

Daughters of Indra

Nero Calatrava

An amulet that shall make thee king of Kafiristan – Rudyard Kipling

Synopsis

Nero and Yara are in or near Delhi. [Explain how they ended up here!]

In chapter one they visit an old Hindu temple.

That night, Yara has a dream: Nero's head is cut off and replaced with a horse's head. He then speaks wisdom and tells Yara to seek out the secret of the honey.

They discuss the dream with an elderly British anthropologist (a British equivalent of Professor Harb). He is **the archetype of the Colonial straw-man**. He tells them the story of Dadhyañc, and explains that honey is code for Soma.

Nero googles Soma. He discovers that it is both a sacred drink and a deity. The drink is made from a plant, also called soma. There has been much speculation concerning what is most likely to have been the identity of the original plant. There is no consensus on the question, although some proposed candidates include *Amanita muscaria*, *Psilocybe cubensis*, *Peganum Harmala* and *Ephedra sinica*.

Yara meets a very attractive Indian man who is **the archetype of Aurobindo**. He admonishes Nero for his colonialist version of Hindu history, which Nero has uncritically accepted from the British anthropologist. He explains "the true history of Hinduism" – which is, in reality, **Aurobindo's fairy tale**.

Nero, Yara, and the Indian man set out on a quest to find the soma plant. They travel through Haryana into the neighboring state of Punjab, and then cross the border into the Pakistani province of Punjab. From there they travel north into the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and pause for a few days to explore the city of Peshawar. Then they head to Chitral, the northernmost district of Pakistan. They cannot travel via the Lowari Pass, since it is closed during the long winter season, and must instead cross into Afghanistan and then back into Pakistan to reach Chitral. Luckily, the border is open; when the border is closed Chitral remains virtually inaccessible during the winter.

In Chitral they meet the Kalasha people. The Kalash pantheon is one of the few living representatives of the ancient Vedic religion.

Then they must travel to Nuristan in Afghanistan, where they discover the **Children of Indra**, the last surviving remnant of the Aryans. They are the last remaining practitioners of the ancient Vedic religion, and mourn the betrayal of Vedic religion by the Brahmins who were influenced by the Sramanas to compose the (anti-Vedic) Upanishads. The

Children of Indra also tell Yara: “You call him Baal; we call him Indra,” and chide her for being so ethnocentric (neglecting all the non-Semitic deities).

Nero and Yara join the Children of Indra for the performance of the horse sacrifice.

DIALOGUE

Red = Colonial stooge

Green = Aurobindo (= Hindu nationalism)

Blue = Children of Indra (= the Truth)

Black = Several

Aurobindo is prepared to concede that some mysterious Aryan peoples may have migrated into North India around 1200 BC, as the Colonial straw-man maintains. But beyond this there is little agreement. Aurobindo strongly disagrees with the Colonial straw-man on a number of significant points. However, on all of these points, Aurobindo is wrong, and the Colonial straw-man turns out to have been right all along:

	Colon	Auro	Truth
The hymns of the Veda are the compositions of these Aryan immigrants	C		T
The hymns of the Veda are not the compositions of these Aryan immigrants but of indigenous Indian rishis		A	
The Aryan immigrants had superior technology (horses and chariots) to that of the indigenous peoples they found in North India. They had a huge impact on the indigenous culture.	C		T
The Aryan immigrants were primitive barbarians compared to the indigenous peoples they found in North India. They had virtually no impact on the indigenous culture. Rather, the Aryans adopted the culture of the indigenous peoples.		A	
The Vedas are to be read literally; they are fundamentally about real physical ritual and animal sacrifice	C		T
The Vedas are to be read allegorically; they conceal a profound psychological and spiritual wisdom		A	
The Vedas are the <i>reputed</i> source of Vedanta and Hinduism. But this reputation is a colossal fiction. The Upanishads are the true foundation of all the later religions and philosophies.	C		T
The Vedas are the <i>true</i> source of Vedanta and Hinduism. The Upanishads do nothing but reveal the inner essence of the earlier Vedic hymns.		A	

The Upanishads represent a revolt of philosophical and speculative minds against the ritualistic materialism of the Vedas.	C		T
The Upanishads cannot spring out of a previous void. The thought of the Upanishads supposes great origins much earlier than itself. During this period it took the form of secret teachings, like the Greek mysteries.		A	
In the Upanishads, the original material attributes of the gods have been given psychological meanings. Agni is no longer invoked for material gain, but for purely moral functions	C		T
The psychological meanings were always there in the Vedic hymns, but disguised so as to hide the truth from the ordinary man. The Upanishads merely made these truths more explicit.		A	

In other words, Aurobindo is guilty of procrusteanism – hammering and forging rebellious material into some sort of shape and consistency.

Interestingly, Aurobindo **agrees** with the Colonial straw-man on some following significant points. It turns out that, on all these points, *both* Aurobindo **and** the Colonial straw-man are wrong, and the [Children of Indra](#) are the only ones to get it right:

Psychological and spiritual wisdom is superior to physical ritual and animal sacrifice	C	A	
Physical ritual and animal sacrifice is superior to psychological and spiritual wisdom			T
Monotheism is superior to polytheism	C	A	
Polytheism is superior to monotheism			T
Cultures and religions generally advance to ever higher achievements over time	C	A	
Cultures and religions often degenerate over time			T
Evolution means progress	C	A	
Evolution does not necessarily mean progress			T
The Hindu gods are metaphors and symbols	C	A	
The Hindu gods are real entities who really exist			T
If the Vedic hymns are just about physical ritual and sacrifice, they are a bunch of superstitious nonsense	C	A	
If the Vedic hymns are just about physical ritual and sacrifice, they are a sacred remnant of an ancient wisdom			T

Aurobindo is right only about one thing: that the Vedic hymns are the sacred remnant of an ancient wisdom. But that ancient wisdom is *not* one of meditation and mysticism; it is one of external ritual and animal sacrifice!

The Vedic hymns are a bunch of superstitious nonsense	C		
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The Vedic hymns are the sacred remnant of an ancient wisdom		A	T
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The Colonial Stooge

“Then, around 1200 BC, a mysterious tribe who called themselves Aryans moved into North India and spread their beliefs among a less civilised people.”

Aurobindo

“Aryan invasion theory is a distorted version of ancient history that was fabricated by missionaries and colonialists because it was highly advantageous to their interests.”

“The British wanted to show that their invasion of India was the second great event, the first being the Aryan invasion.”

“The British came to India as empire builders. They drummed into our heads that we are a fragmented people.”

“The European Indologists depicted the Vedas as the work of lusty marauding nomads whose highest aspiration was to enlist the support of the gods in stealing cattle and defeating their enemies.”

“The rishis who composed the Vedas were enlightened, gentle sages.”

“The Rig Veda makes no mention of an external origin of the Aryans. It simply beggars belief that those who wrote so much on so many subjects simply forgot to mention their original homeland.”

“Harappan culture was already Vedic long before the supposed arrival of the Aryans.”

Children of Indra

“Why should it be so important that the Aryans have lived in the subcontinent since all eternity?”

“European racism and colonialism should not be replaced by Hindu chauvinism.”

“The Vedic religion is all about karmakāṇḍa, which deals with ritual (yajña), as opposed to the jñānakāṇḍa, which deals with liberating knowledge (jñāna). The Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads deal with jñānakāṇḍa; they have nothing to do with the true Vedic religion.”

“Most of what the so-called Hindus have written about and talked about and done, from the Upanishads on, has not come from the Vedas. Indeed, it is often a complete betrayal of everything the Vedas stood for.”

The Daughters of Imra

The DI are the last surviving remnant of the original Aryans who migrated to the Indus Valley around 1200 BC and wrote the hymns of the Rig Veda. They reigned supreme as chiefs in patron/client systems in the Punjab region for several centuries, but their power began to wane with the rise of urbanisation in the sixth century BC. A backlash against ritual and sacrifice soon after led many DI to abandon their old ways, but a few retreated to the Hindu Kush where they have maintained the ancient practices ever since.

Their central ritual is the *asvamedha*, the horse sacrifice, during which they consume the intoxicating soma drink. They also sacrifice to many deities, including Imra (Indra) and Gish, the god of war. The sacrifices are not performed in temples, but outdoors, on specially prepared areas of sacred ground. Their hymns (eg. the Rig Veda) are “lusty invocations to anthropomorphic gods, not esoteric, divine revelations transmitted by enlightened beings from some imaginary golden age.”

They mourn the abandonment of Vedic religion by the Brahmins who composed the (anti-Vedic) Upanishads after falling under the influence of the Sramanas. They also tell Yara: “You call him Baal; we call him Indra,” and chide her for being so ethnocentric (neglecting all the non-Semitic deities).

The Sramanas

Around 600 BC groups of wandering ascetics began to emerge in India called Sramanas (a bit like the Sons of Yahweh). They rejected the superior status claimed by the Brahmins and rejected the Vedic sacrifices in favour of an emphasis on an internal quest for enlightenment. They gave birth to a new introspective strand in Indian thought that would eventually eclipse the older, outward-facing tradition of the early Vedas.

Some Sramanas rejected the authority of the Vedas (and eventually gave birth to Buddhism and Jainism), while others continued to revere the Vedas but interpreted them in new (allegorical) ways, as referring not to external realities (gods and rituals) but to internal ones (the soul and meditation). All the Sramanas rejected the Vedic emphasis on the importance of marrying and leaving sons to carry on the family traditions and embraced celibacy.

The earliest Upanishads reflect the emergence of the Sramanas and launch attacks of increasing intensity on the old Vedic rituals. In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* anyone who worships a divinity other than the Self is called a domestic animal of the gods. The *Chāndogya Upanishad* parodies those who indulge in the acts of sacrifice by comparing them with a procession of dogs chanting “Om! Let's eat. Om! Let's drink.”

The *Kaushitaki Upanishad* asserts that “external rituals such as *Agnihotram* offered in the morning and in the evening, must be replaced with inner *Agnihotram*, the ritual of introspection,” and that “not rituals, but knowledge should be one's pursuit.” The *Mundaka Upanishad* declares how man has been called upon, promised benefits for, scared unto and misled into performing sacrifices, oblations and pious works. *Mundaka* thereafter asserts this is foolish and frail, by those who encourage it and those who follow it, because it makes no difference to man's current life and after-life, it is like blind men leading the blind, it is a mark of conceit and vain knowledge, ignorant inertia like that of children, a futile useless practice. The *Maitri Upanishad* states:

The performance of all the sacrifices, described in the *Maitrayana-Brahmana*, is to lead up in the end to a knowledge of Brahman, to prepare a man for meditation. Therefore, let such man, after he has laid those fires, meditate on the Self, to become complete and perfect.

The opposition to the ritual is not explicit in the oldest Upanishads. On occasions, the Upanishads extend the task of the Aranyakas by **making the ritual allegorical** and giving it a philosophical meaning. For example, **the *Brihadaranyaka* interprets the practice of horse-sacrifice or *ashvamedha* allegorically**. It states that the over-lordship of the earth may be acquired by sacrificing a horse. It then goes on to say that spiritual autonomy can only be achieved by renouncing the universe which is conceived in the image of a horse.

Although there were a few female Sramanas, most were men. Their theology became increasingly misogynist, viewing Woman as the root of all evil (cf. the *Mahabharata*).

The Sramanas were:

- anti-sex
- anti-woman
- anti-pleasure
- anti-drugs (especially anti-soma)
- anti-sacrifice
- anti-violence
- anti-meat (vegetarian)
- anti-possession
- anti-Brahmin
- anti-Veda
- anti-Indra
- anti-polytheism
- anti-feast
- anti-festivities
- anti-dancing

The Sramanas invented the idea of reincarnation, which is completely absent from the early Vedas. They invented the idea of karma, as a spiritual equivalent of the new monetary economy, with debts to pay and interest to be earned. They also invented the practice of reciting mantras, such as the sacred syllable OM. They developed a new

interpretation of the word *brahman*, no longer understanding it as the sacred power of the priestly caste, but as the first cause or supreme reality, thereby making their religion more abstract and philosophical rather than mythical and theological.

Almost all modern Hinduism is descended from the Sramanas and is thus a betrayal of the earliest Vedic religion. The Upanishads are the first and most heinous betrayal of the Vedas. Vedanta is the modern expression of the betrayal of the Vedas, and misleadingly portrays itself as the culmination of the Vedas. It is quite the contrary.

Kafiristan

Kafiristan means “land of the unbelievers” – a label first bestowed by the Muslim emir of Afghanistan and accepted with relish by the inhabitants because they refused to convert to Islam, and maintained instead an ancient form of Hinduism long after arrival of Islam in the rest of country ca. 700 AD. The Kafirs of Kafiristan preserved the worship of Indra (whom they called Imra) and Gish long after it had been abandoned in the Punjab.

Alexander the Great may have passed through Kafiristan in 330 BC with a detachment of his army. The fair hair of many inhabitants today has given rise to a folk legend that the people are descendants of Alexander or his generals. A Greek chronicler reported that the tribesmen were the toughest fighters that Alexander encountered in his entire Indian campaign. Alexander was so impressed that he married a local woman, Roxane – “the loveliest woman they had seen in Asia,” his soldiers thought.

In 1014 AD, Mahmud of Ghazni attacked Kafiristan and destroyed an ancient temple at Nardain, “and brought from thence [a stone covered with certain inscriptions](#), which were according to the Hindus, of great antiquity.”

In the fourteenth century Timur the Lame (aka Tamerlane) attempted to invade Kafiristan and was humbled. Babur wisely decided not to tangle with them. Genghis Khan passed them by. In the 19th century, it was typical of the Kafirs to boast about having killed the sons of Ali. Marco Polo derided them as “idolaters and utter savages, living entirely by the chase and dressed in the skins of beasts,” but it is doubtful he ever went near them.

Kafiristan eventually came to be known as “the dark spot on the map of Asia” – a place that even the British imperial government of India could not penetrate. In 1883 a British spy called McNair slipped into Kafiristan disguised as a Pashtun merchant, and reported that the land was replete with idols. He also noted that locals guarded their isolation jealously. “Of all the notable deeds among the Kafirs,” he recorded, “that of slaying a [Muslim] is reckoned first.”

Not long after McNair, another British army officer managed to penetrate Kafiristan. George Scott Robertson spent a year living among a tribe called the Kam, who were reputed to be the most warlike of all the Kafirs. Robertson made a list of the qualities that the Kam admired; at the top was an ability to kill. Blood feuds were common. Robertson also noted that the Kam were surprisingly well disposed to the British. Apparently they thought that Gish, their god of war, had gone to live in London.

Robertson was probably the last outsider to witness the ancient pagan rites of the Kafirs, for in 1895 they were finally conquered by Emir Abdur Rahman Khan, whose modern rifles proved vastly superior to their assorted flintlocks, bows and arrows. The victorious emir gave the people a stark ultimatum: convert Islam, or be killed. The Kafirs thereby became the last people of the region to become Muslim, and their land was renamed Nuristan, meaning Land of Light, since the darkness of the pagan Kafirs had now been dispelled by the light of Islam.

The Nuristanis remained the fiercest fighters in the region after their conversion. They were the first to declare *jihad* against the Soviet invaders in 1979, and have been the deadliest foes of the American forces stationed there in recent years. On 13 July 2008 nine US soldiers were killed and twenty-seven wounded at the Battle of Wanat, the costliest American engagement in the Afghan war since 2001. The American press subsequently dubbed Nuristan “the deadliest place on earth.”