspects of land and water. Thus he is the lord of trees, forests, thickets, gullies, stony places, chasms, clefts, tanks, pools, cisterns, the ploughed field, the threshing floor, the cloudy sky and the storm.

Śiva's habitat is in Mt Mūjavat³⁸ where grows the Soma plant yielding an intoxicating drink. Although the epic does not expressly mention Śiva as indulging in any drink, yet his association with intoxicants is borne out by the fact that the Śatarudrīya calls him Soma and Saumya and by the oblique connection between Mūjavat and Soma. He is also called the lord of Soma, *andhasāmpati*.³⁹ The later Śiva holds the moon (Soma) on his head, his followers indulge in intoxicants and in still later, post-Purāṇic, literature he himself is addicted to drugs and his cultic worship has *canabis indica*, as a ritual ingredient, to be offered and used.

Śiva's association with snakes is a familiar feature from very early times. Even in the Śatarudrīya he has close connection with snakes. The *Mahābhārata* and *Harivaṃśa* describe his figure as entwined with snakes and in iconographic representations snakes invariably coil round his body. In cult, too, his worship is associated with snakes. In the *Hiranyagarbha Śrautasūtra*⁴⁰ and the *Pāraskara Gṛhyasūtra*⁴¹ instructions are given for his worship in a snake-infested place.

Regarding Śiva's association with dance and music we have innumerable references all through the *Mahābhārata* and Purāṇas to his troops singing, dancing and making merry.⁴²

His association with women in the Purāṇas gives the picture of a philanderer. The *Skanda Purāṇa* recounts his escapades : When Rudra saw a hermitage he entered it for alms. The sages' wives were enamoured and clamoured for his favours. Their husbands found them clinging to him in lust and in great anger they cursed him, his male organ dropped on the ground and, piercing the earth, it entered the nether world. In shame Śiva approached Brahman. At Brahman's advice the gods praised and appeased him requesting him to replace the member on his body. He pleaded the futility of this as his wife Satī was already dead; so the phallus — now an emblem of Śiva—

³⁸ *Vāj. Sam.*, III : 70

³⁹ *Vāj. Sam.*, XVI : 10.

⁴⁰ I : 168.

⁴¹ III : 15 : 17.

⁴² *Mbh* XIII, *Vāyu Purāṇa* XXX : 196, LIV : 37, 38, *Vāmana Purāṇa* XLVIII : 92; 124 *et al.*

came to receive worship independently.⁴³ Variants of the origin of the phallus worship — beginning with its being detached from Śiva's body through the gods' or sages' curse because of Śiva's philandering or of disobliging them in other ways — are found in other texts.⁴⁴ In these episodes we find Śiva, a favourite among women who were so enamoured of him that they left their homes and followed him risking their husbands' displeasure. The last of the episodes gives the origin of phallus worship. Now, in the Dionysos myth also we find women, even married women, left their homes and followed the young and handsome Dionysos.⁴⁵ Although the phallus does not play a major role in the Dionysos myth it was quite prominent in the cult.⁴⁶

The followers of Śiva like those of Dionysos indulged in wild revelry with music, dancing and loud noise. Beginning with the *Yajurveda*⁴⁷ the association of very loud noises⁴⁸ with the Rudra cult persists down to the latest Purāṇas.⁴⁹ In the *Mahābhārata* his followers behave in a wild, uproarious and outrageous manner.⁵⁰ They are dressed in outlandish fashion and among them are dwarfs, deformed and animal- and demon-shaped beings as also actual gnomes and departed souls, Śiva roams in the outskirts of human habitation where his retinue holds wild cultic revelries sneered at and abhorred by the orthodox religion. Many references to his followers' addiction to meat and to their indulgence in cruelty bear out the cult's partiality to socially abhorrent practices.⁵¹ In the *Mahābhārata* we have a reference to captive kings being kept in bondage by Jarāsandha who intended to kill and offer them as oblation to Śiva. Kṛṣṇa chided Jarāsandha for this cruel practice.⁵²

Here is the story of this abhorrence. Dakṣa, a Prajāpati (i. e. a prime progenitor of the human race) performed a sacrifice to which he had invited

⁴³ I : 12-21; also in section VI.

⁴⁴ Cf. the *Śiva Purāṇa*, *Dharmasamhitā* section 10, *Vāyu Purāṇa* 55, *Linga Purāṇa* XXVII : 36-38, *Vāmana Purāṇa* XLVII : 57 : 44, 39 *et al.*

⁴⁵ Cf. the women of Thebes and in the kingdom of Lycurgns.

⁴⁶ Nilsson M. P., *Greek Folk Religion*, Harper 1961, p. 36.

⁴⁷ Cf. *nama uccairghoṣāya-ākrandayate* "Homage to the one with a loud voice, to him who screams!" *Vāj. Sam.* XVI : 19.

⁴⁸ Bull-roarers?

⁴⁹ Cf. *Mbh* XIX : 7 *huhunhārapriya*, *Vāyu Purāṇa* XXX : 196; *kilakilapriya*, *Vāmana Purāṇa* XLIII : 92.

⁵⁰ XIII : 329-40; XIV : 7 ff.

⁵¹ Kālī, Śiva's later spouse is associated with many such practices recorded in Tantric texts. As early as the *Śatarudriya* in the *Yajurveda* Rudra's associates are wild, immoral and formidable.

⁵² *Mbh* II : 22 : 11.

all the gods except Śiva. The earliest version of such exclusion is found in the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* which says, "The gods excluded Rudra from the sacrifice; he pierced the sacrifice, the gods gathered round it (and offered a well-offered sacrifice)."⁵³ Another variant in the *Śatāpatha Brāhmaṇa* reads: "Now by means of the sacrifice the gods ascended to heaven. But the god who ruled over the cattle (i.e. Paśupati Śiva) was left behind here.... He saw what occurred and said, "I have been left behind; they are excluding me from the sacrifice." He went after them and with his raised weapon rose up on the north.... The gods said, 'Do not hurl!'. He said, 'Do ye not exclude me from the sacrifice! Set apart an oblation for me.' They replied, 'So be it'. He withdrew his weapon and did not hurl it, nor did he injure any one."⁵⁴ A later Brahmanic passage says: "Prajāpati⁵⁵ deprived Rudra of the sacrifice. He pierced it (the sacrifice) and it became 'prāsitra'.⁵⁶ Bhaga became blind as he looked upon it. Savitr lost his arms as he held the pot (golden arms were provided for him later, and he was known as *hiranyapāni*), the golden-armed Pūṣan lost his teeth as he tried to eat it, so he became 'piṣṭabhojana', eater of mashed food.⁵⁷ In the Vulgate edition of the *Mahābhārata* Śiva's wife Pārvatī saw a procession of gods moving towards (her father) Dakṣa's sacrifice; these had been invited; she and her husband had been ignored; Śiva told her with utter unconcern that 'it had been ordained' that he should have no share in the sacrifice. He, however, noticed that she felt mortified at this neglect. So he rushed to the venue of the sacrifice and smashed it up.⁵⁸ This episode is repeated in the authentic version where Dakṣa purposely leaves Śiva out. Dadhīca warns him against such exclusion saying that Śiva is too great to be insulted in this way.⁵⁹ Dakṣa scorned the words of caution saying that the sacrifice would be polluted by Śiva's presence. There were eleven Rudras, all with matted hair, all bearing spikes; but he (Dakṣa) knew no Maheśvara whom Dadhīca mentioned. Śiva then created a pair of demons (Vīrabhadra and Bhadrakālī) out of his wrath who destroyed the sacrifice.⁶⁰ The *Harivaṃśa*, a late

⁵³ II : 6 : 8.

⁵⁴ I : 7 : 3 ff.

⁵⁵ Interestingly enough, Dakṣa himself is called Prajāpati.

⁵⁶ Oblation, or 'the host' in Christian terminology.

⁵⁷ *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa*, Uttarabhāga I : 2.

⁵⁸ X : 18.

⁵⁹ One remembers Tiersias warning Cadmus in a similar manner in the *Bacchae*, where we also hear that "Dionysos is not less than any god". Loeb edn., I. 777.

⁶⁰ A similarity with the Dionysos story strikes us; in Euripides' *Bacchae* we read: "For he cometh, our King, Zeus' scion to bring / Yon hall to confusion and disarray". Loeb edn., lines. 601-2. Destruction of those who scoff or scorn the new cult is thus a common feature.

supplement to the *Mahābhārata*, mentions this episode briefly: 'When Śiva destroyed Dakṣa's sacrifice terrible havoc followed and Viṣṇu fought him. Later, Śiva became Nilakanṭha when Viṣṇu embraced him and he allowed him a portion of the sacrifice.⁶¹ The basic theme of all these versions is the exclusion of Śiva from a sacrifice offered by the gods (or Dakṣa) followed by Śiva's anger and either he himself or demons born of his wrath⁶² destroy the sacrifice so that the gods (or Dakṣa) are forced to invite him to, or offer him a share in, the sacrifice.⁶³

Now what strikes us very forcefully in this story is the fact that Śiva himself a god is excluded from the sacrifice. The reason given is that no one has heard of this Maheśvara (= Śiva) as Dakṣa scornfully tells Dadhīca. The second — and perhaps a deeper — reason is to be sought in the conduct of Śiva and his followers — which, to put it very mildly, is not polite. Naturally, the orthodox gods and their followers would not dream of inviting such a god to the assembly of the respectable pantheon.

Here we have a socio-religious resistance to an invading or intruding god. In both the Greek and Indian versions this resistance is "explained" as a resistance to the outrageous conduct of the Maenads or Bacchantes of Dionysos and the "gaṇas" of Śiva. In the *Tattirīya Saṃhitā* (IV : 5) and *Vājasaneyī Saṃ.* (XVI) Rudra has thousands of followers, the Rudra roving in all directions. The *Harivaṃśa* tells us of hundreds of infinitely powerful Rudras who fill the whole earth.⁶⁴ Ovid describes the Maenads as having spiky hair⁶⁵ and curiously enough the *Matsya Purāṇa*, describing the cosmic holocaust at the end of this aeon says that then "women will have spiky hair and the crossroads will be full of Śiva's spikes."⁶⁶ The connection of the spike (*sūla*) with Śiva is another link with thyrsus-bearing Dionysos. The

⁶¹ III : 32 ff.

⁶² One remembers that Dionysos, too, did not wreak vengeance personally but "fashioned a wraith who wrought havoc", *Bacchae*, Loeb, I. 630.

⁶³ An interesting detail is supplied by late Purāṇic versions of this episode. In the havoc caused by Śiva (or his demon substitutes), Dakṣa lost his head. When, however, Śiva received a share in the sacrifice, Dakṣa's head could not be found, so a goat's head was placed on his trunk. This further connects Śiva with Dionysos with the goat serving as a link between the gods and their opponents, through references like "Bacchus is an enemy of the he-goat". Ovid: *Fasti*, Loeb Edn., I : 360.

⁶⁴ III : 53. In this connection, see the present author's article "Rudra, Rudras the Maruts" in *Anvikṣā*, (Journal of the Sanskrit Dept., Jadavpur University, Calcutta) vol : 3, pt. I, March, 1968.

⁶⁵ *Metamorphoses*, ch. IV. Penguin tr., p. 107.

⁶⁶ XLVII : 258.

real resistance to Śiva and his cult, however, must have stemmed from an abhorrence of the non-Indo-European tribes who followed these gods.

In both cases, the anecdotes as we have them were composed *after* the new god had been assimilated into the orthodox pantheon; they merely record the memory of the resistance and the history of how it was overcome. In both cases the resistance broke down at the continuous manifestation of the great power of the new god as also by the swelling number of the devotees and passionate participation in an orgiastic mode of cultic practices.

We have noticed that common characteristics of both these gods — their cult consisting of music, dancing and frenzy, their followers,⁶⁷ their animal associates, the bull, snakes and other dark creatures, their association with fire,⁶⁸ their oblation, especially the human sacrifice which is rarely offered to any other god, the preponderance of women votaries who in the case of Dionysos behave in unwomanly manner while possessed by cultic frenzy, rend animals limb from limb and also slaughter men, mistaking them for animals. Śiva also is said to be fond of cooked and raw flesh and even greedy like a jackal for the flesh of the foetus.⁶⁹

Evidently Śiva's own habits and conduct and those of his followers were found obnoxious by the people of the Great Tradition of orthodox religion. The record of this abhorrence is found in the various anecdotes of Śiva being ignored by the gods (or Dakṣa) at a sacrifice and his wreaking frightful vengeance in order to gain admittance in the assembly of the orthodox pantheon. In this he resembles Dionysos; and both in the Greek and Indian mythologies they are the only ones who have to fight for a place. In the mythologies the texts are composed *after* the new cults are already accepted

⁶⁷ Dionysos' Maenads and Bacchantes and Śiva's hosts, the 'gaṇas' among whom were included departed spirits and deformed or animal-shaped beings.

⁶⁸ Kārttikeya, Śiva's son in later Purāṇic literature is really Śiva's *alter ego*, born of Śiva's seed deposited in the Gaṅgā. The river could not bear the heat of the seed and spewed it on a reed bush on the bank where the six Kṛttikās came and nurtured the foetus which grew into a six-headed boy destined to destroy demon Tāraka. Now, part of the Śiva-Dionysos mythologem can be understood better if the hermeneutic deals with Kārttikeya's early career together with Śiva's, taking them as components of a whole. Śiva's later identification with Agni is reflected in his seed being regarded as fiery by Gaṅgā. This aspect is also reflected in the concept of Dionysos being born of fire, as is borne out by his epithet, *purigenes*, fire-born.

⁶⁹ Cf. *ṣakvāmamāmsalubdha*, and *garbhaniḍmsaśṛṅgāla* in a long and horrendous description of the god's and his followers' habits and predilections, *Vāyu Purāṇa* XXX : 196-212. Keith says, "they are specifically of the ethnic type of theriomorphic ghouls of the dead." *Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads*, Cambridge, Mass., 1925, vol. I, p. 238.

and regarded as (or made) sufficiently respectable to be part of the orthodox religion. Both Śiva and Dionysos are depicted as possessing benign and malevolent traits.⁷⁰

Although Dionysos is mentioned very early in the fourteenth century B. C. in the the Knosso's tablets in Mycenae,⁷¹ yet we know nothing about his career and conduct in that hoary antiquity. He must have undergone considerable change to be transformed from his earlier Olympian personality into the intruder in Euripides who presents him as the hero of his *Bacchae*. Later by the fifth century B. C. "Dionysos had a certain connection with Eleusis."⁷²

Dionysos, in his early career had roamed in the East including 'Lydia, Phrygia, Persia, Bactria, Media and Araby and through all Asia.'⁷³ Among other eastern countries India, too, figures in early Greek writings. Thus *Indikos* appears in *Anthologia Graeca*, (9 : 544, and in Herodotus 3 : 98) also *Indos* in the sense of an Indian.⁷⁴ Curiously enough, we have the word *Indoletes*, (a *hapax legemenon*) Indian-killer, used about Dionysos himself⁷⁵ establishing a relationship between Dionysos and India. When we think of Dionysos' conquest of the various eastern countries at the very opening of the *Bacchae* the passage seems to be unwittingly giving a pre-history of the god.⁷⁶ E. M. Berens wrote of Dionysos' "triumphal march through Syria, Egypt, Arabia, India etc."⁷⁷ In Sophokles' *Antigone*, Creon says :

⁷⁰ One remembers Walter Pater's distinction between the Winter and Summer Dionysos as also between Dionysos Omophagos and Dionysos Melichios, the honey-sweet. *Greek Studies*. Macmillan & Co., 1901, pp. 45-57.

⁷¹ Rudolph Otto in his *Dionysos, Mythos and Kultus* (Frankfurt, 1933) argued that Dionysos became an integral part of Greek religion towards the end of the second millennium B. C. His name spelt as di-wo-nu-so-jo is found in the Pylos fragment Xa 06 as mentioned by Michael Ventris and John Chadwick in their *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, (Cambridge, 1956, p. 126) and by John Chadwick in his *Decipherment of Linea B*, (Cambridge, 1967, p. 124). On another Pylos table, Xb 1419, the god's name occurs as also in the Knossos tablet X 1501. T. B. L. Webster in *From Mycenae to Homer*, New York, 1964, p. 319; also refers to the Mycenaean antecedents of the god. The god in some form was, therefore, as old as the proto-Greek civilization but we are completely in the dark about the contours of his character and cult in that period.

⁷² Nilsson, M. P. : *Greek Folk Religion*, Harper, 1961, p. 60.

⁷³ *Bacchae*, Loeb, 17.

⁷⁴ *Op. cit.*, 3 : 38, and in the sense of a river in 4. 44.

⁷⁵ *Anthologia Graeca*, 5 : 924.

⁷⁶ Although, very likely not of the di-wo-nu-si-jo of the Knossos tablet. It is quite likely that as in the case of Rudra-Siva the name of a god of antiquity resurges and is assimilated within an emergent theologem which is the product of syncretism as also of the apotheosis of a new socio-religious phenomenon.

⁷⁷ *Myths of Ancient Greece and Rome*, London, 1892, p. 126,

Go to, and make your profit where ye will
Silver of Sardis change for gold of Ind.⁷⁸

So India was known to the Greeks through a link of maritime trade at the time when this new cult made itself felt in Greece. Herodotus speaks of the *Indoi* sending an annual tribute to Darius.⁷⁹ Apollodoros in the middle of the first century B. C. wrote that Dionysos had traversed the whole of India and set up pillars to celebrate his victory there.⁸⁰ This ties up with the god's epithet *Indoletes*, Indian-killer. According to the *Bibliothèque* account Dionysos travelled in Asia twice.⁸¹ Ovid, a contemporary Apollodoros, mentions Dionysos' visit to India at four places.⁸² "It were long to relate the triumphs won by the god over the Sithonians and Scythians and how he subdued the people of India, that incense-bearing land."⁸³ Again, "They tell how after subjugating the Ganges and the whole East..."⁸⁴ And "Liber had conquered the straight-haired Indians and returned loaded with treasure from the eastern world."⁸⁵ Also "He has conquered the East, as far as the land where swarthy India is watered by remote Ganges stream."⁸⁶ Because these classical authors continually mention Dionysos' victorious sojourn in India, Jane Harrison says, "So this Indian Dionysos, as we find him in the long and very dull poem of Nonnos, for example, is no Greek god but a hodge-podge of the mythology of several nations stirred together by Hellenistic prince and Hellenistic theories."⁸⁷

There is thus clear evidence for the Indian contribution to the development of the mythology of Dionysos, although other Middle Eastern gods and myths may have supplied certain other component parts. It is interesting to note that none of the Greek texts which mention India in connection with Dionysos goes beyond the fifth century B.C. i.e. beyond the time when Greece came into contact with Persia and with India through Persia. It is also significant that clear references to Dionysos' sojourn in and conquest of India follow Alexander's conquest of the northeastern regions in India and both Virgil and Apollodoros belong to a period when Greek satraps were ruling in India and when there was a brisk trade between the two countries. It is well-known that ideas and religious beliefs travel along with merchandise.

⁷⁸ Loeb edn., 1037-39.

⁷⁹ 3 : 94.

⁸⁰ *Bibliothèque*, Loeb edn., vol. I, p. 331.

⁸¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 325-333.

⁸² Apparently the myth of Dionysos' visit to India became wide-spread in Ovid's time.

⁸³ *Fasti*, Loeb edn., III : 717-720.

⁸⁴ *Op. cit.*, III : 726-730.

⁸⁵ *Op. cit.*, III 461-63.

⁸⁶ *Metamorphoses*, Penguin tr., p. 94.

⁸⁷ *Religion of Ancient Greece*, London, 1905, p. 156.

Since Śiva has so many traits which correspond to those of Dionysos and since Śiva's mythological image is basically formed by the seventh century B.C. (i.e. in the *Yajurvedā* and early Brāhmaṇas), we shall not err in assuming that it was the unfamiliar Oriental characteristics in the Dionysos myth and cult that the orthodox Great Tradition i. e. the Olympian myth and ritual of the Greeks found abhorrent. W. K. C. Guthrie and M. P. Nilsson both think that the orthodox Olympian i. e. the Achaean pantheon and mythology is Indo-European in origin while the chthonic (pre-Achaean) part is of Mediterranean origin. And there was an obvious incompatibility between the two.⁸⁸ Thus there is a hostility between the Olympian pantheon which was predominantly solar and the Mediterranean chthonic religion. It is natural to surmise that Dionysos borrowed the chthonic features of the Indian Śiva⁸⁹ and when he and his cult arrived in Attica the worshippers of the Olympian pantheon were outraged. But when the history of this resistance is recorded Dionysos is not only a respectable member of the Greek pantheon but is "not less than any god."

The process must have been long and bloody, but since this new cult offered something absent in the earlier one, and since the new element appealed to a particular area of the human mind,⁹⁰ this religion of orgy, frenzy and fury, with a predominantly women following, revelling in rituals which released some pent up emotions in their subconscious;⁹¹ — this new religion caught on and stayed on to receive official recognition from the Great Tradition of the Olympian religion, so that the Greeks came to see the Dionysiac truth as complementary to the Apolline.⁹² In the case of both Śiva and Dionysos their earliest prototypes belonged to the Indo-European, while the later syncretistic hierophany belongs to a chthonic category. Śiva had developed the new traits earlier than Dionysos who seems to have imbibed them during his eastern sojourn. But if Dionysos borrowed the chthonic and cultic rites and mythological traits from the Indian Śiva then his earlier counterpart may have conformed with the Olympian pantheon and Pater's theory of the Winter

⁸⁸ Note J. G. Frazer in his note on I : 19 of the *Bibliothèque* mentions Eratosthenes as saying that "Orpheus did not honour Dionysos, but esteemed the sun, the greatest of the gods."

⁸⁹ Perhaps, also of some Middle Eastern gods like Teshub.

⁹⁰ This aspect has been treated by E. R. Dodds in his *The Greeks and the Irrational* Berkeley, 1966.

⁹¹ As an ecstatic religion it is a "safety valve for the ventilation of suppressed aggression on the part of the subordinate groups." Lewis, I. M. : *Ecstatic Religion*, Pelican, 1972, p. 112.

⁹² Cf. W. K. C. Guthrie : *The Greeks and their Gods*, Boston, 1955, pp. 56, 153-74. *The Religion and Myth of the Greeks*, Cambridge, 1964, p. 28. *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, New York, 1966, p. 55.

Dionysos and Summer Dionysos can be based on the fundamental dichotomy between the Olympian and Mediterranean figures. The mediterranean Bacchus who had travelled in the Middle East and India, like Alexander, had conquered these regions, brought back mythological traits hitherto alien to any Olympian god. He seems to have borrowed the Indian Śiva's traits which conflicted with those of his earlier counterpart and these revolted the people. And the stories clearly demarcate those who readily accepted the newcomer and those who did not; women and the common people on the one hand and royalty and the aristocracy on the other.

But even though the Indian Śiva supplied the chthonic characteristics to Dionysos he, (Śiva) himself was rejected by the orthodox hieratic religion because of these. The Brāhmaṇa and the *Mahābhārata* episodes to which we have referred bear testimony to this rejection. If we bear in mind that it is in the *Yajurveda*⁹³ that the malevolent traits appear for the first time and in the literature of the very next century (i. e. the Brāhmaṇas) that the resistance to Śiva begins to be noticed for the first time, then the story of the resistance can be explained as a resistance to the syncretism of the R̥gvedic Rudra with various non-Aryan regional gods.⁹⁴ The resistance was a phenomenon which occurred exclusively among the aristocracy. We can see the miscegenation of the Aryans with the indigenous populace and the consequent syncretism of the Vedic Rudra with the various regional gods sharing common characteristics. This syncretism was a *fait accompli* among the humbler sections of the people, presumably through the agency of the womenfolk and the socially restricted sections.⁹⁵ Orthodox religion put up a stiff resistance — the same resistance of the primarily solar pantheon to the chthonic one, but eventually, chiefly because the cult must have been spreading like wild-fire (as did its Dionysiac counterpart in Attica), compromise was arrived at. The more savage and wild aspects lost their edge, and cult became somewhat tamer and more or less acceptable to the orthodox hieratic religion. At the beginning, the Great and Little Traditions seem to have been looked in a fierce and irreconcilable combat but the inherent demand for a reconciliation and synthesis was operative in both. Thus: " these two diametrically opposed assessments do not pertain to different religious systems (as the folk-view

⁹³ Probably compiled in the eighth century B. C.

⁹⁴ *Mahādeva, Ugra, Śarva, Bhava, Īśāna*, etc., all of which occur for the first time in these two centuries.

⁹⁵ Cf. the *Atharvaveda* hymns with Rudra as their deity, hymns the body of whose texts have little or nothing to do with Rudra; and also the fact that women and their rites with chthonic bearings figure quite prominently in the *Atharvaveda*. This *Samhitā* contains a valuable record of the formative stage of the syncretism of the Rudra-Śiva complex of the mythology.

might seem to imply) but, on the contrary, are mutually entailed aspects of a single religious system in which peripheral spirits represent the sinister counterparts of those benign powers which sustain public morality."⁹⁶ Hence eventually there is a compromise between the intruding ecstatic religion and its established orthodox counterpart. Only after this happens does the once-rejected-but-now-triumphant intruder religion record the history of its victory, and in Euripides, Ovid, Apollodoros as in the later Brāhmaṇas and the *Mahābhārata* we have the records of the battle and also of the victory.

A medieval Bengali text supplies us with a curious appendix to the Śiva story. Briefly stated, the story of this text, the *Manasāmaṅgala*, is this: a very prosperous merchant, Chānd Sadāgar by name, is a devotee of Śiva. His wife (together with other women) has been converted to the cult of the snake-goddess *Manasā*. This new cult is rapidly proselytizing and Chānd is aware of this threat, but a devotee of Śiva he looks down upon this new-fangled religion with its dark myths and ritual. *Manasā* knows that her cult will really find a firm root and grow rapidly and effectively only if Chānd accepts her. So she kills off six of Chānd's sons, drowns his merchant ship, causes him to remain adrift on the sea and undergo various humiliating and painful hardships. But Chānd is adamant. His last son Lakhindar marries Behulā who comes from a family which worships *Manasā*. Chānd has been forewarned of Lakhindar dying of snake bite on the night of his wedding if he (Chānd) does not worship *Manasā*. But he builds an air-tight bridal chamber for Lakhindar. The sly *Manasā* has suborned the architect into leaving an invisible hole through which her emissary, a deadly snake, enters and bites Lakhindar. Chānd is heart-broken, but even his wife Sanakā who secretly worships the snake-goddess cannot persuade him to placate the goddess. Finally, Behulā takes Lakhindar's corpse on a boat and sails away. After many temptations and hardships she arrives at the assembly of the gods in heaven. There she charms them with her exquisite dance performance into reviving Lakhindar, but only on condition – stipulated by *Manasā* – that Chānd agrees to accept the new faith. And after a bitter inner struggle he does agree. The *Manasā* cult spreads on earth through Chānd's conversion.

What is striking in the story is the role of Śiva. Not only is he the antagonist through his devotee, Chānd, but he represents the orthodox religion. Chānd suffers heart-rending agony because he has to disown and repudiate an official, respectable, all-powerful god and accept a 'low' goddess whom he had continually reviled. To complicate matters, *Manasā* is none other than Śiva's own daughter; as Dionysos was Zeus' son.

⁹⁶ *Ecstatic Religion*, p. 172.

This story records the second stage of the process at work behind the social and theological admission of a new-comer. It shows how the once-intruder god gradually becomes such an integral part of the orthodox pantheon that the next intruder faces exactly the same process of opposition from him.

In all three cases the pattern of operation of the intruding deity is the same : oppression of the resisting aristocracy ; for, in each case it is the ruling aristocracy which resists because the religion of the Great Tradition has become a vested interest to them, and any threat of dislocation of this theology through the admission of a new entrant will jeopardize its interests. But the fate of the new entrant in all three cases is determined not by theology, philosophy or ideas, but by the acceptance of the new cult by a large number of common people, especially women and the socially restricted sections. For them the orthodox religion has frozen into a rigid frame and affords no relief for their frustrated emotions which like molten metals and vapour in the bowels of the earth seek a vent. And find one through an earthquake.

The rise of ecstatic religions — and all three of these cults began as ecstatic religions — is a concomitant of large-scale socio-economic (and sometimes political) turmoil and frustrations and their emergence is an expression of the common people's agony and hankering for some redress. When socio-economic forces fail to afford any redress they express their rebellion in religious terms. And a cult that affords a vent for frenzied and orgiastic rituals (i. e. a ritualized rebellion), for self-hypnosis through music or loud noises, even for slaughter of men and/or animals as substitutes for the real targets of their hatred, a cult that welcomes the deformed (cf. Śiva's followers) and the down-trodden, the ordinary folk and women, a cult that drowns their many sorrows in wine (Liber) or narcotics (*soma* or *canabis indica* in the later Śiva cult). Such a cult will furnish a safety-valve and will flourish for a time, even triumph over the sober orthodox gods and rites. But, then, after the initial revolutionary content expends itself and the shrewd patrons of the Great Tradition make an effective compromise with them so that the revolutionary content appears redundant and quite unnecessary, those same cults begin to ossify. What appeared at first as degenerate, wild and savage, loses the edge of its wildness and with it its vitality, and also its theological validity, and becomes a dead ritual — a spent force. Then another cult knocks at the gate, is refused entrance, forces its way violently and the same history repeats itself. The ecstatic religions seek to solve on the religious plane real grievances experienced on more mundane levels, but because this is a mere surrogate for actual redress the trials and tribulations seethe underground till they come out in a fresh upsurge.