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Arockiam Rajaian

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_rajaiana@csl.edu

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THE CONFLICT OF KRISHNA AND YAHWEH AS WARRIOR: A COMPARISON OF THE
CONFLICTS OF KRISHNA IN THE PURANAS AND OF YAHWEH AS WARRIOR
IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE
THEMES OF HISTORY, AND SALVATION, AND
THEIR RELEVANCE TO HUMAN LIFE

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Old Testament Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Theology


by

Arockiam Rajaian

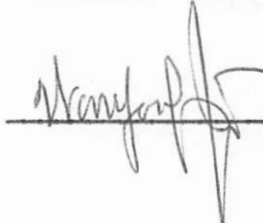
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INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Scope of the Study

Hinduism is probably one of the greatest and oldest religions in the world. Its history is as old as the history of India itself. It has immensely influenced the culture of the land, and it has permeated almost every aspect of the country's culture to the extent that it is next to impossible to separate the culture and thought patterns of the Indian people from Hinduism.

During the course of centuries of history, Hinduism has undergone numerous changes, different and conflicting philosophies have emerged, and orthodox as well as heterodox and sectarian movements have evolved. But the peculiar feature of the religion is its capacity to accommodate and digest all those movements within its total structure. As Pandit Nehru has stated, "Hinduism as a faith is vague, amorphous, many-sided, all things to all men. It is hardly possible to define it, or indeed to say precisely whether it is a religion or not, in the usual sense of the word."¹ It can be compared to the ocean which consumes the waters of all the rivers, whose separate identities become indistinguishable when they merge in the ocean. So is the case of Hinduism as different doctrines are absorbed, and each one is retrospectively explained

¹A. C. Bouquet, Hinduism (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1962), p. 10. Quoting from Jawaharlal Nehru, Discovery of India (New York: John Day, 1946), p. 52.

as part of its teachings. Dr. Radhakrishnan would call this phenomenon "synthetic vision."²

Voluminous literature has also been produced about each tenet of Hinduism. With such "incredible variety,"³ a study of Hinduism becomes extremely complex, and even more so when one engages in the task of comparing Hindu doctrines with Biblical message. But the challenge must be faced by Christians, both in India and elsewhere, in order to understand the different facets and doctrines of Hinduism and then to communicate the gospel.

Paradoxically, even though Hinduism has not been noted for its missionary zeal in the past centuries, its influence has gone beyond the confines of Indian society. Many cults and sects of Hinduism have made inroads into other countries. Krishnabhakti (devotion to Krishna) is one of the influential movements in India. It developed as a sectarian movement, yet because of the nature of Hindu religion it has become a strong sect within the entire Hindu system. It has attracted many in the western countries also through the "Krishna consciousness Movement," Krishna is considered as the supreme god or avatera par excellence of Vishnu by the Vaishnava sect. The literature which extensively deals with the exploits of Krishna are the Puranas. To make a comparison of all the motifs found in the Puranas with those of Old Testament is beyond the limits of a paper. The author of this paper has selected one theme, namely, the conflicts or battles of Krishna (which is a major one in the

²S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, 2 vols., 2nd ed., ed. J. H. Muirhead (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1929-31), 1:31.

³Bouquet, p. 11.

Puranas), that is, his conflicts with demons (asuras or rakshases) which include human beings who are mythified as or associated with demons, and with other deities of the Hindu pantheon.

The conflicts of Krishna cannot be understood simply as stories or interpreted as isolated events. They have to be understood within the framework of Vaishnava theology as exemplified in the Puranic literature. Viewed from this perspective, one will find that they have profound theological significance. In the Old Testament also we find the motif "Yahweh as Warrior." The question arises whether a comparative study of the conflicts of Krishna and the battles of Yahweh is feasible, and what is the distinctiveness of the Old Testament message. Therefore, an attempt is made in this paper to analyze the conflicts of Krishna in the Puranas and the battles of Yahweh, to elucidate the fundamental theologies underlying the battles in the respective documents, and to highlight the distinctiveness of Old Testament message with specific reference to the themes of the meaning of history and salvation, and their relevance to human life.

No attempt is made in this paper to explain the different schools of Vaishnavism. Only the general development of the theme of Krishna/Vishnu pertaining to the texts of this study will be observed. For the purpose of the study of the texts of Hindu literature, only the English translations of the original, and in some cases summaries made by eminent scholars will be used.

Hinduism and Old Testament developed in entirely different cultural settings. But the Ugaritic literature which developed within a cultural and historical context similar to those of the Old Testament,

shares some commonality with the Puranas, namely, conflicts among the deities. Therefore, a brief analysis of the conflict motif in the Ugaritic literature will be made for the sake of comparisons and to elucidate the distinctiveness of the Biblical message. To attempt any new proposals regarding Ugaritic texts is beyond the scope of this paper. Translations of Ugaritic texts will be consulted for this purpose.

Description of Methodology

In the first chapter of the paper an historical sketch of the development of Vishnu-Krishna theme from the Vedic period to that of the Puranas will be attempted. When tracing the development of the Hindu religion one is faced with two main difficulties: first, the earliest literature of Hinduism lacks scientific data on exact dates of individuals, events, and writings. Secondly, even though names of persons or places are freely used, since there has been a tremendous amount of deification and mythification of persons either as descendants of gods or of demons, historical accuracy does not seem to have played any significant role in the earliest writings. It remained wholly absorbed in the invisible and the abstract.⁴ Within such limitations, the development of the theme of Vishnu-Krishna will be traced under three headings, namely, Vedic period, Epic period, and the Puranic period. Besides translations of the relevant literature, books and articles written by Indian and western scholars will be consulted.

In the second chapter, the conflicts of Krishna will be analyzed on the basis of their structures. The doctrine of avatara (incarnation)

⁴Ibid., p. 76.

as explicated in the Bhagavat Gita and the framework of the total incarnation theory as exemplified in the Puranas also will be taken into account. On the basis of the analysis and interpretation, the basic doctrines underlying the conflicts will be elucidated. Vishnu Purana will be used as the basic text, and when additional clarifications and explanations are made, it will be on the basis of the accounts in Harivamsa and Bhagavata Purana. Other books and articles relevant to the subjects also will be consulted. The similarities and differences between the themes of the Puranas and of the Ugaritic literature will be observed in the third chapter.

In the fourth chapter, the battles of Yahweh in the successive period of the history of Israel, as recorded in the Old Testament, will be investigated. Occasionally when the same events occur in the prose narratives and in poetry, comparisons of these sections will find a place in the chapter, as well as differences of emphasis in the "Deuteronomic history" and in Chronicles. Brief study of the battle motif which is implicit in the ex-mythological passages, prophetic oracles and apocalyptic passages also will be considered. All Biblical quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version unless otherwise indicated. Besides the Scriptures, books on Old Testament introduction and history, commentaries, articles, Old Testament Theologies, Bible dictionaries, and other books on the subject will be utilized. Major themes which run through the accounts of the battles of Yahweh will be enumerated in the chapter.

A comparison between the themes found in the Ugaritic literature and in the Old Testament will be made in order to highlight the

distinctiveness of the Old Testament before a comparison between the Puranic and Biblical message is attempted. Relevant conclusions will be made at the end of the paper.

CHAPTER I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE "KRISHNA MOTIF"

IN HINDUISM - A BRIEF SKETCH

Our investigation of the conflicts of Krishna is limited only to those found in the Puranas. For the sake of a proper understanding of how and when Krishna was portrayed as the supreme deity and how he was identified with Vishnu, a brief sketch of the development of the Krishna motif is attempted in this chapter.¹ As pointed out in the Introduction, since the earliest literatures of Hinduism do not provide scientific historical data, a sketch of the development will be attempted within a relatively broader frame of time reference.

Krishna in the Vedic Literature

Definitions and Date of the Vedic Period

The word "veda" literally means "knowledge" and it is derived from the Sanscrit word "Vid" which means "to know." The Vedas are the oldest sacred literature of Hinduism, and it is generally agreed that Rig Veda is the oldest and the most important one.² The term "Veda" is

¹The words Vishnu and Krishna are transliterated in different ways by different authors. The author of this paper is following the transliteration as mentioned above. When quotations are taken from authors who use other transliterations such as Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa, they will be retained as they are in the text.

²F. C. Cook, Origins of Religion and Language (London: John Murray, 1884), pp. 10-12.

used in two different ways. It means individual books of the Vedic literature as well as the entire sacred texts of the Vedic period. The latter includes, besides the original Vedas, the Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and Upanishads. The Brahmanas or mantras were intended as instruction for the use of the Vedic hymns by the Brahamans. The Aranyakas are writings for study in the forests by the Brahamans who retired from the world. They expound the mystical meaning of the ceremonies, nature of gods, and so forth. The Upanishads are closely connected with the Aranyakas, and both are occasionally used interchangeably. They are philosophic chapters.³ Thus, in the Vedic literature itself one can find successive strata of thought. This observation is particularly relevant for the understanding of the subject under this study.

Of the four Vedas, Rigveda is the most important one for our study. There is no consensus regarding the exact date of the Rigveda. The common belief among the Hindus is that the Vedas in general are eternal and existed in the mind of the deity, and that at the commencement of each Kalpa Brahma reveals them and they issue from his four mouths and are taught by Brahma to the Rishis (sages) whose names they bear.⁴ Rigveda (RV) is a collection of priestly hymns addressed to the Vedic pantheon, and most of them are addressed to Indra imploring him to come to the help of the Indo-Aryans, and to give them crowning victory over the aboriginal tribes of India.⁵ But a number of hymns are also addressed to Indra and the other gods praising them for their aid in

³The Christian Literature Society for India, Hindu Series
Vol. I The Vedas and the Brahmanas (London and Madras: C.L.S., 1897)
pp. 10-13.

⁴Ibid., p. 13.

⁵Cook, p. 13.

the warfare against the aboriginal tribes. Thus a long interval between the most ancient hymns of RV and the first entrance of the Aryans and the latest hymns is evidenced. It is generally agreed that RV is the product of the age which witnessed the establishment of the Indo-Aryan invaders after a long series of desperate struggles, and preceded all of the movements of national life and thought.⁶ Bloomfield, on the basis of the definite historical dates available such as the date of Buddha's death in 477 B.C., Alexander's invasion of India in 326 B.C., Chandragupta's establishment of the Mauriya dynasty in 315 B.C., and Chandragupta's grandson Asoka who had the teachings of Buddha around 250 B.C. proposes that the RV must have been in existence at least two centuries before the time of Buddha which would mean seventh century B.C.⁷ But how long before that date is a question which can be only conjectured. Eliade observes that the Aryans had advanced into north western India at the beginning of the second millennium B.C. and four or five centuries later they had occupied the regions of the basin of the Upper Indus, and further proposes that by about 1200 B.C. the Aryans had made their way into Indo-Gangetic plains while the Iranians were firmly established in Persia, and Greece and the islands were Indo-Europeanized.⁸ In the light of these observations, one can agree with Dr. Radhakrishnan that the Vedic period falls between 1500 and 600 B.C.⁹ This will cover the

⁶Ibid., pp. 16-17.

⁷Maurice Bloomfield, The Religion of the Veda (New York: AMS Press, 1969), pp. 18-19.

⁸Mircea Eliade, A History of Religious Ideas, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 1:187 and 195.

⁹S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, 2 vols., 2nd ed., ed. J. H. Muirhead (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1929-31), 1:17.

entire period of the Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and Upanishads.

Reference to Krishna in Vedic Literature

It is quite obvious that Krishna found no place at all in the Hindu pantheon in the Vedic literature. In RV VIII:85 there is a song addressed to Indra praising his victories over the enemies of Aryans. The enemies are described as the weaponless asuras, the godless, the black drop in Ansumathi's bosom, the godless tribes that came against him, the seven who never had met a rival and so forth, (vs. 9-16). One of the "seven" mentioned in the above passage is interpreted to mean Krishna. Another explanation is that the "black drop" means "swift moving Krishna" (drapsah Krishna), an asura or demon who with ten thousand of his kind who had occupied the banks of the river Ansumathi (which is Yamuna) and was defeated by Indra, Brahaspathi and the Maruts.¹⁰ The basis of this explanation is that the word Krishna means "black." Another passage speaks of a leader of fifty thousand Krishnas, who was captured and slain together with all his pregnant wives.¹¹ "The Rigveda account may have preserved the memory of an actual contest between the Aryan invaders with Indra as their general and an ancient tribe with Kṛṣṇa as their leader-god."¹²

¹⁰The Hymns of the Rigveda, 4 vols., translated with a popular Commentary by Ralph T. H. Griffith (Benares: E. J. Lazarus & Co., 1889-1892) 3:331. Citations from Rigveda will be made from this work hereafter unless indicated otherwise.

¹¹Benjamin Walker, The Hindu World, 2 vols., (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), 1:559.

¹²Sukumari Bhattachari, The Indian Theogony (Cambridge: The University Press, 1970), p. 306.

The second category of references to Krishna in the Vedic literature considers him as a Rishi (sage), RV I:8.2-4; I:16.22-24. Here, Krishna is considered as a Rishi in the family of Angiras.¹³ Chandogya Upanishad III:17.6 also mentions Krishna as a disciple of Angiras and son of Devaki. Majumdar disputes the claim that Angirasa was Krishna's teacher on the basis of Vishnu Purana (VP) which mentions that Sāndīpani was his teacher (VP 5:21.19-22) and that Angirasa addresses Krishna as acyta (the infallible) a term which Arjuna also uses about Krishna (Gita 1:21; 11:42).¹⁴ But it must be noted that Vishnu Purana and Bhagavat Gita are later writings, and it does not fit into Majumdar's interpretation.

From these observations it is obvious that in the Vedic literature Krishna is not mentioned as a god while several other gods such as Indra, Vishnu, Agni, Varuna, Asvins, Maruts, Soma, Vayu, and so forth, are mentioned and prayers offered to them. It leads one to the conclusion that the "Krishna motif" is of late origin in Hindu literature.

Vishnu in the Vedic Literature

Vishnu in Rigveda

One of the distinctive features of Vaishnavism is the doctrine of avatars or incarnation of Vishnu. "The Viṣṇu concept reaches its culmination in Kṛṣṇa because, as Kṛṣṇa, his anthropomorphism is most complete, full-blooded and hence most convincing and emotionally

¹³Griffith, p. 331.

¹⁴Bimenbehari Majumdar, Kṛṣṇa in History and Legend (University of Calcutta, 1969), pp. 2-4.

satisfying."¹⁵ But the concept of Vishnu does not become complete until a much later date. A brief account of the place and role of Vishnu among the Hindu pantheon in the literatures prior to the Puranic age is included in this chapter for the following two reasons. First, Krishna is usually seen as a form of Vishnu; hence it will serve to understand the development of Vishnu-Krishna motif. Second, it will help to understand the long process before even Vishnu was considered as the supreme deity,

In the RV Indra is indisputably the greatest of all gods. More than one-fourth of the hymns are wholly addressed to him besides numerous passages in hymns addressed to other deities. Attributes such as he is most excellent (I:8.1), irresistible (I:6.8), Sakra (the powerful) (I:10.6), lord of all men (I:9.3), mighty, supreme, and great (I:8.5), thunder-armed (I:121.14), eternal, who rushes down like a bull, men's conquerer, bounteous like a cow (VIII:1.2); warrior, fort-destroyer, lord of battle's din (VIII:1.7), undaunted god (VIII:2.1), and similar epithets are extremely common in RV. He is also praised and implored as the giver of horses and kine, grain, wealth, riches, noble children, and so forth (I:29, 53; II:11.13; II:17.18). In these passages he is venerated as the god of fertility and well-being.

A great number of hymns are addressed imploring his help and/or praising him for his victories over the Rakahasas or asuras or Dasas or Dasyus (I:32.11; I:51.5; I:63.5; I:100.18). "The most important trait of the Vedic Indra was his demon-killing and the RV is full of these accounts."¹⁶ Some of the minor demons killed by Indra are Ilivis, Susna (I:33.12; 101.2), Pipru (I:51.5), Sambara (I:51.6; 53.4), Alma (I:63.7),

¹⁵Sukumari, p. 301.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 251.

Rauhina (I:103.2), Kṛṣṇa (I:130.8), Vala (I:51.5), Namuci (II:14.3-5). The most important victory of Indra was the slaying of Vrtra which is repeated throughout the RV (I:4, 32, 51, 52), and sometimes he is said to have destroyed several Vrtras (I:53.6, 10; I:84.13). According to RV Indra stands out as the supreme god.

Vishnu plays only a minor role in the hymns of Rigveda. More hymns are addressed to other gods such as Agni, Vayu, Soma, Visvadevas, Asvins, Maruts and others than to Vishnu. He is described as a wild beast, dread, prowling, mountain-roaming, the bull (I:154.2-3), swift (VIII:20.3), the ancient and the last, the one who ordains, the mighty one, one who has power supreme (I:156) and similar traits. The most important feat mentioned about him in RV is his three strides (I:22.16-19; I:154; IV:3.7). "We are told that his two steps are visible but the third is inscrutable. The third step seems to be his highest achievement, in it lies the fountain of honey (RV I:154.5). This stride is called the highest, parama (RV I:22.10,21). Because of these strides Viṣṇu is styled urugāya or urukrama (having a moment of magnitude, RV I:155.5). By these strides Viṣṇu reached the gods' region (RV VIII:29.7)."¹⁷ Even though such descriptions are given regarding Vishnu, he is not given a status equal to that of Indra in RV. He is also presented as a companion to Indra in the task of the latter's slaying of Vrtra (RV I:61.7). Rigveda I:156 reads "Even the heavenly one who came for fellowship, Viṣṇu to Indra, godly to the godlier . . ." Such references also indicate that although Vishnu is given some importance, he is placed only below the level of Indra, and does not play a supreme role in Rigveda.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 284.

Vishnu in the Brahmanas

While Indra enjoyed supremacy and Vishnu played only a minor role in RV, at the time of the Brahmanas which is normally believed to be around 600 B.C. which marks the end of the Vedic age the role of these two gods had started getting reversed. In the Brahmanas Vishnu is seen as a rising power and Indra as almost a spent force, although he remains the nominal sovereign of heaven.¹⁸ The three strides of Vishnu mentioned in RV got further explained and developed in the Brahmanas so as to give him supreme power. He took his three strides and conquered the three regions, and thus established his overlordship of the three regions, (TB I:7.4.4; III:1.2.6).¹⁹ This is a new development in the Brahmanas. His role and importance is further developed by stating that when Vrtra offered his strength to Indra it was Vishnu who received it on behalf of Indra whereas according to RV he is only a companion to Indra (TMB (SS:15.6)).

One of the unique methods of raising Vishnu's image was to identify him with the sacrifice. The age of Brahmanas was predominantly the age of sacrifice, and hence the god who symbolized the sacrifice would naturally be given supreme importance. So the equation of Yajna (sacrifice) and Vishnu was very significant in order to bring him into power and prominence. The Brahmanas used to repeat the formula "Viṣṇu is the sacrifice" or "the sacrifice is Viṣṇu (SB I:2.5.1; V:4.5.1),"

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 277.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 284. Abbreviations used in this section are: TB - Tairriviya Brahamana, TMB - Tandya Mahabrahamana, SB - Satapata Brahma.

Vishnu is the upper half of sacrifice (SB III:1.3.1). Statements like "the Yajna is Viṣṇu's" (SB IV 6.7.3), "the Soma cart belongs to Viṣṇu" (SB III 5.3.15), "Viṣṇu protects the oblation" (TB III 3.7.7; III 7.4.18), are common in the Brahmanas.²⁰ Thus the position of Vishnu was gradually built up. How this process got further developed will be dealt with later in this chapter.

In the Brahmanas when Vishnu's position got exalted to the level of a major deity the place of Indra who as the central deity of the Vedic pantheon enjoyed undisputed supremacy gradually got undermined. Once the sacrificial aspect of religion got prominence and Vishnu identified with the sacrifice, Indra naturally became secondary. The Brahmanas insist on the Katriya (warrior caste) character of Indra (TB III 9.16.3), and according to the Brahmana thought the Ksatriya caste is inferior to that of Brahmans, the priestly caste. Because Indra is a Ksatriya he is the sacrificer (SB V 4.3.8) whereas Vishnu is identified with the sacrifice itself. Indra slew the demons only with the aid of the power obtained arising out of sacrifice (TMB XXIII 10.2), and the hymns.²¹ This process of elevating Vishnu as the supreme god and dismissing the power of Indra got further intensified in the literature of the later periods.

Krishna In The Epic Age

The Epic Age

The earliest stage of the development of the Krishna motif is the epic age. It is generally agreed that the epic age falls between

²⁰Ibid., pp. 277, 291-92.

²¹Ibid., pp. 258, 275-77.

600 B.C. and A.D. 200. Dr. Radhakrishnan suggests 600 B.C. to A.D. 200 as the epic period which "extends over the development between the early Upanishads and the darsanas or the systems of philosophy."²² Stillson Judah suggests about 500 or 600 B.C. to A.D. 200 following the dates proposed by Dasgupta.²³ Most of the scholars follow such chronology, sometimes with slight modifications.

Ramayana and Mahabharata are considered to be the greatest epics of India. While Ramayana is called Kavya in Indian literature, Mahabharata is called Ithihasa (Ithi ha asa) which means "so in truth it was."²⁴ Both these epics signify major developments in the Vaishnavite theology with special reference to that of the divine incarnation of Vishnu, and ever since that time they have been regarded as Vaisnavite literature.²⁵ In Ramayana, Rama is considered to be the chief character. In Mahabharata, while the central story "takes its matter from the legitimacy of the succession to the kingdom of Kuruksetra in northern India"²⁶ between the two branches of the Bharata family, and the subsequent war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, Krishna

²²Radhakrishnan, 1:57.

²³J. Stillson Judah, Hare Krishna and the Counterculture (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974), pp. 21, 23.

²⁴Majumdar, p. 34.

²⁵John Nicol Farquhar, The Religious Quest of India: An Outline of the Religious Literature of India (London: Oxford University Press, 1920), p. 84.

²⁶The Mahabharata I the Book of the Beginning, trans. and ed. by J. A. B. Van Buitenen, 3 vols. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973), 1:xiii. Citations from Mahabharata will be made from this translation hereafter in this paper unless indicated otherwise.

is introduced in the epic, and plays an important role.

Hindus generally believe that "the Mahabharata was composed many thousand years ago" even though they may concede that generations of gifted reciters have added to the original.²⁷ According to tradition Vyasa is the author. According to the statement in Mahabharata (Mbh) the epic in its present form was recited by Ugrasravas who heard it recited by Vaisampayana who in turn heard it from Krsna Dvaipayana, the son of Satyavati (Vyasa) the grandfather of the Pandavas. He is also said to have arranged the Vedas (Mbh. I:1.1-15), and compiled the eighteen Puranas, as well as the basic text of Vendanta. "We have right here three generations of reciters through whom the text had been transmitted. . . . Successive generations would add, embellish, digress; but also understate what might have been emphasized before."²⁸ Dr.

Radhakrishnan also had pointed out that there were different stages in the compilation of Mahabharata and concludes that "containing within itself productions of different dates and authorship, the Mahabharata has become a miscellaneous encyclopedia of history and mythology, politics, law, theology and philosophy."²⁹ Bhandarkar also voices the similar opinion that the date of Mahabharata or any portion of it cannot be ascertained with any approach to certainty;³⁰ it can only be conjectured.

The use of different names for Krishna is significant because it helps to determine the date of the epic as well as the development of the

²⁷C. Rajagopalachari, Mahabharata, eds. K. M. Munshi and K. R. Diwakar (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1962), p. 8.

²⁸Van Buitenen, l:xciii.

²⁹Radhakrishnan, 1:481.

³⁰Sir R. G. Bhandarkar, Vaishnavism and Saivism (Varnasi, India: Indological Book House, 1965), p. 4.

Krishna motif with certain approximation. One of the names used for Krishna in Mahabharata is Hari (I:191.13; 2:12.25), which is a name for Vishnu. Other names of significance in this connection are Narayana (I:210.5) and Vasudeva (I:1.86, 121, 136). Hari is the name for Vishnu. There is no trace of such identification of Krishna with Vishnu in the vedic period which ends approximately in 600 B.C. Several theories have been proposed regarding the combination of the names Vasudeva and Narayana, and later on Krishna Gopala, with Krishna. Bharatan Kumarappa suggests that the main streams of beliefs, namely, that of Vasudeva-Krishna, of Vishnu, of Narayana which were of separate origins mingled together to form the Vaishnavite theology which is the fourth stage of development.³¹ Other scholars like Bhandarkar also have traced several stages of development.³² Although such authors do not claim that their observations and conclusions are absolute, some of the evidences they have produced are helpful in determining certain stages of development. In Panini's grammar which is accepted to be from the fifth century B.C. Vasudeva is mentioned with Arjuna as a compound noun form Vāsudevār-junābhyam in IV 3. 98. According to this passage Vasudeva and Arjuna were worshiped together.³³ Kumarappa contends that since Vasudeva is mentioned along with Arjuna, Krishna was at that time revered only as a demi-god.³⁴ In an inscription found at Ghosundi in Rajputana which dates around 200 B.C. the worship of Samkarasana and Vasudeva is

³¹Bharatan Kumarappa, The Hindu Conception of the Deity (London: Luzak & Co., 1934), pp. 86-92.

³²Bhandarkar, pp. 2-13.

³³Majumdar, p. 14.

³⁴Kumarappa, p. 88.

mentioned. Another inscription from Nanaghat which has been assigned to the end of the second century B.C. shows that Sankarasana and Vasudeva had been invoked along with other gods. An inscription discovered in Besnagar which dates from the second century B.C. has a column with the image of Garuda (which is a symbol of Vishnu) on top in honor of Vasudeva.³⁵ This inscription might be an indication that Vasudevap-Krishna was identified with Vishnu by about 200 B.C.³⁶ Kumarappa also suggests that Taittiriya Aranyaka which probably dates to the third century B.C. has a hymn (X. 1. 6) in which Vishnu, Narayana and Vasudeva are addressed as three phases of one god.³⁷ Another historical reference derives from Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador, who mentions that Krishna was worshiped then at Mathura (300 B.C.).³⁸

It is significant to recognize that all the references cited in the foregoing section belong to a period later than the sixth century B.C., and that the full identification of Vasudeva-Krishna, Narayana, Vishnu, and the combination of Vasudeva and Sankarasana belong to the period after the sixth century. This indicates that the date of Mahabharata would fall within the generally accepted epic age 600 B.C. to A.D. 200.³⁹

³⁵Bhandarkar, pp. 3-4; Majumdar, pp. 16-19. Majumdar also in pages 18 to 22 cites other inscriptions on this subject.

³⁶Kumarappa, p. 88.

³⁷Ibid., p. 91.

³⁸Radhakrishnan, 1:88.

³⁹Van Buitenen in his introduction cited earlier proposes that the oldest portions preserved in Mahabharata are hardly older than 400 B.C., and that A.D. 400 is the approximate date after which no more substantial additions were made (p. xxv). Dr. Radhakrishnan suggests that the identification of Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu, and the prominence of Viṣṇu belong to the period which is about 300 B.C. (p. 489).

Krishna According to Mahabharata

Krishna plays a prominent role in Mahabharata. A close examination of the text will testify to the fact that he is portrayed from different angles, namely, human and divine. As Dr. Radhakrishnan has stated, it "contains several layers of thought superimposed one upon another in the course of ages representing kṛṣṇa in all grades, from historical character to an avatar of Viṣṇu."⁴⁰

Krishna, a Historical Character (Described in Human Terms)

One sees Krishna in the first place as a chief of the Vrsni and Andhaka race attending the Suyamvara (bridegroom choice) of Draupadi of the kingdom of Panchala along with his elder brother Balarama (Baladeva). He was the one who recognized the Pandavas who were in the guise of Brahmans. In the ensuing fight over the victory of the Pandavas in the Suyamvara he advised that "the maiden was won by the Pandavas according to the law." Following his verdict the other chiefs turned away from the battle (Mbh. I:178-81). After the Pandavas were exiled by the Kauravas, the Bhojas, Vranis, and Andhakas visited the Pandavas in the forest. Krishna was the head of the delegation and vowed that he would do his best for the Pandavas to rectify the injustice done to them (I:1.13). He was also present at the Royal consecration of the Pandavas, and among all the chiefs present, Krishna was given the gift of honor (I:2.33). When the Kauravas sent Sanjaya as messenger to the Pandavas, Yudhishthira, the eldest of the Pandavas, replied that he would like to have Krishna's advice on the subject of terms of peace because the

⁴⁰Radhakrishnam, 1:494-95.

Caitrikas, Sinis, and Andhakas, the Kaukuras, Srinjayas, Vrsnis, and so forth, are guided by Krishna (V:28. 10-14). These and similar references in the epic show that Krishna was a leader and chief among the kings.

Nevertheless, Krishna's position did not go unchallenged. He had to face an alliance headed by Jarasandha. He suggested to Yudhisthira that Jarasandha must be eliminated because he was a threat to the royal consecration. Since Jarasandha had attacked the middle country and driven the Vrsnis from Mathura, the Vrsnis had to fall back on the town of Dvaraka. Only after Jarasandha's withdrawal could the Vrsnis return to their ancestral home, Mathura. Jarasandha was aided by Sisupala, king of Cedi. It was Krishna who was the would-be assassination party, crashing the gate of Jarasandha and addressing him in the name of others. He incited Bhima by a signal to kill Jarasandha who was already defeated (II:12-22). When the gift of honor was offered to Krishna during the Royal consecration of the Pandavas, Sisupala protested Krishna's claim to rank as leader or god; several other kings also walked out in protest to Krishna's claim (II:34). In the subsequent argument on the issue Sisupala challenged Krishna to a fight, and even berated him for having married a woman who had been betrothed to another. In the ensuing fight, Krishna cut off Sisupala's head with his disc. When this happened some of the chiefs applauded, some were enraged, and others were undecided (II:35-42). Thus we find three parties among the kings of whom only one party was supporting Krishna. This is further explained by the fact that because Krishna had slain Sisupala, Salva, king of Sauba, had made a furious attack on Dvaraka when Krishna was absent. Krishna later

explained to the Pandavas that only because he was engaged in a war with Salva he was not able to attend the disc contest. He also expressed the feeling that if he were present at the contest, the troubles caused as the result of the contest could have been avoided (III:15-23). These incidents illustrate the fact that Krishna was by no means omnipotent.⁴¹

Another aspect of the human side of Krishna's life is his relation and friendship with the Pandavas, and particularly with Arjuna. He was blood-related to them by the fact that their mother Kunti was his father's (Vasudeva) sister (I:138.15-20), and even more related to them by Arjuna's marriage with his sister Subhadra. It was Krishna who suggested that Arjuna abduct her, and when Baladeva wanted to punish Arjuna for the abduction of Subhadra, Krishna intervened and pacified him (I:211-13). He developed intimate relationship with Arjuna (I:225.10-15; III:13.35-40). He and Baladeva visited the Pandavas after the Suyamvara (I:183), and sent a wedding gift (I:191. 10-15); he also brought a wedding gift for Arjuna's wedding with Subhadra. Several chiefs of countries were also in the party (I:313); at another time he visited the Pandavas in the forest with his wife Satyabhama (III:180) and assured them of his people's support for their struggle against the Kauravas; he attended the wedding of abhimanyu, son of Arjuna (V:1). The Pandavas always sought and accepted his advice.

In V:5.1-10 Krishna offered to be neutral in the war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, because both of them were related to him even though he expressed sympathy for the Pandavas and anger at the Kauravas for the injustice done to the Pandavas. But Duryodhana and Arjuna went

⁴¹Van Buitenen, 2:25.

to Dvaraka to seek Krishna's assistance in the war, according to the choice offered to both of them, Duryodhana chose the army of Krishna while Arjuna preferred his personal participation as his charioteer. We see him throughout the war as Arjuna's charioteer and advisor supporting the Pandavas.

There are incidents also in Mahabharata which indicate that Krishna was not above using tricks, if necessary, to achieve his purpose. When Bhima and Jarasandha were engaged in the duel and Krishna found out that the latter had become exhausted on the fourteenth day of the duel, Krishna indirectly told Bhima that Jarasandha was exhausted. Bhima recognized the message and killed the other (II:21.15-55). When Krishna failed in his peace mission to the Kauravas, he tried to form a division in the camp of the Kauravas, and met Karna privately and revealed to him that he was the oldest son of Kunti, and offered him the kingdom if he would leave the Duryodhana camp and join the Pandavas (V:5.138-141). In the battlefield when Arjuna and Karna were engaged in the duel Karna's chariot wheel fell off, so he asked Arjuna for time, reminding him of the ethics of war. At that point Krishna chided him that he did not have right to appeal to virtue since he had not remembered virtue when Drapadi was disgraced by Duryodhana or when Sakuni played tricks in the disc contest. Then he exhorted Arjuna seizing the opportunity to strike Karna even though it was against ethics of war. Similarly, when Duryodhana and Bhima were engaged in the duel, Krishna realized that Bhima had to use unfair means if he were to kill the other. So he signalled to Arjuna so that Arjuna in turn signalled to Bhima to strike Duryodhana at his thigh, although according to war ethics it was a foul

to strike below the navel. After Bhima struck Duryodhana, Krishna's brother Balarama told Krishna it was a foul act. Duryodhana assailed Krishna, "O son of Kamsa's slave you reminded Bhima by a hint about breaking my thigh" to which Krishna answered, "when the enemies are outnumbered, then destruction should be brought about by strategem. The gods themselves have used such methods in killing the asuras."⁴² Such acts of partiality, vengeance, tricks, use of foul means, and so forth, are not characteristic of a god.

Portrait of Krishna as Divine

The use of divine means (of Vishnu) applied to Krishna was earlier discussed in this chapter. Besides them, other names such as Kesava, Madhava, Madhusudhana, Govinda, Varsneya, Janardhana, Dhomodhara, Acyta, and so forth, are also used in Mahabharata. The very same names appear in Bhagavat Gita also as divine names. So, already in Mahabharata one can see that the development of this theme to raise him to the level of a god and even to identify him with Vishnu had already taken place.

Besides the application of divine names for Krishna the following pictures are given to identify him with Vishnu and/or a portion of Vishnu. When the earth approached Brahma and complained about its burden he ordered that the gods should incarnate themselves, to which Narayana (Vishnu) and Indra had also agreed. Then Narayana and Indra made a covenant among themselves that they would descend from heaven

⁴²Chakravarthi V. Narasimham, The Mahabharata: An English Version Vased on Selected Verses (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1965), pp. 165-75.

with a portion of themselves (I:58-59). Later, when Krishna appeared in the Rajasuya sacrifice, seeing him, Narada is reported to have remembered that Hari (Narayana) himself was born in the form of men (II:33.10-25). In III:13.38 we read that Krishna said to Arjuna "You are Nara and I am Hari Narayana (See also III:41.1-2). In another account it is said that Narayana descended with a portion of himself as Vasudeva and Baladeva was a portion of the snake Naga (I:61.90-91). According to a third account Hari (Vishnu) plucked two hairs from his head. One hair was white and the other was black. These hairs then went into the Yadhu women Rohini and Devaki. One of them became Baladeva (the white hair) and the other, the black one became Kesava (Krishna) (I:189). It is to be noted that according to these three accounts Krishna is described only as a portion of Vishnu, and not the full incarnation of Vishnu. On one occasion he joined with Arjuna in setting the fire god at the conflagration of the Khandava forest. When both of them proved to be invincible, Indra himself is reported to have come to a compromise with them, recognizing their divine quality (I:214-18).

Two incidents appear different from the rest of Krishna's activities. First, when he went on a peace mission on behalf of the Pandavas he appeared as an ordinary human ambassador, and Duryodhana made preparations to capture him. In his confrontation with Duryodhana he revealed his divinity and power, and hosts of gods and Pandavas appeared from his body (V:129). Second, when Arjuna requested him to reveal his identity, he revealed himself as the god who had been worshiped and praised as supreme from Rigveda onwards.⁴³ Thus he showed

⁴³Sukumari, p. 308 quoting Mbh. XII:328.

that all other gods were only partial incarnations whereas he was both immanent and transcendent.⁴⁴ These two accounts are intended to show that he was the full incarnation of Vishnu.

On reading the epic a question to be asked is: While Krishna is represented as the incarnation of the divine, what makes him unique in comparison to the rest of the characters of the epic. From one angle, Krishna is not different from the other chief characters. It should be noted that all the chief characters of Mahabharata are portrayed as incarnations either of gods or of demons. God's were born in the lineage of men, it is stated (I:59.1-5); for example, Vipracitti was born as Jarasandha, Hiranyakasipu as Sisupala, Samhrada as Salya, and so forth. (I:61.5-15). Brahaspathi was born as Drona, Bhisma to Ganga and Samtanu, Krpa was one of the Rudras. Satyaki, Drupada, Krtavarma, and others were Maruts. Duryodhana was portion of Kali, Yudhisthira was portion of Dharma, Bhima was a portion of Wind, Arjuna of Indra, Nahula and Sahadova of Asvins, Abhimanyu of Soma, Karna of Sun, and so on. It can be argued that Krishna is also portrayed as a portion of Vishnu like others are of other gods. The only main claim that Krishna is supreme is based on the claim that Vishnu is the supreme god.⁴⁵

Vishnu in the Epics

Vishnu and Indra

The period of epics witnessed the rise of the Hindu triad Brahma,

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 328.

⁴⁵Such a claim will be acceptable only to the Vaishnavites who worship Vishnu as the supreme god whereas Saivites will dispute it on the ground that Siva is the supreme god according to their teaching.

Vishnu, and Siva to prominence. Dr. Radhakrishnan believes that such belief was the second stage of the epic age (the first being the religion of the Vedas), and the third stage occurred when Krishna was identified with Vishnu.⁴⁶ However, during these stages of development Indra the chief god in the Vedas got further pushed to the background. In the epics he was still considered as a major god. His warrior-traits and victories were still remembered (Mbh. I:217-19). He was still considered as one who grants boons and blessings (Ram. 5:67.5; I:3.6;⁴⁷ Mbh. I:225; I:114; I:126). In the passages cited above he is portrayed as the god of gods, and the god of rain. Arjuna was born to Kunti through Indra (Mbh. I:114), and he was watching over the fight between Arjuna and Karna (Mbh. I:126), he invited Arjuna to heaven, embraced him and granted him his thunderbolt (III:43-45); he also appeared to Karna as Brahmin and exchanged his inborn armour and earring in return for the never-failing spear, in order to help Arjuna to win the fight with Karna (III:43). After the end of the Kurukshetra war Indra appeared to Yudhishthira on a chariot, asked him to board it, and then took him to the heaven.⁴⁸ Such references in the epics demonstrate that Indra was still considered as a major god.

Nevertheless, there is a constant effort evident in the epics to undermine his position. He is painted as one who was afraid of Vasus' austerities (Mbh. I:57), feared the garuda who came to steal the

⁴⁶Radhakrishnan, 1:485.

⁴⁷Quotations cited from Ramayana (Ram) in this section are taken from Sukumari, p. 251.

⁴⁸Narasimhan, p. 209.

Soma (Mbh. I:26), he was afraid of Viswamitra's austerities (Mbh. I:165). He is also pictured as a weak god who needed others' help: He begged Dasaratha to help him to kill Sambara (Ram. 2:9.25), he killed the demons only at his mother's behest (Ram. 2:18.24-25), the gods had to bless him when he set out to kill Vrtra (Ram. 2:25.24), once he was swallowed by Vrtra and escaped with the help of gods (Mbh. v:9), Siva and Vishnu helped him to slay Vrtra (Mbh. XII:272-73).⁴⁹ The epics also have records about his sins and lust for women. For example, he came to Ahalya in the shape of her husband and enjoyed her (Ram. 1:49.15-50), he had a lascivious nature and love for others' wives (Mbh. XIII:40.19).⁵⁰ Such narratives undermine his power and moral stature.

There are episodes which demonstrate that Indra is extremely inferior to Vishnu. Once he was hiding himself for fear of Nahusha who had usurped his throne and demanded his wife. The gods, at Vishnu's advice performed a horse sacrifice for the remission and atonement of his sins, and reinstated him on the throne (Mbh. XII:329); when Ravana defeated him frequently (Ram. 5:52-15; 7:18.5) he went to Vishnu trembling and admitted his inferiority (Ram. 7:23.3-13). Brama explained his defeat as inevitable due to his previous sins (Ram. 7:30).⁵¹ Once Indra felt polluted and performed a Vaishnavite sacrifice before he could

⁴⁹In this account Indra's credit is diminished and is shared by Vishnu and Siva.

⁵⁰Sukumari, pp. 259-64, 272.

⁵¹It shall be remembered that in the epic of Ramayana, Rama the incarnation of Vishnu killed Ravana at whose hands Indra had experienced defeats. The position of Vishnu is further built up through these narratives.

re-enter heaven (Ram. 7:49-50).⁵² These and similar narratives are definitely meant to undermine the position of Indra and to establish the supremacy of Vishnu. One can see the process started in the Brahmanas coming to a climax in the epics.

Vishnu and Siva

A major development which occurred during the epic age in Indra had become less influential and weak; the question which had to be decided was who among the Hindu triad was supreme. Brahma does not seem to be a competitor which is evident from the fact that a Brahma sect did not become strong in Hinduism. Then the question left to be answered was: Who was the greatest Vishnu or Siva. Siva was "apparently venerated as far back as the heyday of the Proto-Davidian civilization of the Indus valley."⁵³ To trace the development of the Siva concept is beyond the scope of this paper. But it has to be stated that in the epics he had become a significant force. In the age of the Brahmanas Siva had become the distinctive term for Rudra, the personification of the destructive forces of nature in the Rigveda.⁵⁴

In the epics the question of supremacy between Siva and Vishnu seems to have been answered in three different ways.⁵⁵ First, there are passages which claim that Siva was supreme: According to

⁵²Sukumari, pp. 265-73.

⁵³A. C. Bouquet, Hinduism (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1962).

⁵⁴Radhakrishnan, 1:488.

⁵⁵References in the following section are taken from Sukumari, pp. 178-207.

Mahabharata XIII:14.33 Siva and his consort are the supreme deities and creation belongs to them because creation is not marked by a lotus (Lakshmi's symbol), disc (Vishnu's symbol) or thunderbolt (Indra's symbol), but the phallus (Siva's symbol). In this passage he is elevated above Vishnu and Indra. When the gods were molested by Vrtra, Brahma sent them to Siva who removed his ingrown armour with which Indra killed Vrtra (Mbh. VII:69). When the gods were harried by the demon Taraka, Brahma told them that Siva's son was the destined divine general who would lead them to victory (Mbh. XIII:87). Brahma then asked Siva to create; thus Brahma preferred Siva to be the creator. Again, when Sankara (mixed castes) developed, Brahma asked him to set it right, so Siva created Danda (punishment) and punished Ksupa a self-conceived son of Brahma (Mbh. XII:122). One can find many similar passages in the epics. It is said that Asvatam praised Siva and offered himself by flinging himself into fire. Then Siva said, "Krishna worshiped me in due form and I am well pleased with him." Then he gave Asvathaman a brilliant sword and disappeared (Mbh. X:7). Once Krishna paid homage to Siva and advised Arjuna to do so also (Mbh. VII:57). Arjuna on the eve of killing Jarasacha on Krishna's advice praised Siva (Mbh. VII:78;20; VII:79.24). To Arjuna Siva gave the Brahmasiras weapon (Mbh. III:91.11). Krishna himself once approached Siva for a son (Mbh. XIII:14). It is also said that Parasurama became invincible through the fatal axe and other weapons which he received by placating Siva through long and dire penance (Mbh. XII:49.30).⁶⁰

⁶⁰It is to be noticed that both Krishna and Parsurama are incarnations of Vishnu according to Vaishnavite theology. The references cited in this section show that the Saivites^o claim that Siva is superior.

Second, there are passages in the epics which establish the supremacy of Vishnu over Siva: When Jarsandha offered human sacrifice to Siva, Krishna chided him for that (Mbh. II:20). Here in a conflict of two cultures, Saivism was probably responsible for the origin of the Sakta cult with its appetite for flesh offering; Vaisnavism with its abhorrence for meat and pronounced predilection for vegetarianism. Siva is also described in dripping animal hide, serpent form, ill-clad, lunatic, short of stature, four-faced, carrying a skull, and so forth (Mbh. XIII:17). Siva is said to have not been invited for Laksa's sacrifice because he was considered unworthy for it, and hence Siva destroyed the sacrifice (Mbh. X:18; XII:274). So the angry Daksa created a third eye on Siva's forehead. Usanas plucked Siva's hair when he was initiated for the annihilation of Tripura; his locks turned into snakes, and those snakes choked him and so his neck became blue. Another version is that his neck turned blue when he was throttled by Narayana's hand (Mbh. XII: 329.14-15; 330.65). These and similar narratives are designed to establish the supremacy of Vishnu over Siva.

Third, there are passages which show that honor is equally shared between Vishnu and Siva. In Book XII of Mahabharata (as well as Harivamsa and the early Puranas) there are narratives of conflicts between Siva and Vishnu. They are alternately posed as superior to each other. Sometimes Brahma is brought into it as arbiter. Sometimes superior exploits determine the real worth of the god, while at other times other gods, sages and saints justify a devotee's choice of his personal god. On some occasions they equally share honor. For example, in Anusassanaparvam of Mahabharata it is stated that when the chariot

started to move, Siva's bull roared and the chariot was about to sink. Then Vishnu assumed the shape of the bull and rescued it. The point of the narrative is that the two gods share the glory of an extraordinary feat. Once Rama (who is Vishnu's incarnation) declared that Siva alone was equal to him. Dr. Radhakrishnan, as mentioned before in this section, ascribes this kind of tension to the second stage of development in the epic age in which Vishnu and Siva had become supreme over other gods, but they had not then acquired any clear-cut distinction.⁶¹

Vishnu, the Supreme God

One of the distinctive features of Vaishnavism is the theology of incarnations (avatara) of Vishnu. With the introduction of Krishna in Mahabharata as his incarnation, and Rama as his incarnation in Ramayana and references to other incarnations as dwarf, boar, Narasimha, Vishnu is portrayed as the supreme god besides references to his warrior-trait and other feats. The purpose of the incarnation, as explained through these narratives, is that it has to defeat the wicked ones and to restore order.⁶² The purpose of the incarnations will be dealt with in the next section.

Krishna in Bhagavat Gita

Context of the Book and Date

"The Bhagavatgita which forms part of the Bhisma parva of the

⁶¹Radhakrishnan, p. 485.

⁶²Sukumari in her book, pp. 286, and 292-94, has cited several examples of Vishnu's fights and victories, and activities as the champion of gods from Mahabharata and Ramayana.

Mahabharata is the most popular religious poem of Sanscrit literature. . . . It is not looked upon as a sruti, or revealed scripture, but is regarded as a smṛti, or a tradition. Yet if the hold which a work has on the mind of man is any clue to its importance, then the Gita is the most influential work in the Indian thought.⁶³ The context of the Gita is the beginning of the Kurukshetra war. Arjuna approaches the battlefield with Krishna as his charioteer, and asks Krishna to take him to the center of the battlefield; seeing his relatives and teachers on the opposite camp he is perplexed as to what he should do.

At the psychological moment he shrinks from his duty. His conscience is troubled, his heart is torn with anguish and his state of mind like to a little kingdom, suffers then the nature of an insurrection. If to slay is to sin, it is worse sin to slay those to whom we owe love and worship.⁶⁴

It is in this moment of tension and pain that the discourse which is claimed to have taken place between Arjuna and Krishna has come to us in the form of Bhagavat Gita.

Several theories have been proposed regarding the date of the Gita.⁶⁵ Dr. Radhakrishnan, while assigning it to the fifth century B.C., admits that the date of Bhagavatgita cannot be easily settled.⁶⁶ However in the light of the various similarities between Mahabharata and Bhagavat Gita with respect to the similarities of names of both Vishnu and Krishna in Mahabharata and of Krishna in Bhagavat Gita, the doctrine

⁶³Radhakrishnan, p. 519.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 520.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 524. Dr. Radhakrishnan cites some important suggestions made by others: Bhandarkar - fourth century B.C.; Garbe - Original Gita 200 B.C. and the present form A.D. 200. He also claims that the Puranas which he assigned to second century B.C. contain many Gitas composed after the manner of the Bhagavatgita.

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 522, 524.

of incarnation of Vishnu, the supremacy of Vishnu over the other gods, it can be safely concluded that the Gita belonged to the age of the epics even though it may have attained its present form through a long process.

Krishna and Incarnation

One of the cardinal teachings of Bhagavat Gita is that of incarnation. The doctrine of incarnation was already evident in the epics. But it finds a unique and philosophic interpretation in Gita. Krishna declared,

Many births have passed of mine. I am born through my inscrutable power and controlling nature; whenever there is decline of righteousness and uprising of unrighteousness, then I project myself into creation. For the protection of the righteous and the destruction of the evil-doer, and for the proper establishment of the law of righteousness, I appear from age to age (BG 4:4-8).

In this passage two main teachings are emphasized, namely, the nature of Krishna's incarnation and secondly the purpose of incarnation. "The avatars are generally limited manifestations of the Supreme, though the Bhagavata makes an exception in favor of Kṛṣṇa, and makes him a full manifestation."⁶⁷ He further claims that

the deluded not knowing my real being, contemn me, the Supreme lord of all creatures, connected with this human body (or The foolish mistake me, clad in human form, ignorant of my supreme nature, the great lord of all beings) Bhagavat Gita 9.11.

Thus, according to the author of the Gita, Krishna is the Purusottama.⁶⁸

According to Bhagavat Gita, Krishna possesses all the attributes of the supreme being. He is spoken of as the supreme Brahman (10.12), the highest person (Purusottama) (10.15; 11.3), the great lord (9.11),

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 544.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 534.

the imperishable being, non-being, that supreme (11.37), his great self (11.12, 20, 37, 50), incomprehensible (11.17, 42) and so forth.⁶⁹ Such attributes are meant to demonstrate that Krishna was the incarnation of the supreme god in the fullest form. The transfiguration account in chapter eleven stands out as the highest point of this expression. During the course of the discussion between Krishna and Arjuna in the battlefield, it is stated that Arjuna begged Krishna that the vision of his divine form be granted. Accordingly, Krishna granted him a divine eye, that is, spiritual illumination, with which he could behold the supreme form of Krishna as the embodiment of the whole universe. Seeing the supreme form of Krishna (the supreme deity), with infinite forms, with many arms, stomachs, mouths, eyes, and so forth, Arjuna praised and worshiped him.⁷⁰ This vision is called "visvarupa-dharsana, the vision of the cosmic form."⁷¹ The purpose of this account of transfiguration is to establish that Krishna is the supreme god.

The names used for Krishna in Bhagavat Gita shed further light on the understanding of his identity. We have earlier in this chapter mentioned that scholars have suggested that through a long process Hari, Vasadeva, and a Narayana got identified with Krishna. These names are frequently used in the Gita for Krishna. Other names used are Kesava, Covinda, Janardhana, Mahava, Madhuscodana, Acuta, Vraneya, Hraikesa,

⁶⁹Kumarappa, pp. 58-60. In these pages the author gives an elaborate list of attributes of Krishna as found in Bhagavat Gita.

⁷⁰The Bhagavat Gita or The Lord's Day, trans. Mohini M. Chatterji (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1887), chapter 11 and notes, pp. 169-79.

⁷¹Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Talks on the Gita (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1960), p. 148.

Vishnu, Damodhara, and so forth. It is to be noted that all these names are used both for Krishna and Vishnu interchangeably in Mahabharata. In Mahabharata III:187.50-55 the names Janarchana, Krishna, Govinda, Hari, Madhava and Vishnu are used without any difference. So also in III:66-68 the names Vasudeva, Kesava, Madhava, Madhusoodana, Krishna, Vishnu, Janardhana, Damodhara, Hrsikesa, Narayana, Purushothama, Govinda, Aeyuta and Ananta are used without difference. From these identifications one can safely conclude that both Bhagavat Gita and Mahabharata follow the same tradition. In Bhagavat Gita Krishna refers to himself as Vishnu (10:21), and Arjuna addresses him as such in 11.24 and 30. Such identification of Krishna with Vishnu - a fundamental tenet of all the Bhagavata schools seem to be the background of the Gita.⁷²

From the foregoing discussions it can be said that the doctrine of the incarnation of Vishnu, and the identification of Krishna with Vishnu and the claim that Krishna is god supreme find their fullest expression in Bhagavat Gita. It has to be noted also that such identification took a long period of time and was a strenuous process.

Vishnu-Krishna in the Puranas

Since the subject of Vishnu-Krishna will be dealt with in chapter two, no elaborate analysis is attempted in this section. But, for the sake of understanding the historical development of the Vishnu-Krishna theme, a few remarks regarding the Puranas will be made. Purana means "ancient" or "old." It means that they were intended to preserve the ancient or old traditions. There is no consensus among scholars

⁷²Ibid., p. 58.

regarding the dates of the various Puranas. As Farquhar has stated, it is "impossible to give a trustworthy chronology of these poems, or to explain how each arose."⁷³ He further observes that since only a very few Puranas have a settled text, and different recensions exist, it is very possible that the old texts were rewritten and sectarian documents incorporated into the originals. This process of "contamination" must have continued for several centuries after the original Puranas were written between the fourth and sixth centuries of Christian era.⁷⁴ Dr. Radhakrishnan suggests that they may have been in existence as early as the fifth century B.C.⁷⁵ However, the general consensus is that they were in existence by the tenth century A.D., Bhagavata Purana being the latest.⁷⁶ For the purpose of our study it is sufficient to state that the Puranas follow the Epics in point of time,⁷⁷ and were completed before the end of the tenth century A.D.

Once the supremacy of Vishnu was established, as well as the identification of Krishna with Vishnu - as observed in the study of Gita - it is natural that the Vaishnava sect would have started promoting its teaching through additional literature. Other sectarian movements also would engage in the same pursuit. There are eighteen Puranas which are called Mahapuranas (great Puranas). Six of them are Vaishnavite, that is, promoting Vaishnava theology, and projecting Vishnu as the supreme deity; six are Saivite promoting Saivite theology, and projecting Siva

⁷³Farquhar, p. 138.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 138-39.

⁷⁵Radhakrishnan, 2:663.

⁷⁶Judah, pp. 29-30.

⁷⁷Walker, 2:254.

as the supreme deity; and six promote Brahma as the supreme deity. Besides the Mahapuranas, there are several secondary ones also which are called Upa-Puranas (sub-Puranas).⁷⁸ Farquhar suggests that Harivamsa which forms the conclusion of the Mahabharata⁷⁹ and both Siva and Vaya Puranas (one of which is usually excluded from the list) should be counted as Mahapuranas, thus making the number twenty.⁸⁰ From the nature of the titles and texts it is obvious that each sect was trying to promote its doctrines and claim superiority over the others. Each will become evident as the subject of Krishna's conflicts is discussed, and reference will be made in appropriate sections in the following chapters.

Summary

Krishna is unknown in the Vedic literature as a deity. In the Rigveda, Indra is the supreme god, but in subsequent literature there seems to have been a constant effort to project Vishnu's importance.

The Epic period witnessed the rise to prominence of the Hindu triad Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, and Krishna was identified with Vishnu. Yet the question of supremacy seems to remain unsettled in the Epic period, and the question was approached in different ways.

Vishnu's supremacy is unquestionably claimed in the Gita, and the identification of Krishna with Vishnu becomes complete.

⁷⁸Radhakrishnan, 2:663.

⁷⁹The subject of Harivamsa will be discussed briefly in the second chapter.

⁸⁰Farquhar, p. 139.

The Puranas are the development of a later period with sectarian teachings, and with each sect claiming one god and its teaching as supreme over the others.

CHAPTER II

CONFLICTS OF KRISHNA IN THE PURANAS

One will come across with a great number of conflicts and feats of Krishna in the Puranas. The author of this paper has made a survey of the conflicts recorded in Vishnu Purana, Harivamsa¹ and Bhagavatam. Even to analyze all the conflicts recorded in these three major sources is beyond the limits of this study. An attempt will be made to analyze the conflicts narrated in Vishnu Purana, and at the same time whenever a significantly different interpretation of any of these conflicts is offered in the above two sources, it will be taken note of for the purpose of understanding the meaning of the relevant conflict.

The Context In Which The Conflicts Of Krishna Are Placed

The narrative of the conception and birth of Krishna provides the context in which his conflicts are portrayed. But in the course of

¹Harivamsa means the family of Hari (Krishna). Properly speaking, it is a sequel of the epic Mahabharata. It is difficult to ascertain the true nature of this work, whether it is to be called a Purana or an epic. It is not mentioned in the list of puranas or upapuranas. But the style, form and character resemble that of the puranas. It closely resembles Vishnu Purana. "The account of Krishna's early life and some of his miracles are merely the counter parts of the same in Vishnu Purana." Even though it is not listed as a purana, in essence it is one of them written with the same object and in the same style. Hence it is treated as a purana. "Introduction," Harivamsa, A Prose English Translation of, edited and published by Manmatha Nath Dutt (Calcutta: Elysium Press, 1897), p. 1.

Srimad Bhagavatam, Tenth Canto Parts 1 to 3, trans. by A. C.

the development of the Puranas different emphases find place. In order to understand how the emphases got shifted from the original setting a brief description is given below.

The circumstances of, and the conception and birth of Krishna are recorded in Vishnu Purana, Part V, sections 1 to 4, Bhagavatam X.1-4, and also Harivamsa chapters 1 to 1v. The same is referred to in Mahabharata I.58-59 as mentioned in chapter one of this paper.

Summary of the Circumstances, Conception, and Birth of Krishna

Once upon a time, the great seer Vasudeva married Devaka's daughter Devaki. After their marriage Kamsa, the increaser of the Bhojas (or the joy of the Bhojas)² who had usurped the throne of his father Ugrasena drove their coach as the charioteer. On the way a voice was heard in the sky warning Kamsa that the eighth child of Devaki whom he was carrying on the chariot would rob him of his life. Agitated by this voice, Kamsa got ready to kill Devaki by his sword. But the situation was averted by the promise made by Vasudeva that he would deliver over to Kamsa every child that she brought forth.

In the meantime, Earth, oppressed by her heavy load, went to the assembly of the celestials and described all her distresses. She

Bhaktivendanta Swami Prabhupada (Los Angeles: The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1977).

Vishnu Puranam, prose English translation by Manmatha Nath Dutt, published by the Chowkhamba Sanskrit Senes Office (Varnasi: Vidyavilas, 1972). References to Harivamsa, Bhagavata Puranam and Vishnu Purana in this paper are taken from the above mentioned books respectively unless indicated otherwise.

²Cornelia Dimmitt and J. A. B. Van Buitenen, Classical Hindu Mythology (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978), p. 106.

recounted that Kalanemi the asura once slain by Vishnu was born as Kamsa, the son of Ugrasena, and other deities also had been born in various royal families, and that they were oppressing her. Since she could not bear the distresses she pleaded that she be relieved of the burden lest she should sink helpless in the nethermost abyss. Hearing the complaint of the earth, Brahma and other gods went to Narayana (Vishnu) and narrated the situation to him and asked for his advice. Vishnu then plucked two of his hairs, one white and the other black, and said to the celestials that the two hairs would go down and be born upon the earth and relieve her of the burden of her distress. The black hair would be impersonated in the eighth conception of Devaki and would destroy Kamsa who was the demon Kalanemi. Vishnu also ordered that the other deities should descend upon the earth and fight with the Auras. Saying this, Hari vanished.

When Kamsa heard the gods' plan from Narada the sage, in great wrath he kept Vasudeva and Devaki in secret confinement. According to the promise, Vasudeva delivered to Kamsa each of the six infants as soon as it was born. It is said that those six children were those of the demon Hiranyakasipu introduced into the womb of Devaki by Yogindra (the Yogic Sleep of Vishnu).³ When Devaki was conceived the seventh time, according to the command of Hari, Yogindra transferred the embryo who was portion of Sesa (Sesa is a portion of Vishnu) into the womb of Rohini, another wife of Vasudeva. Then Hari entered the womb of Devaki. Again Yogindra on the very same day entered the womb of Yasoda, wife of Nanda. The child born of Rohini would be called Sankarasana, and the

³Dimmitt and Van Buitenen, p. 108.

one born of Devaki would be Krishna.

When Devaki bore the child, Vasudeva (nicknamed Anakadundubhi) carried him away in the dead of the night while the guards were sleeping. Since it was heavily raining, the Serpent Sesa followed him and sheltered him with his hoods. Carrying the child, Vasudeva crossed the deep river Yamuna with its hundreds of whirlpools, but it only reached up to his knees. On the bank of the river, Vasudeva saw Nanda and other cowherds who had come to pay tribute to Kamsa. On that night Yasoda also had given birth to a female child by the influence of Yogindra. Vasudeva placed his son by the side of Yasoda and picked up the female child without the knowledge of anyone and left the place. Having heard that Devaki had given birth to a child, Kamsa came and seized it, and dashed it against a rock. The child at once went up to the sky, expanded itself into a gigantic figure and declared to Kamsa that the child which was to destroy him had been born elsewhere, then disappeared.

Thereupon, Kamsa took counsel with the leading Asuras and ordered that all the young children in whom there were signs of unusual vigor be killed, and freed Vasudeva and Devaki. Vasudeva immediately went to Nanda and urged him to go away to Gokula, and also entrusted him with the other child who was born of Rohini. Thus Nanda and Yasoda raised him along with Balarama (Sankarasana) at Gokula and Vrindavana. Krishna's life and his extraordinary feats are thus set in the context of Gokula and Vrindavana, and later at Mathura and Dwarka; and in Dwarka he assumed the kingship of the Yadavas and continued to kill tyrants and monsters.⁴

⁴Charles S. J. White, "Kṛṣṇa as Divine Child," History of Religions 10 (November 1970):162.

Krishna's Extraordinary Feats From Childhood
Remembered in the Puranas

"The child Krishna receives the first extensive discussion in the Vishnu-Purana and the Harivamsa, and later in the Bhagavata-Puranam."⁵ They never get tired of remembering and celebrating the extraordinary and miraculous strength hidden within the form of the child. For example, once while he was asleep under the wagon he cried for the breast and kicked up his feet. The wagon was overturned, and all the pots and pans were upset and broken (V.P. V.vi);⁶ one day his foster mother fastened a cord round his waist and tied him to a wooden mortar, but he pulled the mortar after him to place it between two arjuna trees, and the two trees were uprooted (V.P. V.vi). Bhagavata Purana elaborates the story and says that the two trees were Nalakuvara and Manigrive who were once great devotees of Siva and became trees by a curse of Narada; and when Krishna uprooted the trees their old consciousness revived (Bh.P. X.10). Another time Krishna's companions came and reported to Yasoda that he had eaten earth. Yasoda seized him and ordered him to open his mouth. "The mighty Hari . . . who had in his sport assumed the form of a human child, opened his mouth. Yasoda then saw inside the mouth of Krishna the whole universe, the mobile and immobile creation, the ethereal dome, the heavenly quarters, the grand division of the earth with the mountains, the oceans and the mundane sphere, the atmosphere, the fire and lightning, the Zodiac presiding over the senses,

⁵Ibid., p. 159.

⁶Abbreviations to be used in this chapter are: Bh.P. - Bhagavata Purana; HV. - Harivamsa; RS. - Rudrasamhita; SV. - Siva Purana; V.P. - Vishnu Purana; VS. - Vidyeesvarasamhita.

the sense of organs, the mind, the objects of perception and the three principles."⁷ He thus revealed that he holds within his own body the whole universe "in extenso."⁸ According to Harivamsa lxiii he once created hundreds of wolves from his body until he persuaded the herdsmen of Vrindavana to move to where he desired to be. According to the Puranas, and particularly the Bhagavata Purana, his childhood life is pictured around

the unstructured play of the little child, his crawling through the dust, his hanging on the tails of the calves, his mischievousness, his stealing butter. Always the gopis, the cowherd women, are watching him, enchanted by his play. Later he plays in the forest with other young cowherd boys as they go out day after day with the grazing calves; later still, there is the development of an erotic aspect, the sensual play with the gopis in which he draws them to a closer and deeper love for himself. In addition, the aura of playfulness is developed in greater emphasis upon the dance.⁹

The Vaishnava sect has extensively used and honored the theme of Krishna's childish feats, and their devotion to him as is illustrated by the following examples. "Among the earliest literary uses of the child Krishna material we find that the poems of some of the Alvars show detailed knowledge of its leading motifs. Periyalvar describes Krishna as though Yasoda were speaking. Sri Andal expressed her devotion to Krishna in ecstatic lines."¹⁰ Surdas who was born around 1484 A.D. "wrote more or less exclusively on the theme of Bhakti, particularly honoring the child Krishna."¹¹ It will not be surprising that the

⁷Bh. P. X. 10.13. The Srimad Bhagavatam, 2 vols., trans. by J. M. Sanyal (New Delhi: Munshiram Manshantal Publishers, 1973), vol. 2.

⁸White, p. 165.

⁹Clifford B. Hospital, "Krishna and the Theology of Play," History of Religions 6 (1976-77):286.

¹⁰White, p. 162.

¹¹Ibid., p. 170.

portrayal of such extraordinary character of Krishna is carried through in his confrontation with the opponents.

Types of the Conflicts of Krishna

Krishna's conflicts as recorded in the Puranas shall be divided into three categories: (1) his conflicts with demons and asuras which shall be termed in this paper as Minor Conflicts, (2) his conflicts with other major deities in which the deities are directly or indirectly involved, and (3) the two major conflicts, one with Kaliya the serpent and the other with Indra (termed as "cosmic battles" by Hawley).¹²

Minor Conflicts

The antagonists of Krishna as recorded in Vishnu Purana shall be classified as follows:

Putana the child killer (V.P. V.v), Demon Dhenuka (V.P. V.viii), Asura Pralamba (V.P. V.ix), Demon Arishta (V.P. V.xiii), Demon Kesin (V.P. V.xv), and Kamsa (Kamsa's elephant Kuvalayapida, his wrestlers Chanura, Musthika and Tomalak, and his brother Sumalin) (V.P. V.xx). Already in the council held by Kamsa to devise ways and means to get rid of Krishna they are mentioned as the leading Asuras who later took different forms, namely, woman, ass, cowherd boy, bull, and steed respectively. We find each one of them attacking Krishna and/or Balarama. According to Harivamsa LXI.22-23 Putana was Kamsa's nurse, and according to Bhagavata Purana x.6.2-4 it was the same Putana whom Kamsa had engaged to kill babies, and was a Rakshasi who was once upon a time wandering in

¹²John Stratton Hawley, "Krishna's Cosmic Victories," Journal of the American Academy of Religions 47 (June 1979):201-21.

the outer space. Kesin was commissioned by Kamsa (V.P. V.xvi); Chanura, Musthika and Tomalaka were his own wrestlers who were engaged by Kamsa as also the elephant Kuvalyapida (V.P. V.xv). Even though such commissioning is not explicitly stated in the case of Dhenuka, Prelamba and Aristha, from the total setting of the conflicts it is obvious they were agents or associates of Kamsa. It is to be noted that all these fights took place during Krishna's infancy and boyhood. Kamsa is pictured as his chief antagonist.

Jarasandha, Rukhmin, and Kalayavana: Jarasandha the king of Magadha opposed Krishna because he was angered by the death of his son-in-law Kamsa at the hand of Krishna (V.P. V.xxii). Rukhmin was in alliance with Jarasandha and his fight with Krishna was prompted by Krishna's carrying away Rukhmin's sister, Rukhmini, who was already engaged to Sisupala. Originally Krishna had wanted to marry Rukhmini. But Jarasandha who was in enmity with Krishna had instigated that Rukhmini be given to Sisupala as wife, and not to Krishna (V.P. V.xxviii). Kalayavana in his pride wanted to defeat the Yadavas who were under the protection of Krishna (V.P. V.xxiii-xxiv); according to Harivamsa CIX-CXI he came to assist the allies against Krishna. According to these reports it must be understood that these three opponents were also associates of Kamsa. There is no mentioning of these opponents assuming any other forms in the course of the conflicts.

Demon Panchajana and Naraka and his associate Mura: The conflict with Panchajana was prompted by Krishna's attempt to recover the son of his teacher Sandipani on the latter's request, and the conflict with Naraka and Mura was prompted by the request of Indra (V.P. V.xxi, and

xxix-xxx). In these two conflicts neither Kamsa nor any of his associates is involved.

Conflicts under the last two paragraphs occurred during Krishna's youth. In these one can see the development from "the irresponsible tricks of Krishna's infancy giving way to the salvation exploits of childhood, then to the amorous adventures of the youth."¹³

Krishna's Conflicts with Other Major Deities
(or Conflicts in Which Other Major
Deities are Involved)

There are two conflicts of Krishna with Indra recorded in Vishnu Purana, one in V.xxi and the other in V.xxx-xxi.

There are two conflicts with Siva recorded in Vishnu Purana, one in V.xxxii-xxxiii and the other in V.xxxiv.¹⁴

An examination of these combats will show that neither Kamsa nor any of his associates is involved in these occasions.

¹³1. Dimmitt and Van Buitenen, p. 104.

2. Besides the ones mentioned in the above section the following conflicts are recorded in Bhagavatam Puranam:

The Bhagavata Purana has the following minor conflicts in addition to the ones in Vishnu Purana: Conflicts with Trinavarta (VII.41-44), Batsasura (XI.37-43), Bakasura (XI.46-59), Aghasura (XII.13-35), Sankachura (XXXIV.25-32), Sisuppala (LXXIV), Salva (LXXVII), demon Byoma (XXXVII.24-34). Taken from The Srimad-Bhagavatam. Harivamsa has in addition Krishna's conflict with Shrigala (CXIV), Nikhumba (CCXXXI).

¹⁴Bh.P. X.XIII has the episode of the destruction of the infatuation of Brahma who in the guise of a cowherd boy pilfered the calves and cowherd boys and kept them elsewhere. But his purpose was defeated by Krishna, and finally Brahma appeared and eulogized Krishna.

On another occasion, Varuna's servant imprisoned Nanda and brought him to Varuna. Knowing this, Krishna went to meet Varuna. Varuna apologized for the mistake and worshipped Krishna (Bh.P. X.XIII-XIV), The Srimad Bhagavatam.

Krishna's Major Conflicts

1. Conflict with Kaliya the serpent (V.P. V.vii).
2. Conflict with Indra (V.P. V.xcxi).

These two conflicts are considered to be unique because they represent Krishna's victories over the water below and the waters above, and are battles in a broader cosmic sense.¹⁵ It is to be noted that in these two battles also there is no reference to Kamsa or to any of his associates.

Structure of the Conflicts

Structure of the Minor Conflicts

The pattern of the conflicts, particularly of the minor ones, must be understood within the framework of the total incarnation theory. They lay out important elements of all the conflicts and portray deep doctrines of the Puranas. Clifford Hospital has observed the following structure which stands at the base of almost all the accounts of major incarnations or avatars of Vishnu. With minor variations, it is applicable to the Krishna material also:

1. A demon or a company of demons usurp the power of the gods, taking control of the worlds.
2. The demons upset Dharma
3. The world, beset by instability, stands on the brink of chaos. Creatures are beset by fear.
4. The gods seek refuge in the supreme person.
5. The supreme person acts in response to their plea so that,

¹⁵Hawley, p. 203.

sooner or later, the demon is slaughtered, or at least overcome or tamed.

6. The gods and all other creatures are restored to their rightful places, and there is peace and prosperity again in the world.¹⁶ The afresaid broad outline is as applicable in the case of the avater of Vishnu as it is to Krishna in the Puranas. This can be illustrated as follows:

1. The Dhanavas and Asuras have taken control of the earth according to the Earth's complaint in Vishnu Purana V.i.
2. They afflict the world.
3. The earth is at the point of sinking into the nethermost abyss.
4. The earth approaches the deities who in turn approach the supreme person, Hari.
5. Hari responds to the request, and becomes incarnate as Krishna. The demons or the afflictors are overcome or slaughtered by him.
6. Restoration is effected. That is, Ugrasena is set on the throne; Sandipani's son is restored; the earrings of Aditi the mother of Indra are restored.

According to this observation, Krishna's conflicts in general can be perceived within the framework of the theology of incarnation.

Structure of the Individual Conflicts

The basic structure which stands at the base of the accounts of major incarnations of Vishnu is also applicable in the case of individual conflicts of Krishna in certain cases with minor variations. This shall be illustrated as follows:

¹⁶Hospital, pp. 285-6.

Conflicts in Which All the Steps are Traceable.

Sample: Krishna killing Naraka (V.P. V.xxix-xxx)

1. The demon Naraka was inflicting the creatures, celestials and saints.
2. He took away the umbrella of Varuna (The umbrella is the emblem of sovereignty), and the earrings of Aditi, the mother of Indra.
3. As a result there was discomfort, and Naraka continued to terrify Indra and others.
4. Indra sought refuge in Krishna pleading to be relieved from the affliction.
5. Krishna acted in response to the request. Naraka and his companion Mura and other demons were slaughtered.
6. The umbrella of Varuna, the earrings of Aditi, and other materials were restored to their rightful places.

Krishna's fight with Kamsa (along with the wrestlers he had employed and the elephant) fits exactly in this patten as outlined above, and so also his conflicts with Panchajana and Kalayavana. In the latter case there is no explicit reference to any request made to Krishna, but he assumes the role of the defender of the Yadhus (V.P. V.xxi, and xxiii-xxiv).

Conflicts in Which All the Steps are Evident, but Some are Implicit.

Sample: Krishna killing the demon Putana (V.P. V.v).

1. According to Bhagavata Purana X.6.2 Putana was engaged to kill babies. Thus she took control of the village. But in Vishnu Purana, that she took control of the village is implicit.
2. Putana entered the house of Nanda to kill Krishna in order to upset the plans of the gods, which means upsetting Dharma.

3. The fear of the inhabitants of Vraja is implicit because it is said "whatever child is sucked by Putana at night, dies instantly."

4. There is no mention of seeking refuge in the supreme being; but Krishna the child becomes the center of action in response to the appeal by earth.

5. Krishna acted, and the demon was killed.

6. There was joy and surprise in the community. The village was freed from the affliction of the child killer.

The following battles shall be grouped under this category: (1) Killing of demon Dhenuka. In this conflict Bararama also joined hands with Krishna (V.P. V.viii). (2) Killing of the Asura Pralamba: In this conflict it was Balarama who killed the demon. But when he was carried away by the demon it was Krishna who reminded him of his identity and prompted action (V.P. V.ix). (3) Killing of the demon Kesin (V.P. V.xv). (4) Killing of the demon Aristha (V.P. V.xiii).

Conflicts with Jarasandha (V.P. V.xxii) and Rukhmin (V.P. V.xxviii)

In the case of Krishna's combat with Jarasandha and Rukhmin the above stated steps are not specifically traceable. Jarasandha's anger was provoked by Krishna's killing the former's son-in-law, Kamsa. His fight with Rukhmin was prompted by his abducting Rukhmini. Thus it became a personal enmity provoked by Krishna's action. Krishna did not kill Jarasandha and Rukhmin by himself. Rukhmin was killed by Bararama at a later stage (V.P. V.xxx) while Jarasandha was killed by Bhima. However, both Jarasandha and Rukhmin were in alliance with Kamsa; thus they can be grouped with Kamsa in whose case the steps are clearly traceable.

Concluding Remarks on the Structure of the Minor Conflicts

In the light of the comparison between the total structure which stands at the base of the major incarnations of Vishnu and the individual conflicts of Krishna it shall be concluded that the same structure is followed in both of these categories. Thus each of the minor conflicts of Krishna becomes a microcosm of the total conflict or overall plan. The pattern and the order of redemptive events that Krishna employs in his overall plan is repeated many times during the course of his life. Thus the meaning of all the conflicts of Krishna must be understood in the light of the theory of incarnation in general.

Structure of Krishna's Conflicts With
Other Major Deities

Vishnu Purana has records of Krishna's two conflicts with Indra, although a real conflict occurs only once in a real sense of the word. There are two with Siva (or in which Siva is directly involved).

Conflicts with Indra

According to Vishnu Purana V. xxi, after killing Kamsa and establishing his father Ugrasena on the throne, Krishna mentally summoned Vayu, the deity of the wind, by whom he sent word to Indra and "commanded" him to send the royal hall Sudharma back to Yadhavas, and thus to lay aside his pomp. Indra immediately conceded and sent the royal hall back; thus the Yadhavas maintained possession of the celestial court.

In this instance there is no real fight between Krishna and Indra. Indra did not oppose Krishna's demand, but simply yielded. Nevertheless, the restoration of Ugrasena to the throne which was usurped by his son Kamsa occasioned the restoration of the royal hall to the Yadhus, and

was "defended by the arms of Govinda" (Krishna). Or it may be stated that both of the "restorations" are set in parallel here. On the basis of the close connection between the two events the following structure may be discerned:

1. Krishna's victory over Kamsa provided an occasion to challenge Indra.
2. Krishna challenged the authority of Indra - a combat.
3. Indra conceded to his demand - Krishna's victory.
4. Restoration of the royal hall, and Krishna's protection of it.

On the other occasion, after defeating Naraka, Krishna went to Swarga (heaven) to restore the earrings of Aditi. On the way back, his wife Satyabhama wanted to have the parijatha tree which had arisen during the churning of the ocean. Krishna took it with him in spite of the warning given by the guards. Thereupon a fight arose between the celestials and Krishna. Finally Indra and Krishna met each other in a battle, and Indra was defeated.

The purpose of the event was, as told by Satyabhama, to try the strength of Indra against Krishna; Krishna proved the victor. However, after the battle was over, Indra and Krishna came to compromise with each other. This offered a setting for Indra to eulogize Krishna as the supreme god proclaiming the purpose of Vishnu's incarnation. The celestials, sages, and saints also eulogized him (V.P. V. xxx-xxxI). The structure:

1. Krishna's victory over Naraka provided the occasion for a combat.
2. Fight between Indra and Krishna - a combat.

3. Krishna's victory - Indra's accepting his supremacy and making a compromise.

4. Krishna being eulogized by Indra, celestials, and so forth.

It shall be observed that the same steps are followed in Krishna's challenging Indra's authority and/or strength on both occasions. In the fourth step Krishna's restoration of the royal hall and his protection of it in the first case is paralleled by his being eulogized in the second case. In both cases his authority is recognized.

Conflicts with Siva

The first combat was occasioned by the capture of Anirudha the grandson of Krishna by Bana, who had the protection of Siva and had obtained a boon from Siva. When Krishna, Balarama, and Krishna's son Pradyumna proceeded to Sonitpura to recover Anirudha, a fight arose (V.P. V. xxxii-xxxiii). The structure:

1. An occasion for the combat - Anirudha's capture.

2. The combat - The spirits of Siva which opposed Krishna were slain. A mighty fever emanated from Siva. Balarama obtained relief by clinging to the body of Krishna. A fever that arose from the body of Krishna drove away Siva's fever. Brahma intervened, and Krishna retained the fever and absorbed it to himself.

3. Krishna's victory - The demons and the demigods who helped Siva were slain, Siva was defeated, and Bana's thousand arms were cut off.

4. Krishna's supremacy recognized: Siva came down and begged for forgiveness and the sparing of Bana's life. A compromise was made between Krishna and Siva in which Siva accepted Krishna's supremacy, and

Krishna accepted Siva's identity.

The second conflict was caused by the opposition of the king of Pandura whose name was also Vaudeva, another name for Krishna, who claimed himself to be the real Vasudeva and demanded Krishna's submission. He was assisted by the king of Kasi and Siva (V.P. V. xxxiv). The structure:

1. An occasion for the combat - King of Pandura's claim.

2. The combat - The kings of Pandura and of Kasi were on one side.

They opposed Krishna with their armies. When the two kings were killed Siva sent the mystic fire to Dwaraka. The people of Dwaraka sought the protection of Krishna.

3. Krishna's victory - He attacked the flame and repelled it, consumed the army of the king of Kasi and the attendant divinities of Siva, and set fire to the city of Kasi in which the magic power of Siva had concealed itself.

It may be noted that in the second conflict with Siva there is no reference to any compromise arrived at, or any sparing of the life of Siva's devotees, as in the first conflict studied.

General Observations on the Structure of Krishna's Conflict with Major Deities

In all of the four conflicts examined above, two against Indra and two against Siva and his devotees, Krishna comes out the victor. The features common in all of them are an occasion for combat, the actual combat, and Krishna's victory. His supremacy is recognized or accepted in both of his conflicts with Indra as well as in the first one with Siva. Explicit recognition of such supremacy is absent in the last one examined above. This is perhaps due to the fact that there cannot be

any compromise when the question of Krishna's identity is at stake. Brahma appears as the compromiser in the fight of Krishna with Bana and Siva, but the fight goes on until Krishna achieves absolute victory.

While Krishna's combat with Indra is presented as a trial of strength to determine who is the greater of the two, his combat with Siva is called "king of demons." Those who sided with Siva in the fight were called Dhanavas, Daityas, demons, and asuras; also demi-gods such as Karthikeya, the god of war, who came to support him. They were all defeated by Krishna. Thus the fight of Krishna with Siva is equated with his fights with the demons, as we have observed in the minor conflicts. A difference is that, while in the minor conflicts all the demons are killed by Krishna, Bana who is also called a demon is not killed because of the intercession of Siva. But in the case of Paundraka and the king of Kasi no intercession on their behalf is made, nor is their life spared.

When the Siva fever which emanated from Siva attacked Balarama, the fever left him when he clung to the body of Krishna; so also when the mystic fire sent by Siva attacked Dwaraka, the people sought refuge in Krishna and were saved. This phenomenon reminds one of steps four and five of the general pattern of the conflict observed in the section on the structure of minor conflicts in this chapter.

It is to be noted that in Vishnu Purana V.xcciii Krishna tells Siva, "Do not consider me as distinct from thee. The celestials, Asuras and men and the whole universe are not distinct from us. Those who have been possessed by ignorance consider me as separate from thee." The point implied in this statement is mutual recognition of Krishna and Siva. It is also emphasized in the eulogy of Krishna by Aditi in Vishnu Purana V.xxx.

Krishna's confrontation with Indra in Vishnu Purana V.xxx-xxxii provided an opportunity for the latter to explain the purpose of the incarnation of Krishna. He said to Krishna "thou art engaged in the active preservation of earth, and thou removest the thorns implanted in her bosom." The same is reflected also in establishing the royal hall Sudharma and defending it (V.P. V.xxi).

Krishna's Major Battles (or Cosmic Battles)

John Hawley has made an observation that Krishna's battle with the serpent Kaliya at the river Jamuna and the battle with Indra at Mount Govardhana were the most popular motifs of Krishna sculpture of the period from 500 to 1500 A.D. Even though the climax of Krishna's life as presented in Harivamsa and the later Puranas is his confrontation with Kamsa, the unrighteous king, this battle is rarely featured in the sculpture, whereas the conflict with Kaliya and Indra are represented very frequently.¹⁷ Moreover, these battles mean cosmological conflicts between evolutionary and devolutionary forces. Hence these two battles are singled out as the major battles.

Krishna's Battle with Kaliya the Serpent (V.P. V.vii)

Summary: Krishna saw the serpent Kaliya causing havoc in the river Jamuna, tossing about the water, causing waves, and emitting poison which made the trees wither and the birds scorch. Krishna concluded that this must be the wicked Kaliya, once defeated by him, and who is now defiling the waters so that the cows and the cowherds could

¹⁷Hawley, pp. 201-23.

not use it. So he decided to slay the serpent. He jumped into the river and started striking the serpent. He was encircled by many other poisonous snakes and became motionless. The cowherds who saw the scene were bewildered. The cowherd women started lamenting for him. Balarama at this point reminded him of his real identity and urged him to vanquish the serpent. Krishna immediately caught hold of the serpents' head, bent it down, and danced upon its hood victoriously, thus subduing it. Kaliya and his wives praised Krishna acknowledging his supremacy, and pleaded for mercy. Krishna ordered the serpent to go into the sea with the promise that Garuda (Eagle, which is his vehicle), the enemy of the serpent, would not injure it when it should see the impression of his feet on the serpent's head. The inhabitants of Vraja embraced him and praised his glory. The water of Jamuna became pure.

The structure of the battle: The general structure of the incarnation can be seen in this conflict also.

Battle with Kaliya	General Structure
Kaliya takes control of Jamuna	A demon or a company of demons . . . taking control of the worlds
It disrupts the water and poisons	The demons upset Dharma
Life becomes instable - trees wither, cows and cowherds want of water, and so forth	The world, beset by instability . . .
The cowherds lament - Balarama exhorts	Gods seek refuge in the supreme person
Krishna acts - subdues the serpent	The supreme person acts . . .
Water restored, cowherds praise him	The gods and other creatures are restored . . . peace and prosperity . . . 18

¹⁸According to Bh.P. X.XVI, Krishna after defeating the serpent says, "whoever performs ablution in the water of this river in which I

Krishna's battle with Indra (V.P. V.x-xii).

Summary: The cowherds of Vraja were making preparations for a sacrifice in honor of Indra who was believed to be the lord of the clouds and waters. Krishna stopped it and persuaded them to worship the mountain Govardhana. They did accordingly. Upon the summit of the mountain he stood and said, "I am the mountain" and partook of the food presented by the cowherds. He then ascended the hill with the other cowherds, and worshiped his other self. This incited the anger of Indra. So he sent thunder clouds in a horrendous storm of rain and wind in order to destroy the cows. The cowherds were moved with terror. Krishna realized the cause of it and resolved to defend the village. So he upheld the mountain Govardhana and offered shelter to the cowherds and their belongings. Thus he freed the cowherds, cattles, and so forth. Finding his efforts made fruitless, Indra stopped the storm, came down to see Krishna, eulogized him, and made compromise with him accepting his supremacy. The structure of the battle:

Indra is in control of thunder and rain, and utilizes them.

He disrupts the life of the village.

Life becomes hard - for people and cattle.

The cowherds tremble; the cattle cries for help.

Krishna acts; makes Indra's effort fruitless.

Life restored, people praise him.

have played, shall after oblation with its water to the celestials and their ancestral manes, and whatsoever person, after having observed a fast and meditating on me, shall adore me, shall be released from all their sins," The Srimad-Bhagavatam.

Two things are implied in this statement: (1) Salvation to Kaliya who worshiped Krishna, and (2) Invitation to Bhakti, or devotion toward Krishna.

Here also the basic general structure of incarnational doctrine is followed.

General Observations on the Structure of the Major Battles

In the fifth step, in the battle with Kaliya, Krishna subdues it and dances on its hoods, and also shows mercy to the serpent. But in the battle with Indra, he only makes Indra's effort fruitless. Indra compromises with him.

In the fifth step of the battle with Indra, Indra installs him as "Upendra" (which means small or minor Indra) of the cows, and he remains as "Mahendra (which means great Indra). At the same time he requests Krishna to protect Arjuna who is born as portion of himself in the family of Bharata, and Krishna agrees. But in the case of battle with Kaliya, Kaliya accepts Krishna as supreme absolutely.

Both the battles gave occasion for describing the purpose and meaning of the incarnation of Krishna. While in the battle with Kaliya, Krishna himself recollected the purpose of his incarnation (V.P. V.vii) before jumping into the river, in the battle with Indra it is Indra who described the meaning of incarnation at the end of the fight (V.P. V.xi),

There is a great difference in the nature of the occasions of the two battles. In the first one there is no reference to any provocation by Krishna causing Kaliya to disturb the water. But in the other Indra's anger was provoked by Krishna's action of stopping the sacrifice in honor of Indra and instituting a different sacrifice to Govārdhana the mountain.

Major Differences Between the Three Categories of Battles

In the first category all the opponents of Krishna are described as demons or asuras. The same is true of the devotees of Siva whom Krishna confronted in the second category. The serpent Kaliya is also portrayed as such. The conflicts in the other two categories are with gods.

All the opponents in the first category are presented either as emissaries or associates of Kamsa, whereas those in the other two categories are not his emissaries.

All the opponents in the first category were killed by Krishna (or Balarama or Bhima), and also all the demons and asuras who allied themselves with Siva in the second category. Bana alone was spared by the intercession of Siva. He did not kill the others. They were banished and tranquilized, but not killed.²⁰

Interpretation of the Battles of Krishna On the Basis of their Structures

An attempt will be made in this section, first to elucidate the theories that underlie each of the categories of battles of Krishna, and secondly to explain the general principles which emerge from them.

Minor Conflicts of Krishna

Krishna as Demon-killer

In the first chapter it was pointed out that in the Vedas, Indra is undisputably the greatest of all gods, and that the most important trait of Vedic Indra is his demon-illing. In the Brahmanic period his

²⁰ Hawley, p. 204.

position as the supreme god was gradually undermined, and Vishnu was seen as the rising power. That Vishnu is a warrior-god, a feature that is not prominent in the Vedas, is magnified in the Puranas, hence it is applied to Krishna as a major avatara.

The Puranas devote much space to magnifying Krishna as a demon-killer. The demons always take the form of an animal, bird, or human. Krishna easily identifies them. That is, when Putana approached him in the form of a woman, he immediately identified it, and closed his eyes, pretending that he was afraid (Bh.P. X.6.8). When another demon approached the cowherd boys in the form of a calf, he recognized it immediately and pointed out to Baladeva, "Here is another demon" (Bh.P. X.11.41).²¹

The demons were no match for Krishna; he disposed of them easily, employing very little strength. Sucking the breasts of Putana and draining her of her life (V.P. V.v) and playing on the upper portion of the breast (Bh.P. X.b.18); slaying the demon Dhenuka's relatives and throwing them on top of the trees (V.P. V.viii), slapping his arms in defiance of Arishta, holding firmly on its horns . . . and wringing its throat as if it were a piece of cloth (V.P. V.xiv); enlarging his arms and thrusting them into the mouth of Kesin and knocking down its teeth (V.P. V.xvi), and similar features are very common in the Puranas. From such events it appears that "mighty Krishna in the form of a child or youth is obviously invincible, and his contests with demons and fiends never pose any real threat to him. Krishna never exerts any measurable strength in

²¹Other examples: Bh.P. X.12.25 the python, V.P. V.vii the serpent, etc.

these battles, but toys with the enemies. For the cowherd boy these battles are another form of his lila, a mere diversion."²²

To fit into the pattern of Krishna as demon-killer, kings and others who confronted him are also portrayed as demons or incarnations of demons. Demon Kalanemi was born as Kamsa, and also other powerful ones born in various royal families . . . and other chiefs of their race (V.P. V.i), Chanura and Musthika are demons (V.P. V.xx), Naraka and Mura are demons (V.P. V.xxix), and so on. Harivamsa LIV 64-77 and LV 6-14 include the entire list of Keshi, asura Kakudumi, Kuvalayapida, Chanura, Musthika, Naraka, Putana, Pralamba, Dhenuka, Jarasandha, and so forth, who, though once demons, were not born again and assailed the earth. Thus Krishna's minor conflicts are brought into the sphere of the battle between god incarnate and demons. The primary context, that is, delivering the Yadus from the tyranny of Kamsa, becomes less important whereas Krishna's combat with and victory over the demons is brought to prominence.

Krishna's Battles and Their Relation to the Doctrine of Reincarnation

Krishna's demon-killing is closely linked with the doctrine of reincarnation. In the Puranas one of the attributes given to Vishnu is demon-killer. According to Vishnu Purana V.i, Kalanemi, who was once killed by Vishnu, and other asuras were born again. Harivamsa LIV and LV also give an elaborate list of such demons. Other examples of battle of Vishnu and his killing of demons and asuras are described elsewhere in

²²David Kingsley, "Without Kṛṣṇa There Is No Song," History of Religions 12 (August 1972):161.

the Puranas, that is, Harivamsa XL-XLII, L, III, and so forth. The demons which Krishna confronted are the same ones which Vishnu had once confronted and defeated in the previous kalpas. Since the universe is governed by cyclic time "the individual soul as microcosm is governed by the same law of cause and effect as is the macrocosm."²³ The same law is applied to demons also. They are not created or born, but re-arise in the cosmic cycle of time. Incarnations of gods "yuge yuge" and reincarnation of demons are a perpetual phenomenon in Hindu mythology. The meaning is that the conflict is bound to continue age after age. According to this doctrine, since nothing new happens in the world, it is simply a repetition of the same primordial archetypes.²⁴

According to the above observation, conflicts between gods and demons, or good and evil, are nothing but a repetition of the past. Thus Krishna's conflicts are essentially removed from the reality of history and presented in a mythological setting.

A further question which arises out of these considerations is the identity of the demons. Vishnu Purana V.1 says that the demons are all but forms of glorious Vishnu. In Vishnu Purana V.xxxiii Krishna says, "the celestials, Asuras, and men and the whole universe are not distinct from us." It is further stated that after the dissolution of the universe at the end of each Yuga Brahma awakes and sets his mind on the work of creation. Then are born the celestial saints, Yakshas, Gandharvas, Pishachas, Serpents, and Rakshasas (HV VIII.33-37). Kees

²³R. C. Zaehner, Hinduism (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 6.

²⁴Mircea Eliade, A History of Religious Ideas, 2 vols, trans. Willard Trask (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 1:90.

W. Bosse has made a study of Vishnu Purana I.5.27-40 and has suggested that this section, which describes the creation of asuras (demons), devas (gods), ptrs (ancestors), and manusyas (men), has a ritualistic purpose. According to this text Brahma (who arises from the navel of Vishnu) brings forth all these four orders of creation by taking on different bodies, varying according to gunas, namely, Tamas (darkness, dullness, blindness, inertia) which denotes the quality of the demonic power, Rajas (activity, passion) which forms part of man's nature, and Sattva (goodness, "real reality") which is the nature of God. According to the nature of Karma beings are recreated at each cosmogony. Hence, demons, gods, ancestors and men are not created, but re-arise.²⁵ The Samkhya system of philosophy had great impact on the doctrine of evolution or emanation found in the Puranas, The Samkhya system recognizes no personal creator. It postulates two ultimate uncaused realities, namely, purusha (spirit) and prakriti (matter). Everything is held to be potential in these two. Nothing is created anew; everything is but a manifestation of or emanation of what has already existed. Purusha implies a plurality of selves or purushas, and each follows an individual carrier when it gets intertwined with Prakriti. Thus prakriti is the seat and seed of all manifestations and is made up of the three gunas referred to above.²⁶ Prakriti has no cause, but it causes effect. It is called "pradhana, since all effects are found on it, Brahma, or that which grows, maya, or that which measures

²⁵ Kees W. Bolle, "Reflection on a Puranic Passage," History of Religions, 2 (1962-63):286-91.

²⁶ Benjamin Walker, The Hindu World, 2 vols. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), 2:344-45.

or limits."²⁷ This is the philosophy of purusha and prakriti which is developed in the Puranas with a theistic emphasis. According to the nature of the two principles, evolution and dissolution of demons and deities are inevitable. As long as Brahma exists, who has no beginning and end, the different gunas imply that conflicting forces in the universe must keep arising, and therefore the need for the incarnation of gods in one form or other also exists. This will continue "ad infinitum."

Krishna's Demon-killing and "Play"

That the conflict lies within the nature of god himself is demonstrated further in the concept of "play" or "sport" or "lila" of Krishna. This motif is found not only in Harivamsa and Vishnu Purana, but also in Bhagavat Purana in a very broad way. Avataras are called "lilavataras" for the first time in Bhagavata Purana (I,2.34; II,6.45; VIII,24.29, and so forth).²⁸ It appears in the fullest sense in Krishnavatara. His battles are described as sports, that is, he approached demon Arishta while smiling in sport (V.P. xiv), sported with Chanura for a long time (V.P. xx), he played upon the upper portion of Putana's breasts (Bh.P. X.6.18), he danced upon Kaliya victoriously (V.P.vii), after killing the wrestlers of Kamsa, Krishna and Balarama danced victoriously on the arena (V.P. xx), and so on. Those who witnessed his actions also described them as sports (Brahma in V.P.vii, cowherds in V.P.xiii, citizens of Mathura in V.P.xx, and so forth). The idea of play or sport is conveyed also through the way he kept the demons engaged in the fights.

²⁷S. Radhakrishnan. Indian Philosophy, 2 vols. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931), 2:260.

²⁸Hospital, p. 286.

"For the cowherd boy the slaying of monstrous demons is an extension of his sports, combat with them is all in a day's play, as it were."²⁹ It was his delight to kill the demons, and he enjoyed doing it.

This phenomenon of "play" conveys the idea that every action of Krishna must be understood as lila or purposeless, spontaneous and continuous action. These actions are not necessarily pragmatically oriented; they are playful.³⁰ His sports with the demons and his other extraordinary feats as explained previously in this chapter illustrate that his "actions are unambiguously playful. His biography in Vrindavana is sheer delight. He scampers and plays continuously. His whole life in Vrindavana is nothing more or less than aimless display."³¹ Since his actions are his own delight, they are also performed for the delight of his devotees.

The concept of "play" is developed most significantly in the Puranas, especially in Bhagavata Purana, in Krishna's circular dance with gopis or cowherd girls. "This is Brindaban lila, the divine sport taking place for a time among the gopis of Brindaban."³² This is a new theme introduced into the Avatara doctrine which does not necessarily demand the context of Krishna's purpose of incarnation in order to slay the demons and Kamsa. The avatara, according to this, does not occur simply to restore righteousness and destroy demons. Passionate love becomes a

²⁹Kingsley, p. 159.

³⁰Ibid., p. 150.

³¹Ibid., p. 153-54.

³²Geoffrey Parrinder, Avatar and Incarnation (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1970), p. 76.

symbol of divine-human relationship.³³ Geoffrey Parrinder in his book gives a sketch of development of Bhakti literature in Vaishnavism following the theme of passionate love between Krishna and the gopis.³⁴ Thus the human soul is involved by the delightful lila of Krishna.

Salvation to Demons

Bhagavata Purana derives a new concept from Krishna's demon-killing. It says that the demon Putana was freed from all material contamination, and her sinful reactions automatically vanished. Because she gave her breast to Krishna, she attained the position of a mother in the transcendental world, thus obtaining the highest perfection (Bh.P. X. 6.34-38). When the demon Aghasura was killed the effulgence which came out from its body entered the body of Krishna. Krishna showed mercy to the serpent Aghasura which was then elevated to being one of his associates and achieved saupya-mukti (Bh.P. X.12.33,38). The same is said of Kamsa. When he was killed by Krishna, he obtained release (Bh. P. XLIV.34.39). The explanations given in Bhagavata Purana are, (a) Putana offered her breast to Krishna, (b) Krishna showed mercy to Aghasura, and (c) Kamsa was always thinking of Krishna even though in enmity. Explanations given in these three instances reflect a main doctrine of Vaishnavism, namely, bhakti (devotion). Even though Putana was about to kill Krishna, she offered something to the deity, which is an act of devotion. So also Kamsa by his thinking of Krishna always, was indirectly meditating upon the deity, and this is interpreted as Bhakti

³³Ibid., pp. 77-78.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 78-82.

(devotion). Aghasura too was elevated by the grace of Krishna. Such a doctrine is devoid of ethical considerations.³⁵

According to the doctrine of the Puranas, liberation does not mean merging of the soul with the supreme soul or the impersonal Brahman; it means freedom from the ever recurring cycle of rebirth. It is emphasized in the Puranas that the individual should strive to free himself from the cosmic cycle of evolution and dissolution through bhakti.

Liberation is to isolate oneself within its own eternal and timeless essence.³⁶ It ultimately means cessation from existence. In the case of the demons which are reported to have attained liberation, it is explained that they reached the highest position in the transcendental world. On the one hand they were freed from the cycle of rebirth, and on the other hand they were not merged into the deity. According to the Puranic doctrine of bhakti and salvation, the highest position to be desired is to be freed from the individual and cosmic cycle of evolution and dissolution, and the way of liberation is bhakti. Through the explanation of the liberation of the demons the Bhagavata Purana insists primarily on the necessity and usefulness of the bhakti of the individual.

Bhagavata Purana has recorded these events in the context of an

³⁵Regarding Kamsa, Bhagavata Puranam says, "The asura king Kamsa, being agitated in mind always used to see the discus-armed Lord Vishnu before him even while drinking, walking or breathing. Therefore, after death at the Lord's hand Kamsa attained the self-same appearance with the Lord which is difficult of being attained." Bh.P. X.XLIV.34-39.

When Sisupala was killed by Krishna, an effulgence emitting out of the body of Sisupala entered into the body of Krishna. It is interpreted that even through enmity Sisupala was always thinking about Krishna, and therefore he was united with Krishna. Hence "meditation is the means of emancipation" (Bh.P. X.LXXIV), The Srimad-Bhagavatam.

³⁶Zaehner, p. 92.

appeal to devotion toward the supreme deity. It exhorts that if even such demons could attain salvation, as Aghasura did, why should not those whose hearts the supreme personality enters, who constantly think of the lord, also attain liberation (Bh.P. X.12.39). Bhagavat Purana X. 6.44 reads, "Any person who hears with faith and devotion about how the Supreme Personality of Godhead, killed Putana, and who thus invests his hearing in such childhood pastimes of Krishna, certainly attains attachment for Govinda, the supreme, original person." In these incidents also one can see the shift of emphasis in the description of the purpose of incarnation, a shift from establishment of righteousness to promotion of Bhakti or devotion.

Principles Emerging from Krishna's Conflicts With Other Major Gods

Krishna as Demon-killer

In the two conflicts with Siva, Krishna emerges as the demon-killer just as in the minor conflicts. Bana is called an asura and king of demons (V.P. xxxiii), a great asura (HV. CCLXIII), and an energetic and haughty demon (HV. IV.8). In the battle, Krishna is reported to have slain the attendant demons (and demi-gods) of Siva. Bana was spared only because of Siva's request. There are two differences between these conflicts and the minor conflicts: (1) Bana, Paundraka and the king of Kasi had the support of Siva, whereas in the minor conflicts no such association of the demons with gods is mentioned. (2) Paundraka challenged the claim of Krishna as Vasudeva, and claimed himself to be the real Vasudeva. As in the minor conflicts Krishna easily killed or overcame the demons and emerged as the victor. The nature of these conflicts

and the way Krishna overcame the demons fits into the motif of his sports or lila.

Krishna as Protector of His Devotees

When the mighty fever which emanated from Siva attacked Balarama he obtained relief by clinging to the body of Krishna (V.P.xxxdii). So also, when the female-like flame attacked Dwaraka, the people fled for protection to Krishna, and the flame was vanquished by him (V.P. V.xxxdii). Explanation is given in this section that Krishna is the refuge of all worlds. This illustrates that Krishna protects his devotees from the oppression of demons as well as of other deities, and those who take refuge in him live safely.

Relief or release in these events does not mean release of the soul from the cycle of Karma and Samsara, but from physical pain and oppression. Nevertheless, the words "clinging to the body of Krishna" and "refuge" have a wider connotation of Bhakti or devotion in Vaishnavism.

As Zaehner has stated:

Every stage in the divine hero's life, however, was utilized to excite the loving devotion of his worshippers. As the divine child he appealed to the maternal instinct, as a youth he became the lover of the soul, as a young warrior the trusted companion who is ever at your side, and in his maturity he became the universal father of all.³⁷

Interests in Theogony As Evidenced in the Conflicts

In chapter one we have observed the development of thought regarding the Hindu pantheon with particular reference to Indra, Siva, Vishnu (Krishna) and Brahma. The process of elevation or degradation of

³⁷Zaehner, p. 166

one deity or the other became further intensified in the Puranas. Puranas fall into three categories, namely, Vaishnava, Saiva and Brahma. Even though all are theistic in nature, each Purana is interested in emphasizing the supremacy of one deity over the other. With the claim of supremacy of one god over others, the conception of trimurthi comes into prominence.³⁸ This may be called a process of synthesis.

In the texts under our purview Krishna confronts two major deities, Indra and Siva. In the two combats between Krishna and Indra, the latter accepts the supremacy of the former. In the first confrontation, when Krishna commanded Indra to send the royal hall Sudharma, Indra yielded immediately without protest. In the battle over the parijatha tree, Indra ultimately accepted the supremacy of Krishna. Krishna also recognized Indra as the god of the celestials and of the universe. Nevertheless, in taking the parijatha tree back to earth, two points are implied: First, since it was claimed that the tree was produced at the churning of the ocean, an event which was presided over by Narayana (Vishnu), Krishna's claim over it was accepted. Secondly, while Indra's authority over the celestials is accepted, Krishna's authority on earth is also accepted by the fact that the Parijatha tree was planted there. Thus, both of these incidents serve the same purpose - to establish the supremacy of Krishna/Vishnu. Krishna's (Vishnu's) priority over Indra is further emphasized by the fact that Krishna addresses Aditi (the mother of Indra) as mother. According to Harivamsa XLII.4-6 Narayana (Vishnu) assumed the form of Hari in the Krita yuga, the first of the yugas, and became son of Aditi. Thus Vishnu's priority over Indra is made clear.

³⁸Radhakrishnan, 2:663-64.

"After dominating the Aryan pantheon for a long time Indra's potentialities were exhausted."³⁹ But the question of who was the greatest among the trimurthi received many different answers. In chapter one we have outlined the different ways in which this question is answered. As Saivism and Vaishnavism grew into two different sects, antagonism between the two seems to have grown also.⁴⁰ In the text under our purview, Vishnu/Krishna is acknowledged as supreme. Siva is portrayed as patron of demons, grants boon to his devotees, and even fights for them. In another place Kalayavana who marched against Krishna is said to have been born by a boon granted to his father by Siva (V.P. V.xdi). In the fight between Krishna and Bana as well as Paundraka Siva is aided by demons. Krishna kills them all except Bana because of Siva's appeal that he had given him a boon. Siva is assisted by Karthikeya and an army of other deities who are all defeated by Krishna. In these battles, Krishna emerges as uncompromisingly superior god. At the same time, a compromising statement is also made at the end of the battle. Krishna told Siva, "Do not consider me as distinct from thee." This statement reflects the synthetic approach of Hinduism.

The fact that Vishnu is portrayed as the supreme god over Siva does not mean that the question is settled forever. It is the picture given in Vaishnava Puranas. In the Saiva Puranas, Siva is portrayed as the supreme god. In Vidyasvarasamhita of Siva Purana Siva is called the highest Brahman (5.13); he is superior to Vishnu and Brahma (ch. 7);

³⁹Sukumari Bhattachari, The Indian Theogony (Cambridge; University Press, 1970), p. 283.

⁴⁰J. Gonda, Visnuism and Sivaism (University of London; Athlone Press, 1970). In pages 87 to 109 the author has outlined the development of the relations between Saivism and Vaishnavism.

Vishnu and Brahma installed Siva and worshiped him (9.2); Vishnu and Brahma made obeisance to Siva (19:28-31); Hari, Brahma, Prajapathi and all other sages attained all they desired by worshiping the earthly phallic symbol of Siva (19:5). Once even Vishnu said to Narada, "Sing a song of noble glory to Siva" (RS., sec. 1, chap. 4.37). According to Siva Purana Vishnu was created by Siva, and even commanded by Siva to do penance, and he did so (RS I.6 of SV). At the coronation of Siva in Kailasa Vishnu and other devas celebrated the occasion, and he was served by every one, lord Vishnu and others. Siva said on that occasion, "Dear sons O Vishnu, Brahma, you are great favorites of mine, entrusted with the work of creation and sustenance of the three worlds. You are the best of the devas." Then he promised them protection and happiness (SV, RS I.21:339-49).

While in Vishnu Purana Brahma appears as the compromiser between Vishnu and Siva, in Siva Purana Brahma and Vishnu view with each other, and it is Siva who effects compromise (SV, VS 6-7; RS I.6 and so on).⁴¹ Similar phenomena are obvious in other Saivite Puranas also. From this observation two points become clear: first, Siva is claimed to be the superior deity, and second, Vishnu and Brahma are accepted as gods by the Saivites, but subject of the authority and supremacy of Siva.

The question of supremacy of one god over the other is resolved in Hinduism only "by the essentially kindred and congenial doctrine of the Trimurthi, the triune unity of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva as aspects and manifestations of the Highest Being which, of course, in Vishvite

⁴¹The Siva Purana, trans. by a board of scholars, ed. by J. L. Sastri (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970). Quotations from Siva Purana (SV) above are taken from this book.

eyes was Viṣṇu, in Sivaite opinion Siva."⁴²

Principles Emerging from Krishna's Major Battles

Major Battles and Puranic Doctrine of Avatara

The analysis of the structure of the minor conflicts within the broader framework of the Puranic doctrine of avatara and of the major battles shows that the pattern followed is essentially the same. It serves as a norm to understand the basic meaning of the battles. They cannot be understood apart from the general framework of the Puranas. That means that in his battles with Indra and with Kaliya the serpent, Krishna engages himself in vanquishing adharma and establishing dharama. At the same time it is to be noted that the context of the major battles has no relevance to the original context of Krishnavatara, namely, atrocities of Kamsa and his associates. However, the citizens of Vraja are rescued from the afflictions of Kaliya and of Indra, and Krishna becomes the refuge of the people, cattle, and so forth.

Mythological Antecedents of the Major Battles

Krishna's battle with the serpent Kaliya has mythological antecedents both in the Vaishnavite and Vedic traditions which involved Vishnu and Indra respectively. According to Bhagavata Purana VIII.2-3 the serpent had seized the elephant which got into the waters of the deep. The elephant implored the help of the High God, and immediately Vishnu appeared on the scene. At the very sight of Vishnu the serpent freed the elephant and did obeisance to Vishnu, along with his wives. The second antecedent appears in Vishnu Purana I.4 which happened at the dawn of

⁴²Gonda, p. 96.

the present kalpa. The earth was suddenly ravished by the serpent. At this point Vishnu took the form of a boar and plunged into the sea. He overcame the serpent who in turn with folded hands implored the mercy of Vishnu. Vishnu gathered the mother earth in his arms and brought her up again to the surface of the sea. The third incident is Krishna's encounter with Kaliya.⁴³

In the first chapter of this paper Indra's supreme place among the Vedic pantheon has been pointed out. Of all the battles of Indra, the most important one is his battle with the dragon Vrtra. In Rigveda numerous passages in which Indra is implored to slay Vrtra as well as praising him for his victory after the battle can be found. Vrtra held back the waters in the hollow of the mountains. Indra laid the serpent low with his thunderbolt, split open his head, and freed the waters. The victory over Vrtra has been seen either as the freeing of the mountain waters, or as the triumph of the sun over the cold which had imprisoned the waters by freezing them, or as rain brought on by thunderstorm. Indra's victory is equivalent to the triumph of life over sterility and death resulting from the captivity of waters by Vrtra.⁴⁴ Because Indra released the waters it became available for civilization.

In Krishna's battle with the serpent both these mythological traditions are combined together. On the one hand, as the supreme avatara of Vishnu he is engaged in the same activity as Vishnu was in the former times, and on the other hand he is revealed as the supreme god who performs the same function which Indra did. Because Indra killed Vrtra

⁴³Zaehner, pp. 77-79.

⁴⁴Eliade, 1:205-6.

became the greatest and the leader of the gods.⁴⁵ In the battle with Kaliya, Krishna, by subduing it and making the water of Jamuna profitable for the people and to the cattle, he is held to be the greatest and supreme god.

In the battles of Krishna under the second category we have observed that Krishna's primacy over other gods, including Indra was accepted. In the "major battle" his primacy is established in an ultimate way. In Rigveda Indra is said to be the winner of cows after defeating the demons, and his releasing the water or light is also interpreted as winning the cows. In Vishnu Purana Krishna disputes his claim as vegetation-god, and asserts that Indra does not have anything to do with cows, and he himself becomes the defender of the cows (called Govinda). Thus he absorbs all those characteristics which were felt to be mythologically potent. The mythological aspect is further strengthened by his claim to be the younger brother of Indra (HV. II:68:33). This means that he is the ultimate fulfillment of the Indra-theophany, and cultically usurps the worship of Indra and the solar gods.⁴⁶ This is confirmed by Indra's recognizing him as Upendra (youth Indra or minor Indra).

Symbolism of Vishnu, Serpent, and Waters, and Krishna's Battle with Kaliya

Several attempts have been made to interpret Krishna's battle with Kaliya. One such interpretation is that the Dasyus or aborigines of India are symbolized by a serpent, and Krishna, the Aryan prince, vanquished and routed them. It is substantiated by the fact that the Nagas

⁴⁵Sukumari, p. 262.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 255, 267, 269, 309-10.

or serpent gods are looked upon as deified rulers of the Nagas, whose racial symbol was the Naga or hooded serpent.⁴⁷ Another interpretation given is that the Krishna cult's victory over an old snake cult may have been the background of the Kaliya tale.⁴⁸ But in the light of the Puranic doctrine of avatara and the mythological antecedents, it can be inferred that it has close connection with the symbolism of the relation between Vishnu, serpent, and waters.

Eliade explains the importance of symbolism of water in religious mythologies and practices, and points out that this phenomenon appears in the Puranic traditions also.⁴⁹ According to Vaishnavite Puranic tradition evolution and devolution of the universe rests with Vishnu who rests on the serpent. At the end of each Kalpa Vishnu consumes all the waters. After consuming the waters and all creation, he once again causes rain and overwhelms the entire world with water. It is the end of an aeon. When the waters come to rest, this single ocean completely covers the three worlds. This period is called Pralaya. Then Vishnu reposes on Sesa in the single ocean. At the close of the Pralaya period which is called the night, Vishnu awakes in the form of Brahma in order to create the universe.⁵⁰ In this mythology the relation between Vishnu, serpent, and the waters is brought out. At the end of each kalpa all things are

⁴⁷Oldfield M. Howey, The Encircled Serpent (London: Rider & Co., 1955), pp. 45, 49.

⁴⁸Sukumari, p. 303.

⁴⁹Mircea Eliade, Patterns of Comparative Religion, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Ward & Sheed, 1958), pp. 60-62.

⁵⁰Dimmit and Van Buitenen, pp. 41-43.

absorbed by Vishnu, and in the interval that elapses before another period of creative activity, he once again reposes upon the serpent Sesa. This is one of the most striking conceptions represented in the sculpture: The Deity floating or moving upon the face of the saters on the coils of the serpent.⁵¹

The meaning of this symbol is that "the anthropomorphic figure, the serpent coils that form his bed, and the water on which this serpent floats, are triune manifestations of this single divine, cosmic substance, the energy underlying and inhabiting all the forms of life."⁵² The multi-headed snake is an animal-counterpart of the sleeper himself. It is named Endless (Ananta), also the Remainder (Sesa). It represents the remainder, that is, that which remained after the three regions had been shaped out of the cosmic waters of the abyss. The three created worlds are afloat upon the waters.⁵³

The course of evolution is subject to setbacks. There is an ever-threatening counter-current working against the trend of evolution. This counter force is represented by the serpent power of the world of abyss. Vishnu, the embodied absolute being, is not different from the serpent principle of water. Yet, he has to interfere with the serpent's action; it must be checked because it endangers further evolution of the universe. In counteracting with the action of the serpent, Vishnu counteracts that

⁵¹Howey, pp. 366, 369.

⁵²Heinrich Zimmer, Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, ed. Joseph Campbell (Washington, D.C.: Pantheon Books, 1946), p. 61.

⁵³Ibid., p. 62.

retrogressing tendency of his own substance as the creator and maintainer.⁵⁴ According to the Puranic doctrine of the nature of the universe this is also an endlessly recurring drama within the substance of Vishnu himself.

Understood in the light of the above observations, in the battle with Kaliya, Krishna is engaged in a cosmic battle. Kaliya causes a setback in creation by poisoning the water of Jamuna. After jumping into the water, encircled by the serpents, Krishna becomes motionless. This is reminiscent of Vishnu resting on the waters on the coils of the serpent in a yogic sleep. Balarama invokes him to act and to kill the serpent. He reminds Krishna that since it is not Pralaya age, it is no time to relax on the serpent's back. He must awake and show his strength.⁵⁵ Immediately Krishna acts. A cosmological battle is thus repeated and the opposing principle is tamed.

The relation between Vishnu, serpent, and the water is further illustrated through the narratives about Balarama, Krishna's half-brother and portion of Vishnu himself. Balarama is called "mighty Sesha," "illimitable Sesha, and so on. (V.P. V.,xxv,xxv). Balarama is identified thus as Sesha the serpent. His character is exhibited particularly in the story of his end. While he was sitting under a tree a huge serpent came out of his mouth and proceeded toward the ocean. The saints and other great serpents sang hymns. The ocean brought offering and worshiped him with all attendant snakes. Thus he entered into the waters of the deep (V.P. V.,xxvii). This shows that "the serpent essence of the divina hero goes back into the formlessness of the abyss - returning

⁵⁴Hawley, p. 209.

⁵⁵Ibid.

into itself after having accomplished the momentary role of companion and supporter to a human avatar."⁵⁶ The other description is his connection with Jamuna (water) as his wife (V.P. V.xxv). In Krishna's battle with the serpent (Sesha) Balarama (who himself is also Sesha) urges Krishna to kill the serpent. Krishna jumps into the water (Jamuna who is Balarama's wife). So, in the end, water and the serpent, which have definite relation to Krishna, are not banished, but saved.⁵⁷

Krishna's Major Battles and Their Soteriological Function

As observed earlier, Krishnavatara is Vishnu's response to the earth's plea against the oppression it suffered under the demons who were born in different forms and in various royal families. Even though the major battles of Krishna do not fit into this context, the pattern and the context of the battles show that Krishna appears as the savior in both instances. By poisoning the water of Jamuna, Kaliya caused great catastrophe, making the life of people, animals, birds, and trees extremely difficult, that is, the catastrophe was cosmic. So also when Indra took revenge on the people with thunder and rain the earth, the points of the horizon, and the sky were all blended into one. It amounts to the creation sinking into the Pralaya stage. Krishna saves creation from sinking into the abyss, and makes earth inhabitable. He makes the efforts of both Kaliya and Indra fruitless by defending the earth and all its creatures from ruin and terror. Since the earth, people, animals, birds, and trees, all enjoyed the benefit of Krishna's victory,

⁵⁶Zimmer, p. 89.

⁵⁷Hawley, pp. 209-10.

and the whole creation was saved from falling into the state of abyss, it can be perceived that the salvation or victories effected by Krishna are cosmic. According to Hawley the two battles have become "two theatres of a single cosmic drama."⁵⁸

Unlike the minor battles, Krishna does not kill or destroy the opponents in the major battles. Taming of both Kaliya and Indra is accomplished with considerable sophistication. He sends Kaliya back to the sea where it belongs. He plays the role of a moderator rather than of an annihilator. He liberates mankind from threat and peril; yet he recognized the right of its destructive power. It was in fact a manifestation of one of the darker aspects of his essence. So there cannot be total elimination once and for all. Kaliya was allowed to stay in a remote sphere, but unchanged in power and nature. He effects a boundary settlement between the serpent and men.⁵⁹ The same motif appears in the Govanrdhana episode also. Krishna tames the waters above by pushing them to the periphery where they belong. He does it by lifting the mountain against the waters.⁶⁰ Thus he tames the waters below and above, and makes the world safe for habitation.

Krishna's Cosmic Victories and Their Relation to Devotion or Bhakti

The concept of devotion (worship or Bhakti) is brought out in these two battles specifically and symbolically. While Krishna was struggling with the serpent all the thoughts of the cowherds of Vraja were concentrated on him (V.P. V.vii); when Gokula was assailed by Indra,

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 211

⁵⁹Zimmer, p. 87.

⁶⁰Hawley, p. 210.

the cattles and the gopas cried to Krishna to save them (HV. LXXIII.12-13). In both instances Krishna became the focus of thought of all creatures. After his victory over the serpent, Kaliya's wives and Kaliya himself worshiped him and pleaded for mercy. After Indra's attempt was made fruitless, he came down, praised and honored Krishna. At the end of each battle the cowherds praised him and chanted his glories, and even embraced him with tears of joy. He had become the object of worship both by his "enemies" as well as of his devotees. Krishna utilizes this occasion also to involve devotion from his devotees (See chap. II, n. 18).

Dancing on the hood of the serpent has deep significance with respect to devotion or bhakti.⁶¹ Hawley makes a point by stating that "in the Pralaya age, Krishna, as Vishnu, merely rested on the serpent Sesa who was his unshaped remainder. Now he dances, and through him the whole world becomes his play (lila)."⁶² His creativity invokes devotion.

The concept of Bhakti finds its fullest expression in the Govardhana episode. As Krishna lifts the mountain to protect the people and the cattle, his arm becomes the staff, the axis, of the mountain. This scene of lifting of the mountain is depicted in various temples (also the dancing Krishna on the serpent's hood).⁶³ By this he identifies himself with the mountain. Such identification is expressed in the most profound way in the institution of Giriyajna replacing Indrayajna. When the people had presented their offerings to the mountain he stood upon the summit of the mountain and exclaimed, "I am the mountain," and partook

⁶¹The meaning of "play" or dance has been explained on pages 70-74 of this paper.

⁶²Hawley, p. 209.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 206, 210.

of the food presented by the cowherds (V.P. V.x). Harivamsa LXXII.23 says that he said, "I am satisfied." Also he said, "If you have compassion for the kine, engage in my worship from today" (HV. LXXII.27). Thus he abrogated the hitherto existing worship of Indra, and instituted his own cult, assuming the place of Indra as the supreme god.

Hawley in his analysis of the sculptures between fifth and fifteenth centuries has pointed out that Krishna's adult life or his reign as king of Dwaraka, or even his confrontation with Kamsa the unrighteous and demonic king (which is the climax both of an old epic tradition as preserved in Harivamsa and of later Puranas) is rarely featured in the sculptures. But sculptures representing his victories at river Jamuna and at Mount Govardhana are the most common ones.⁶⁴ Apart from the fact that Krishna bhakti is featured in these sculptures, these two battles incorporate all the basic motifs of Krishnavatara and are projected as unique ones in the life of Krishna.

General Principles Found in the Conflicts of Krishna

The Doctrine of Incarnations of Vishnu

In chapter one we have observed that one of the cardinal teachings of Bhagavat Gita is the avatara or incarnations of Vishnu. Even though this doctrine appears in the epics, it finds its fullest expression and philosophic treatment in Gita (See Bh.P. 4,4-8; 9.11). The doctrine of avatara is divine descent or appearance in the form of a living being, animal, or human or any other. This is a central feature of the

⁶⁴Hawley, pp. 201-3. Hawley's emphasis is on bhakti aspect. At the same time he does make the point that historical context is overshadowed in these battles, and mythical considerations take precedence over historical facts.

Vaishnavite tradition. It is more important to the worship of Vishnu than the worship of Siva because worship in Saivite tradition is mostly directed to the deity himself, to his consort, or to his symbolic form of the phallus.⁶⁵ The doctrine of the incarnations of Vishnu is fully adumbrated in the Puranas.

Structure of Krishna's Battles in Relation to Bhagavat Gita 4:4-8.

It was pointed out that the life of Krishna as found in the Puranas perfectly fits into the general pattern of incarnations. It follows that each of Krishna's battles serves to unfold the theory of incarnation. We have also observed in the first chapter that the doctrine of incarnation is given a classic definition in Gita 4:4-8. The parallelism between Gita 4:4-8 and the general pattern of incarnation shall be demonstrated as follows:

General structure	Gita 4:4-8
A demon or a company of demons . . . taking control of the world	Whenever there is decline of righteousness
The demons upset dharma	and uprising of unrighteousness (I project myself)
The world . . . are beset by fear	
The gods seek refuge in the supreme person	
The supreme person acts . . . the demons are slaughtered, or at least overcome or tamed	For the protection of the righteous and the destruction of the evil doer

⁶⁵Urmila Bhagowalia, Vaishnavism and Society in North India (New Delhi: Intellectual Publishing House, 1980), pp. 20, 161.

The gods and other creatures are restored . . . there is peace and prosperity again in the world

and for the establishment of the law of righteousness, I appear from age to age

There is no parallel step to the third step in Gita, but the world to be captivated by fear is implicit. The gods seeking refuge in the supreme person in the fourth step is also absent in the Gita passage. This absence must be explained by the fact that the question of superiority of one god over the other is not dealt with in Gita. But the Puranas reflect this question, so obviously there are references to supreme god and other gods. From the comparison of the two, it becomes clear that basically the doctrine of avatara in the Gita is further explained and demonstrated in the Puranas.

The Doctrine of Avatara in the Structure of the Conflicts

Steps one to five are clearly followed in the conflicts of the first and third categories. Even though these steps are not specifically followed in the second category, the Puranas have not failed to demonstrate the point. In Krishna's conflict with Indra in Vishnu Purana V. xxx-xxxI, Aditi the mother of Indra praised him as Vishnu (V.P. V.xxx). Indra after being defeated, praised him saying "thou art engaged in the active preservation of the earth and thou removest the thorns implanted in her bosom."⁶⁶ Siva proclaimed this sport of universal being in

⁶⁶V.P. V.xxxi. Indra expressed the same thing in V.P. V.xii, "Thou . . . has descended upon earth to relieve her of her burden. Seeing Kaliya in Jamuna, Krishna himself said to himself, "I have descended upon the land of the mortals to chastise the wicked, led astray into vicious paths" (V.P. V.vii). When Balarma saw that Krishna was keeping inactive in the river he reminded him of his identity and the purpose of the reincarnation. After Kaliya was defeated his wives begged for mercy and exclaimed, "thou art a portion of that supreme light and the mighty lord." Kaliya also praised him as the supreme lord, and as the incarnate portion of the supreme being (V.P. V.vii).

which "thou assumest the person of god, animals and men is a subordinate attribute of my energy,"⁶⁷

From the above observations it must be concluded that the doctrine of avatara of Vishnu runs through the Puranas as a thread that knits various pieces together.

The Purpose of the Avatara of Krishna

The purpose of avatara is explained in the Gita 4:4-8. The terms used for righteousness and unrighteousness are dharma and adharma respectively. The field in which the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna is called Dharma-kshetra (field of righteousness in Gita 1.1). It means that "the battle of Kurukshetra is symbolical of the struggle to maintain right and destroy evil."⁶⁸ It is mentioned in Harivamsa in the same way: "Whenever virtue suffers deterioration the lord for establishing it, incarnates himself."⁶⁹ The words dharma, right and virtue are used with the same connotation. The theme of destroying adharma and establishing dharma is exemplified in the Puranas.

The avatara of Krishna is a response of Vishnu for the earth's plea that she be relieved of her burden.⁷⁰ The theme of relieving the earth of her burden reoccurs constantly in the Puranas. Parallel statements used in Vishnu Purana are "protecting the universe" (statement by Kaliya's wives in V.vii, by Akruva in V.xvii, by Vasudeva in V.xx),

⁶⁷V.P. xxxiii.

⁶⁸Parrinder, p. 26.

⁶⁹HV, XII.17.

⁷⁰Brahma reported to Vishnu according to V.P. LI that the earth is being oppressed by the powerful king (vs. 16), and being oppressed by the kings it has become exhausted (vs. 25).

"upholding the universe" (statements by Kaliya's wives and by Vasudeva in the sections cited above, and by Narada in V.xvi), "alleviating the distress of the earth" (statement made by Muchukunda in V.xxiii), "preserving the earth" (statement by Akura in V.xxii, by Indra in V.xcxi), "for the behoof of the universe" (by Vasudeva in V.xx), "removing the thorns implanted in the earth's bosom" (by Indra in V.xii), and so forth. In order to accomplish this purpose Krishna should engage himself in destroying the unrighteous or the wicked ones and protect right order of the universe. According to this, his killing or subduing the wicked ones served this purpose of his avatara. After giving the details of all these feats of Krishna, Viishnu Purana states, "In this way, Krishna, aided by Baladeva, destroyed, on behalf of the earth, demons and iniquitous kings, and along with Phalgunas also did he relieve the earth of her burden."⁷¹ Narada had declared, "When the son of Ugrasena, with his followers shall have been slain, then O upholder of the earth, earth's burden will have been lightened by thee" (V.P. V.xvi). According to Vishnu Purana V.xxiv, Yadu race was relieved from all fear of invasion. Thus, the conclusion mentioned in chapter xxvii fits in the complaint of the earth and the response made by Vishnu in his incarnation as Krishna.

However, the purpose of Krishnavatara is given a still broader explanation. According to Vishnu Purana V.xxxvii-xxxviii the annihilation of the Yadhu race also lay within the purpose of his avatara. Krishna declared, "The earth is not relieved of her load until the Yadavas are extirpated. I shall speedily bring it about in my descent" (V.P. xxxvii). Following this statement of Krishna there was a dissension among the

⁷¹V.P. V.xxxvii.

Yadavas, and the entire race perished in the ensuing fight, the city of Dwaraka being inundated by the ocean. Soon after that, Krishna was wounded in the foot by a hunter, and united himself with his own unborn and imperishable spirit. He abandoned his immortal body and reentered his own sphere of Vishnu. With this, the dark age of Kali descended on the earth.⁷² When Vishnu decided to have a portion of himself incarnated, he commanded that all the deities in their own portion should also descend upon the earth and fight with the asuras (V.P. V.i). According to Bhagavat Purana X 1.22 they appeared as sons and grandsons in the family of Yadus. Balarama reminded Krishna, "to share in thy sports as men, the celestials have all descended under a like disguise. . . . Having made all the goddesses descend in Gokula for thy sport . . . these celestials who, as cowherds, are thy friends and kin" (V.P. V.viii). If so, what is the meaning of the destruction of Yadus who were avatars of deities, but who have also become subject to annihilation? This question in relation to the meaning of "age" or "yuga" will be dealt with in the next section.

According to Vaishnavite doctrine of cosmology, each age begins with devolution and evolution of universe. If so, the inundation of Dwaraka is interpreted as the devolution of the universe, and Kali yuga is set in with its destruction. It follows then that the annihilation of Yadus and the destruction of Dwaraka are also set into the mythological pattern.

⁷²V.P. V.xcvi.

The Doctrine of the "Yugas" (ages) in
Relation to Avatara

The doctrine of yuga is closely related to that of avatara. In Gita 4.8 Krishna declared that he come into being age after age (yuga-yuga) which means that the lord becomes incarnate whenever he chooses, and that his avatars are not confined to any particular age.⁷³

Krishnavatara is believed to have taken place at the close of Dvapara age (HV. L) and as Krishna left this world Kali yuga has set in. The age in which we live is believed to be the kali yuga which is to be followed by the Advent of Kalkin who will destroy the old order and inaugurate the new order.⁷⁴

According to Hindu mythologies, each world cycle is subdivided into four yugas, namely, Krita, Treta, Dvapara, and Kali. Krita age (krita literally means "done, made, accomplished, perfect") is considered to be the most perfect age when dharma is practiced perfectly. This is followed by Treta yuga in which only three-fourths of the perfect condition of Krita yuga will remain. In the Dvapara yuga which follows, only two of the four perfect quarters of Krita yuga will be effective. The Kali yuga, the dark age subsists on one-fourth of the full strength of Dharma. The complete cycle of these four yugas is called Maha Yuga (the Great Yuga). One thousand mahayugas - that is, 4,320,000,000 years of hyman reckoning constitute a single day of Brahma, a single kalpa. Each kalpa is subdivided into fourteen Manvantaras, or Manu-intervals. This is the seventh manvantara of the present day of Brahma, seven more being due to pass before the day comes to its close. Each day of Brahma begins

⁷³Farrinder, p. 56.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 122.

with creation or evolution, the emanation of the universe out of divine and terminates with dissolution and reabsorption, merging back into the Absolute.⁷⁵

According to the doctrine of "yugas" the progress and decline of each kalpa is marked by events that reoccur in rotating cycles. At the conclusion of each Yuga all spheres of being, including those of the highest beings, get dissolved or absorbed into eternal being.⁷⁶ After the dissolution the process of new emanation or evolution begins. Thus history becomes cyclical. In this process of continuous history, that is, continuous reoccurring of history, incarnations of Vishnu the supreme being occur in either human or animal form for the purpose of redeeming the world. In the light of the doctrine of the yugas and exemplified specifically in the destruction of the Yadus and Dwaraka, as well as in the salvation of demons, redemption or salvation can mean dissolution, emancipation, extinction or absorption.

The process of avatara repeats itself as the universe reemerges. This implies that there cannot be an end to the process of incarnation. Not only the supreme being, but also other deities, demons and human beings are caught up in the constantly recurring process of dissolution and evolution.

Summary and Conclusions

The sublimation of Krishna as the supreme deity (as Vishnu or his supreme avatara) is a product of a gradual and long process in

⁷⁵Zimmer, pp. 13-17. Mircea Eliade, Images and Symbols, trans. Philip Mariet (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961), pp. 62-65.

⁷⁶Zimmer, p. 19.

Vaishnavite theology. In the course of its development, it had to cope or combat with the major deities of the Vedic pantheon, as well as the other deities of the trinity (Trimurthi). This is achieved either by evaluation of other deities, by absorption of their qualities and functions by Vishnu/Krishna, or by Krishna/Vishnu emerging as victor in his combat with other deities. Anecdotes of theogony play a prominent role in this process.

Bhagavat Gita gives the classical and philosophic definition of the meaning and purpose of the avatara of Krishna (or avatara's of Vishnu), which is one of the cardinal doctrines of Vaishnavism. This doctrine is exemplified in its fullest form in the Puranas as evidenced in the life of Krishna.

The immediate context of Krishnavatara is the atrocities meted out by the usurper and unrighteous king Kamsa (and his associates), and the purpose of Vishnu's descent as Krishna is to destroy Kamsa (and his associates), and to free the tribe of Yadus from oppression. This is the kernel of Vishnu Purana and Harivamsa. Nevertheless, the meaning of salvation takes on a cosmic perspective in the Puranas, namely, relief of the earth from its burden. The cosmic perspective of redemption is presented in different angles. First, the entire creation enjoys the benefit of Krishna's victories. Second, the battles in which he engages himself are interpreted as cosmic battles. Third, the cosmic redemption implies devolution and evolution of the universe. Therefore, the doctrines of salvation and cosmology in Vaishnavism are inextricably connected with the doctrine of cosmogony.

The same principle is applicable also to the salvation of individual souls whenever it occurs in the Puranas. Since individual souls are

but projections of Brahma, taking upon themselves different qualities (gunas), their destinies are determined by the cosmic process of devolution and evolution. Salvation of individual souls, either of men or of demons, is interpreted within the dialective of cosmogony. Hence, salvation becomes effectively devoid of ethical consideration.

Interlinked with the Vaishnavite doctrine of avatara, cosmology, and cosmogony is the doctrine of reincarnation of souls, demons and deities. Whatever happens is but a repetition of the past. This underscores the permanent nature of evil in the universe, and the cosmic cycle of the effect of Karma. No one is exempt from this process, not even gods.

The conflicts of Krishna are presented not as isolated phenomena but as continuation of events recurring age after age. Hence, the conflicts, even though placed in a historical context, are shifted from the realm of history to the realm of mythology. Conflicts of the supreme deity with the demonic forces which upset the stability of the universe are bound to occur age after age. Moreover, conflicts are explained as a phenomenon within the nature of god himself; it is a conflict between the progressive and regressive qualities within his own self. Thus in the conflicts of Krishna mythological interests take precedence over historical realities, and history is subsumed under mythology.

Since the human soul is wrapped up in the cosmic cycle of devolution and evolution which is an eternal process, it cannot shake off the fetters of this eternal process upon itself. The only recourse left for man is to take refuge in the supreme being who is Krishna/Vishnu according to Vaishnavite doctrine. The supreme being acts freely, he delights

in his actions, and the whole universe becomes his delight. The way open to human beings is to participate in his delights singing his praises. The Puranas give great emphasis on the devotional or bhakti aspect which is the only way open to man. The dialectic of mythology is used for the promotion of devotion or bhakti toward the supreme being.

CHAPTER III

THE CONFLICT MOTIF IN THE CANAANITE MYTHO-POETIC LITERATURE COMPARED TO CONFLICTS OF KRISHNA

The conflict motif is a phenomenon which does not belong exclusively to Hinduism. Beliefs and religious practices of any cultural area are imbedded in the mythologies and epics of that particular region. An attempt will be made in this chapter to elucidate the basic concepts found in the stories of conflicts between the deities in the Canaanite religion and to compare them with those elucidated from Krishna mythology.

A survey of the history of Israel will plainly show that the people of Israel did not emerge from a vacuum, or its history and culture developed in isolation. Its rootage lay in Mesopotamia, and (humanly speaking) its life and culture were influenced and shaped by its experience in and encounter with Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the neighboring countries. "But it was on Syro-Palestinian soil that Israel's history and religion were cultivated, and that environment had an influence upon her, both by Israel's reaction against and her accommodation to the phenomena which she met in her surroundings."¹ The prophetic movement in Israel is a clear testimony to this factor. As

¹Patrick B. Miller, The Divine Warrior in Early Israel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 8-9.

Arvid Kapelrud has pointed out, "the religion of Israel and that of ancient Canaan had their own distinctive character and characteristics . . . but this does not mean that the two religions in question existed in hermetically sealed, air-tight compartments. Both belonged to more or less the same cultural environment, and they were inevitably influenced by it."² A study of the conflict motif in Canaanite religion will help to understand how the Old Testament faith also stood sharply distinguished from the Canaanite religion.

Conflict Motif in Canaanite Religious Literature

Sources

The one source other than the Old Testament prior to the discovery of the Ugaritic texts which gives a brief picture of the Canaanite religion is the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea (A.D. 263-340). His account was dependent on Philo of Byblus, who in turn, was quoting a more or less legendary figure Sanchuniathon of Phoenicia.³ But it is the texts which were found in the Northern Syrian tell of Ras Shamra, ancient Ugarit, which especially shed significant light on the religion and culture of Palestine.⁴

William Albright has observed that it is not clear to what extent Ugarit was part of Canaan, although there are passages which seem to

²Arvid S. Kapelrud, The Ras Shamra Discoveries and the Old Testament, trans. G. W. Anderson (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), p. 29.

³Ibid., p. 17, quoting O. Eissfeldt's Tauutos and Sanchujaton (Berlin: n.p., 1952), p. 25-26.

⁴Walter Beyerlin, Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1978), p. 185.

distinguish sharply between Canaan and Ugarit. However, he also adds that the religion of the literature of Ugarit is virtually identical with the religion of the North-Western Semites throughout Palestine and Syria. The differences found are mostly due to admixture of linguistic elements and foreign myths.⁵ It should be noticed also that the religion of Canaan and its mythological roots were part of the general culture of the ancient Near East, which had a certain basic homogeneity, influenced by the factors of geographical proximity, linguistic similarities, and cultural interpretation and influence. Nevertheless, Canaanite religion grew out of its own soil as an independent entity while at the same time borrowing from and assimilating neighboring religions.⁶

It is claimed that "during the nearly continuous excavations conducted at Ugarit since 1929, thousands of texts have been found."⁷ Voluminous books and monographs have appeared on the subject matters of the texts of the Ugaritic literature, its language, grammar, interpretations of myths and legends, and so forth.⁸ It is obvious that there is no unanimity among scholars on such subjects. It is partly also due to the fact that a clear understanding of the texts is still far from reach,

⁵William Maxwell Albright, Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1968, p. 116.

⁶Miller, p. 8.

⁷Michael David Coogan, Stories from Ancient Canaan (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), p. 10.

⁸Kapelrud, pp. 17-28. In this section of his book he has given a brief summary of the literature produced since 1929, and also points to the different approaches made by different scholars.

and the fragmentary nature of the texts discovered.⁹ Nevertheless, an analysis of the conflicts between the deities of the Ugaritic texts will be undertaken in this section on the basis of the Baal myth. Relevant references will be made from other sections when and if necessary. G. R. Driver has observed that none of the fragments of the Baal myth is perfect, some are badly damaged, and in most cases either the top or bottom or both are destroyed. This implies that the catch-links are lost. Therefore, certainty of sequence is impossible to ascertain.¹⁰ Basically the translation of the text by H. L. Ginsberg will be used in this section,¹¹ and translations by others also will be consulted at important points.

Major Deities Involved in The Conflicts in Baal Myth

Michael Dahood has pointed out that according to the studies in the Ugaritic texts made so far, there are some 250 gods in the Ugaritic pantheon.¹² But the deities who play key roles in the conflicts are

⁹U. Cassuto, "Baal and Mot in the Ugaritic Texts," Israel Exploration Journal, 12 (1962):78-79. Evidence of such observations will become obvious from the quotations which will be made in the following pages.

¹⁰G. R. Driver, Canaanite Myths and Legends (Edinburg: T & T. Clark, 1956), pp. 10-11. In the introductory section of his book in pp. 1-24 he has also graphically pointed to the "lost" sections in the Ugaritic texts.

¹¹"Ugaritic Myths, Epics, and Legends," trans. H. L. Ginsberg, in Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, 2nd ed., ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), pp. 128-55.

¹²Michael Dahood, "Ebla, Ugarit and the Old Testament," in Supplement to Vetus Testamentum, ed. G. W. Anderson et al (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), pp. 27-28.

El, Baal, Anath, Asherah (Athirat), Yamm and Mot. Others who play some significant roles are Astarte, Athart, Kother wa-Khasis, and Shapeh. Other deities mentioned do not play any significant role in the conflicts.

El, the Ugaritic Pantheon Head

Marvin Pope has written extensively about El in his book El in the Ugaritic Texts. According to the texts of the myth El is the head of the Ugaritic pantheon. He is referred to as king and King, Father of years. He is Bull (a common symbol of masculine fertility), he is wise, beneficent and holy who expresses joy as well as sorrow, but never gets angry, he is father of men and gods, creator of creatures, he resides in aqueous and subterranean environs, and so forth.¹³

According to the text studied so far, El does not seem to be a fierce warrior; there are no references to his warlike attributes. He is always submissive: when Yamm sent his messengers to El to demand the surrender of Baal, the gods, including El, lowered their heads down on their knees. El acquiesced to Yamm's demand (III AB B 10-40). It is obvious that El was not the master of the situation, but it was out of his control. Anath gets permission from El to build a house for Baal by threat of personal violence. She is reported to have said,

"He'll heed me . . .
I'll fell him like a lamb to the ground,
Make his gray hair flow with blood . . .
Rejoice not . . .
I'll make thy gray hair flow (with blood)
The gray hair of thy beard with gore . . ." (V AB E 9-11, 27-37).

¹³Marvin H. Pope, "El in the Ugaritic Texts," in Supplement to Vetus Testamentum, ed. G. W. Anderson et al (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), pp. 27-28.

On another occasion Anath got her way by threatening her father to acquire Aqhat's bow (III D VI 11-20). When Asherah approached El for the purpose of getting his permission to build the house for Baal, she succeeded through intrigue and flattery (II AB IV-V 40-80). When El heard about the death of Baal in the hands of Mot, he descended from the throne, sat on the ground and mourned for Baal (I AB V). It shows that El was not in a position to save Baal or powerful enough to control the situations which threatened his position or affected his passions. He appears merely as a compassionate father.

In the mythological texts it appears that El kept himself aloof and remote from the center of activity. Baal seems to be the rising young God. The actual domination of the world appears to have been divided between Baal in the heavens and on the earth's surface. Mot in the netherworld, and Yamm in the sea. This phenomenon is parallel to the Greek legends about Kronos who was banished by his sons Zeus, Hades, and Poseidon, and the Hurrian myth of Kumarbi who disposed his father Anu.¹⁴ Such development may be explained as the emergence of younger gods over the "olden gods."¹⁵

But in the Canaanite lore, El remained the head of the pantheon, and judge over the council of gods. He was ousted by Baal. He is crown

¹⁴Pope, pp. 29-32, and U. Cassuto, The Goddess Anath, trans. from Hebrew by Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1971), pp. 55-57.

¹⁵Frank Moore Cross, "The Olden Gods" in "Ancient Near Eastern Creation Myths," in Magnalia Dei The Mighty Acts of God (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1976), pp. 329-36. In this paper Cross points out that the olden gods in other religions may be described in some sense as "dead" gods. The dead gods do not cease to exist or function. They are placed in the netherworld. He cites examples. But El is neither dead nor pushed to the netherworld.

prince or co-regent, the young warrior and musician whom El associates in the rule. Astarte, El's mistress, forms the divine triad. So, El remained at the head of the pantheon and ruled from his seat on the mount of the assembly. In spite of the reduced role, El still presided over the assembly of gods, he was consulted by other deities, made sanctions, and even gave permission to Anath to take revenge on Aqhat. It was El who cured Keret. These examples show that he still held a certain degree of authority and power. A good example of this occurs when during the course of the fight between Baal and Mot, Shapsh cried,

Harken, now, Godly Mot,
 Why striv'st thou with Puissant Baal, Why?
 Should Bull El, thy father hear thee,
 He'll pull out thy dwelling's pillars.
 Overturn thy throne of kingship,
 Break thy staff of dominion.

Sore afraid was Godly Mot,
 Filled with dread . . . (I AB VI 24-31).

This shows that when Shapsh threatened Mot with El's disfavor, Mot was afraid of his hostility. But "El's power is confined largely to the matter of dispensation of kingdom, and Mot's fear was thus not of battle with him but of loss of his rule."¹⁶ From these observations it can be concluded that El was the "executive" or titular head of the Ugaritic pantheon, but he is essentially a quiescent figure whose power was limited¹⁷ and who remained merely as the ceremonial head of the pantheon without much power.¹⁸

¹⁶Miller, p. 49.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 48.

¹⁸Coogan, p. 12.

Baal

The god who plays the most prominent part in the Ugaritic texts is Baal. The name Baal is essentially an appellation which means "lord" or "owner."¹⁹ U. Cassuto suggests that before the Ugaritic poems were written the name "Baal" had become the fixed designation of a particular deity named Hadad or Had, the storm god who was the leading deity in the Canaanite pantheon.²⁰ When the house for Baal was completed and he was installed in it, it is stated:

Baal gives forth his holy voice

• • •

Baal's enemies take to the woods

Hadad's foes to the sides of the mountain (II AB VII 29-30).

Here, Baal and Hadad appear to be identical. There are several other passages to the texts where this is the case (IV AB II 1-5; II AB VI 39-40, and so forth). "It looks, therefore, as if Baal, 'the lord,' is the Canaanites' name for the god who among the Arameans and in Mesopotamia is called Hada (Adad)."²¹ Hadad is a thunder god, and therefore Baal is a thunder god. Such observation fits in with his title "rider of the clouds" (II AB III 10; IV-V 110-20, and so on). Thus he is not only the thunder god, but also rain god. When he acquires his temple,

¹⁹ Helmer Ringgren, Religions of the Ancient Near East, trans. John Sturdy (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), p. 131.

²⁰ Cassuto, The Goddess Anath, p. 59. Note: Albright suggests that Baal's personal name was Hadad originally and that the name Baal became applied to Hadad probably during the Hyksos period (17th to 16th century B.C.). Albright, p. 124.

²¹ Ringgren, p. 132.

The seasons of his rains will Baal observe,
 The seasons of . . . with snow
 And (he will) peal his thunder in the clouds,
 Flashing his lightnings to the earth (II AB IV-V 68-71).

These lines are translated by Ringgren as follows:

He will give abundance of rain,
 abundance of moisture with snow,
 he will utter his voice in the clouds
 and his flashings and lightnings on the earth.²²

Thus, Baal's connection with rain and thunder on the one hand, and fertility on the other appears in the text. A similar passage in Keret C III 6-8 reads that when a sacrifice was offered to Baal

Unto the earth Baal rains,
 And unto the fields rain 'Aliyy²³
 Sweet to the earth is Baal's rain,
 And to the field the rain of "Aliyy.

When Baal was slain by Mot and descended into the underworld, the earth ceased to give its produce. Only when he was restored did the abundance of oil and honey returned to the earth (I AB III 6-13).

Baal's connection with fertility is further illustrated by the following episode. When he was ordered to descend into the underworld by Mot, he obeyed. On his way to the netherworld he made love to a cow-calf (Baal is called "Bull" in the texts). The cow-calf conceived and gave birth to Math (I AB V 10-22).²⁴ This is considered to be an act of

²²Ibid., p. 132.

²³Ibid., p. 132. Aliyy means "most high" according to Ringgren's translation. Cf. "Aliyan" below. Cf. also Elyon, Al of Yahweh in Bible.

²⁴The word "mt" is translated differently by different scholars: Gordon simply says "mt." Coogan on page 106 translates it as "lord." Beyerlin on page 215 translates as "son." Driver on page 107 translates as "boy."

See Cyrus H. Gordon, Ugarit and Minoan Crete (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1966), p. 67.

fertility. It also shows that his activity will survive even during the period of his stay in the underworld. Walter Beyerlin suggests that it is associated with seasons. "The period immediately before the end of the rains and the withering of the vegetation is the time for mating cattle among Syrian peasants."²⁵ At another stage, Baal mates with Anath, and she bears a son for Baal. "A buffalo is born to Baal" (IV AB & RS 319). Ginsberg points out that the text in this section is not quite clear and so poorly broken, that it is not entirely clear whether or not Anath herself was the bovine mother of the buffalo.²⁶ But the time fits well into the quality of Baal as observed in the preceding passages. According to Casuto, this section illustrates that the young of the herd and flock were deemed to depend on Baal's influence.²⁷

When Daniel prayed for a son, it was Baal who presented his prayer before the father of gods and pleaded for Daniel (Aqhat AT 17-40). Baal appears here as the mediator of life. From these illustrations it appears that Baal was considered to be the god of life, the source of life for human and divine world, the animal world, and that of vegetation. He declares:

I alone will have sway over the gods
 So that gods and men may feed,
 Who satisfies the multitudes of the earth (II AB VII 49-50).

This statement sums up Baal's connection with fertility.

Another aspect of Baal stressed in the Ugaritic texts is his power and war-like nature. He is often called Aliyan Baal (Ginsberg in most places has translated it as "Puissant Baal"), which means "the

²⁵Beyerlin, p. 215.

²⁶Ginsberg, p. 142.

²⁷Cassuto, The Goddess Anath, p. 60.

mighty," "the strong."²⁸ He is also called the "powerful hero" (I AB II 11-20; V AB C 10, and so forth), "mighty warrior" (II AB VIII 30-33), As mentioned earlier, when he was established in his house, his enemies fled before him. From these references it becomes obvious that he was considered to be a warrior. His war-like character will be discussed later in this section.

The third main aspect of Baal is his superiority over the other gods. As mentioned earlier, even though El was still the nominal head of the Ugaritic pantheon, Baal is seen as the rising young god. Baal declared, after his victory over Mot, "I alone will have sway over the gods." Anath declared, "Our king is Puissant Baal, our ruler second to none" (V AB III-IV 20, 29). Besides Anath, we also read in the text that other gods like Shapsh, Kothar wa-Khasis, Astarte, Ashera, and others, also joined him in his fight with the Sea and Mot as well as in his effort to build a house or palace for himself. This is similar to the rise of Marduk in Mesopotamian mythology, who had the support of other deities, and acknowledged as the leader.²⁹

Baal's terrestrial home was on Mount Zaphon, and because of this association he is called Baal-Zaphon (I AB VI 12; II AB IV-V 19, and so forth). While his terrestrial home was on Mount Zaphon, he had a palace or temple in heaven. Similarly, the Greek gods occupied Olympus as their terrestrial home, but it was understood at the same time that their home

²⁸Ibid., p. 59.

²⁹Miller, p. 24-25. Miller in these pages demonstrates the parallels between Enuma elish and the Baal myth on points such as the democratic nature of the divine assembly in which the leader of the war was appointed, preparations for the war on both sides, the battle, building of the temple, and so forth.

was also in heaven.³⁰ Especially, heaven is the site for the assembly of gods.

Anath

Anath is the most active and powerful among the goddesses of the Ugaritic texts. "She had an important role in Egypt through the Hyksos. On an Egyptian stele from Beth-Sheen she is called "the queen of heaven, the mistress of the gods."³¹ She is also a very loyal sister of Baal. She supports him in the cause of building a house for him and even goes to the extent of threatening her father to achieve it, and takes active part in Baal's struggle against Mot.

She appears not only as Baal's sister, but also as his consort. Earlier reference was made about her giving birth to a buffalo by Baal. In I AB V 17-22, the animal with which Baal had intercourse is termed as ^cglt, "a female calf" and prt, "a heifer." On the basis of a corresponding Egyptian designation of Anath for heifer, Albright suggests that the heifer mentioned in the said passage was Anath.³² In Keret B II 27-29 she appears as a wet-nurse, along with Asherah, who gives suck to the king's child. Thus she is associated with fertility, and was celebrated as fertility goddess. The designation btlit (virgin) for Anath does not

³⁰Albright, pp. 125, 127-28.

³¹Ringgren, p. 142.

³²Albright, p. 128. Ringgren notes that "there are texts, unfortunately very fragmentary, which appears to show her in a sexual function. One text tells of how she sings of her love for Baal, but the text ends abruptly where we should have expected the words of the song" (Ringgren, p. 143).

contradict with the fertility aspect; it rather stresses her youthfulness, and power of life and regeneration.³³

The other prominent feature of Anath is her war-like nature. She is a mighty warrior who devastates her enemies.

In the Aqhat text she is seized by a desire to possess Aqhat's bow. In the poems of Baal cycle she laments and buries her dead brother, but then goes on a rampage, and kills Mot, the slayer of Baal. Another scene shows her fighting against enemies and wading through their blood. She is portrayed with helmet, battle-axe, and spear.³⁴

Even in the account of Anath's war-like nature, her connection with fertility is brought out. In V AB B after her victory over the enemies,

She gathers water and washes
With dew of heaven
Rain of the Rider of the Clouds

The dew that the heavens pour
(The rain) that the stars pour
The anhb-animals leap (by the thousand acres)
The Zub-fish in the sea (by the myriad of hectares) (Gordon 'nt II
35-40)

Thus "the victory of Anath results in dew and rain, fertility of the soil, and abundance of game and fish. The main goal of this mythological literature is to secure life and fertility and to avert death and sterility.³⁵ From the above observation it is evident that Anath appears both as a fertility goddess, and as a war goddess. Yet the fertility aspect seems dominant.

Asherah (Athirat)

Next to Anath, Asherah (Athirat) plays an important role. She

³³ Ringgren, p. 142.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 143.

³⁵ Gordon, p. 52.

is the consort of El, and the highest goddess in the Ugaritic texts. The most common epithet used for her is rbt 'atrt Yam, which means "lady Asherah of the Sea" (II AB I 10-22). She is qnyt 'ilm, "the creator or progenitress of gods" (II AB III 27, 30-35), the mother of the gods (II AB I 5-9). In the epic of Keret she is designated as 'atrt Srm and 'ilt Sdynm which means Asherah of the Tyrians and the goddess of Sidonians respectively. This means that she was worshiped in Tyre and Sidon also.³⁶ According to Albright, in some earlier myth she was thought to have destroyed the Sea Dragon, thus making it possible for El to create the earth.³⁷

With respect to Asherah's relationship with Baal there are two pictures represented in the myth. According to II AB, Anath and Baal seek the help of Ashera to get El's permission to build the house for Baal. So, she goes to El, flatters him, and gets permission in favor of Baal. On another occasion when Baal was slain by Mot, Anath cried. "Now let Asherah rejoice, and her sons" (I AB I 40). The story continues in that Ashera proposed that her son Ashtar be installed as king in the place of Baal. She does not herself engage directly in any battles.

Astarte

The figure Astarte appears very rarely in the myth. "Anath steals the show."³⁸ Astarte takes part in the assembly of gods, and when Baal attempts to strike the messengers of Yamm she stops him from

³⁶Cassuto, *The Goddess Anath*, p. 58.

³⁷Albright, p. 121.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 132.

doing it (III AB B 40-45). According to Cyrus Gordon's translation, Anath and Astarte together seem to have stopped him (Gordon 137.40). At a later stage when Baal was about to strike Yamm she rebuked Baal (III AB A 25-30). An epithet of Sm b'l, "the name of Baal" is used for Astarte in a Phoenician inscription.³⁹ These references indicate her close connection with Baal. Since Baal is a fertility god it should be assumed that Astarte is also a goddess connected with fertility. According to Philo of Byblos, she wore the horns of the bull as a symbol of dominion, and in another instance she carries a crown with decorations like plums, which are fertility symbols. Like the Assyrian and Babylonian goddess of love and fertility, and of war.⁴⁰

Other deities who play minor roles in the mythology are Astar who was made king in the abortive attempt to replace Baal, Kothar wa-Khasis who gave two clubs to Baal to strike Yamm, and who was summoned to build the house for Baal and completes it, as well as Shapsh (sun) who assists Anath in her search for Baal and restoration of his body after he was slain by Mot, and also during the fight between Baal and Mot terrifies the latter with the displeasure of Baal and urges him to submit to Baal. Others play less significant roles. The ones who play important roles are Yamm and Mot who will be discussed below.

Conflicts of Baal and Anath with Yamm and Mot

"The activities of the god Ba'l and the goddess "Anat, the warrior deities par excellence in the Ugaritic texts, are intimately related

³⁹ Ringgren, p. 141.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

and must be examined together. At the center of their activities is a series of battles."⁴¹ There is no consensus among scholars as to the sequence of events in the conflicts. As mentioned earlier, it is partly due to the fragmentary nature of the texts discovered and the loss of sections of fragments. This paper does not intend to propose a new theory on this subject. An attempt will be made to examine the major themes which run through the conflicts.

The first major conflict which one comes across is the one between Baal and Yamm (Sea) (III AB B and A). Yamm is introduced as El's son, and prince Yamm. In the second major battle, the battle with Mot, Mot is called "divine Mot," (II AB VII 40), "El's darling" (II AB VII 40), "El's beloved" (II AB VIII 20-30). This indicates that the battles are between the members of the family of gods. This observation is important for the understanding of the nature and meaning of the battles. It is the members of the same family who take opposite sides in the battles.

Yamm is called Judge Nahar. Nahar means swell, wave, river, or sea. The meaning "river" seems appropriate.⁴² The battle between Baal and Yamm begins with the latter sending messengers to the divine assembly held at the tabernacle of El, located at the source of double deep, at the cosmic mountain, that is at the gates to heaven and the entry into the abyss. He demands that Baal be handed over to him as a captive. The council is cowed and terrified. In spite of Baal's protest and rebuke, El declares that Baal shall be Yamm's captive. Accordingly, Baal becomes captive under the sway of Yamm. Soon after, Kother wa-Khasis predicts victory of Baal over Yamm and he fashions two clubs for Baal.

⁴¹Miller, p. 24.

⁴²Beyerlin, p. 197.

With those two clubs Baal overcomes Yamm.⁴³ The end of the text is incomplete. But it seems to suggest that Baal slew or at least wished to slay Yamm. But Ashtoreth (Astarte), and possibly also Anath, intervened and suggested that Yamm should only be held captive; he must only be defeated and confined to his proper sphere, the Seas.⁴⁴

In another fragment, according to the message sent by Mot to Baal, the latter had defeated

Lotan, the serpent slant,
the serpent tortuous
Shalyat of the seven head (I AB I).

The "serpent slant" is translated by Gordon as the "evil serpent" (67:I: 1), and as "swift serpent" by Helmer Ringgren (p. 148). Serpent tortuous is translated by Gordon in the same passage as "crooked serpent" and by Ringgren as "coiled serpent." Shalyat is translated by Gordon as "the mighty one," and as "the tyrant" by Ringgren. The differences in translation illustrate the difference in understanding of the meaning of the passage with reference to the identity of the enemy (or enemies) defeated by Baal. The question involved is, whether the two references made above are to the same battle or to different ones. The question is further complicated by Anath's statement in V AB D 35-40:

Crushed I not El's beloved Yamm?
Destroyed I not El's Flood Rabbim (Gordon: 'nt III:35-36 "tannin.")
Did I not pray, muzzle the dragon?
I did crush the crooked serpent,
Shalyat the seven-headed . . .

Hence, the question raised becomes three-fold: first, the connection

⁴³Frank Moore Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 113-16. Summary taken from this section.

⁴⁴Beyerlin, p. 97, and Ringgren, pp. 145-46.

between the Sea, Lotan (Leviathan, Dragon, and Tannim (or Rabbim) - whether they refer to the same phenomenon or different ones; second, the connection between the two accounts of Baal's victory, and, third, the role of Anath in the battles. Scholars are divided in their opinions on this subject. Cross suggests that since there is full identification between Yamm and the dragon in Is. 27:1 and 51:9-11, it can easily be assumed that the myth of Lotan, the sea dragon is a variant of the tale of Yam-Nahar. According to his interpretation Yam-Nahar, Lotan, the sea dragon, and the seven-headed serpent refer to the same thing.⁴⁵ As pointed out earlier, the term "tannin" is preferred to "Rabbim" by few scholars. In Ps. 74:13 and Job 7:12 "tannin" appears as a sea monster. So, some suggest that all three accounts refer to the same battle and that the various names mentioned in these texts also mean the same thing.⁴⁶ Cassuto, however, seems to suggest that these monsters mentioned in the texts concerned are different when he describes them as "assistants of Mot who appear in the Ugaritic texts."⁴⁷ Patrick Miller suggests that the creatures mentioned are not all the same, and that "there is nothing intrinsically wrong with the idea that Ba'l and 'Anat fought several battles, some of which may have been related to one another."⁴⁸ Even though the connections between the three accounts remain unsettled, the conceptual unity among them may be clearly observed. As observed previously in this chapter, the deities involved on one side represent

⁴⁵Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, p. 120. Cross observes that "variations and unevenness in oral cycles of myth and epic are not surprising; indeed they are characteristic of the genre."

⁴⁶Miller, p. 24.

⁴⁷Cassuto, "Baal and Mot," p. 84.

⁴⁸Miller, p. 28.

fertility, while the others will naturally mean those opposed to fertility and normalcy of life; hence victory of Baal shall have to be understood in this light.

The victory of Baal over Yamm is followed by the building of the home for Baal. Here again the nature of the text makes it hard to decide about a clear-cut sequence of events. According to one account, Anath plays the key role in getting El's permission (V AB B-E), but according to another account Ashera takes the lead (II AB I-VII). However, there is little doubt that the establishment of a house signifies establishment of "the rule of the warrior-king of the gods."⁴⁹

After establishing himself in his temple, Baal uttered his voice, and his enemies fled to the woods and mountains, and trembled before him. Then he declared:

The earth my dominion shall . . .
Tribute I'll not send to Divine Mot . . .

I alone will have sway o'er the gods
So that gods and men may feed,
Who satisfies the multitude of the earth (II AB VII 43-52).

From the above proclamation two things become clear: first, Baal has been established as the king with absolute dominion over gods and men, and, second, he has restored fertility.⁵⁰

This is followed by an account of a conflict between Baal and Mot. Mot dwells in the depths of the netherworld; there is his city "wattery pit" and throne of glory (II AB VII 7-14; I*AB II 14-16). He is thus king of the netherworld. The poetic language sometimes identifies

⁴⁹Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, p. 120.

⁵⁰Refer to page 108 where connection between the victory of Anath over the enemies and fertility is indicated.

Mot with the netherworld itself, making them synonymous concepts. Baal's entering the netherworld is described as Mot's "eating" (I AB II 1-10; II AB VIII 15-20). This is in keeping with the description by Philo of Byblus about Mot as the god of death as well as the king of the netherworld.⁵¹ The message of Mot to Baal indicates that Sea and the others whom Baal had earlier destroyed were allies of Mot (I AB 1-2). Baal complies with the threat of Mot, and is afraid, declaring, "Thy slave I, thy bondsman forever." On hearing this word, Mot rejoices (I AB II).

The news of the death of Baal was brought to El. El immediately descended from the throne, performed the rite of mourning, and cried, "Baal is dead. What becomes of the people? Dagon's son - What of the masses? After Baal I'll descend into earth" (I AB VI). Anath also mourns for the death of her brother. With the help of Shapsh, the sun goddess, she recovers the body of Baal and performs an honorable burial (I AB I). The effect of Baal's death is described as follows:

Parched is the furrow of soil, O Shapsh;
 Parched is El's Soil's furrow;
 Baal neglects the furrow of his tillage.
 Where is Puissant Baal?
 Where is the Prince, Lord of Earth" (I AB III-IV 26-30).

This is followed by the abortive attempt to make Athtar king in the place of Baal.

Again Anath goes in search of Baal, and intercedes with Mot for the restoration of Baal (I AB II 4-19). It should be noted that Baal's body has already been recovered by her. So there is an apparent inconsistency. But "death" here must be understood as only a period of inactivity. The text is not dealing with metaphysical speculations, but with

⁵¹Cassuto, The Goddess Anath, p. 62.

a myth which has grown out of rituals.⁵² Mot boasts about his destroying Baal and claims, "I made him like a lamb in my mouth; like a kid in my gullet he's crushed." Anath gradually resorts to violence, kills Mot, and grinds his body and sows it in the fields so that birds may eat his remnants (I AB II 20-39).

"The revival of Baal and the consequent restoration of fertility is anticipated by a dream of El."⁵³ El dreams that Baal is alive, and as a consequence, the text reads:

The heavens fat did rain,
The wadies flow with honey.
So I know
That alive was Puissant Baal, (declares El) (I AB III-IV 1-10).

These texts show that it was believed that with the death of Baal fertility is lost, and with his revival the fertility of the earth and life on earth are also restored again.⁵⁴

"After a lacuna, we encounter Baal redivivus. He avenges himself on his adversaries"⁵⁵ (I AB V 1-7).

Baal seizes the sons of Asherah
Rabbim he strikes in the back⁵⁶

⁵² John Gray, "The Legacy of Canaan: The Ras Shamra Texts and Their Relevancy to the Old Testament" in Supplement to Vetus Testamentum, Vol. 5, 2nd rev. ed., ed. G. W. Anderson, et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), p. 67. But he also adds that it is a "ritual relating to the death and revival of vegetation."

⁵³ Ibid., p. 70.

⁵⁴ Refer to pp. 104-08 where the connection between Baal and fertility is stated with reference to other passages.

⁵⁵ Gray, p. 72.

⁵⁶ Ginsberg, p. 141. Ginsberg states in the footnote that Rabbim has been slain by Anath once. This statement means that Ginsberg has interpreted Rabbim as Mot. Gordon translates it as "the great one" (Gordon 49:V.2).

Dokhyamm he strikes with a bludgeon⁵⁷ (he struck the waves with his club (Coogan, 114)
 . . . he falls to the earth.⁵⁸ (he pushed swallow death to the ground (Coogan, 114)

It is quite clear that, according to this section, Mot was vanquished. As in Baal's conflict with Baal, after his victory over Mot, he established himself on the throne. That means that his dominion was established again.

The section following the above passage mentions that after seven years Mot challenged Baal again, and there is a description of the fight between the two. Mot was subdued again (I AB V 8-20). It seems that there is some confusion in the text. According to this order, Mot was killed by Anath first, then by Baal, and again subdued by Baal after a gap of seven years. The uncertainty of the sequence is even apparent in the way different scholars have translated the passage quoted above.

However, the following points should be noticed. Baal died first at the hand of Mot, then Mot at the hand of Anath. Both of them are fighting with each other again. So also, if there was a second battle between Baal and Mot after seven years, Mot, who was killed by Baal, is living again. This phenomenon indicates that the two gods are still alive after death, corresponding to their own immortality. Their death is merely a period of powerlessness or inactivity. Death is not the end of existence, but it is simply the end of a particular form of

⁵⁷In the place of "Dokhyamm," Gordon has "the tyrant" (Gordon 49:V.c); Coogan has "the waves" in its place. (Coogan, p. 114)

⁵⁸Gordon has the last line as "Mot is vanquished" (49:V.4); Coogan has "he has pushed swallow death" (p. 114).

existence.⁵⁹ If the passage I AB V 1-7 means that Mot was vanquished by Baal, and the subsequent text is a reference to another battle after seven years, it will mean, first, that Baal's victory over Mot was only temporary. He emerges from his eclipse to challenge Baal for another combat, but again Baal comes out as the victor. Since the text at this point is badly damaged, the ultimate outcome of the battle does not become clear. But, from what remains, it is assumed that Mot admitted Baal's claim to kingship.⁶⁰ Second, it is possible that the idea behind the myth is the seven-year agricultural year culminating in the sabbatical year.⁶¹ According to this observation, the first battle represents the idea of the regular agricultural year, and the second one the seven-year cycle.

Conflicts in the Ugaritic Texts and Conflicts
of Krishna - Main Themes Compared

On the basis of the nature of the deities in the Ugaritic myth and the conflicts between the opposing forces the following main themes should be observed. Since the conflicts in the Ugaritic text and the conflicts of Krishna both fall under the category of mythology several parallels between the two may be discerned. At the same time some basic conceptual differences between the two must also be observed.

Conflicts Between Gods

As observed earlier in this chapter, since the main deities

⁵⁹Beyerlin, p. 219.

⁶⁰Gray, p. 75.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 73, "We suggest that coupled with the notion that a regular period of transition should be observed between the two cycles of normal agriculture, the period may have had a certain cathartic significance."

involved in the battles in the Ugaritic myth belong to the same divine family, the conflicts are between the members of the pantheon. According to the nature of the texts, the conflicts between the deities signify two factors, namely, the emergence of younger gods in the place of "olden gods," and competition for supremacy among the young gods. In Canaanite mythology El remains as the titular head of the pantheon, but Baal plays the dominant role. Second, there is a constant conflict going on among the young gods - Baal, Anath, Yamm, Mot, and others. It means conflict for kingship; conflicts among gods for supremacy is a phenomenon of theogony. This has parallels in the mythology of Krishna. We have observed in Chapters I and II that the "Krishna motif" is a late development in Hinduism. The supreme god in the Vedic pantheon is Indra, who is gradually pushed into the background and his place taken by sectarian gods. Vishnu who plays a minor role in the Vedas, when compared to Indra, gradually emerges as the supreme god in the later literature. Eventually, Krishna as the supreme avatara of Vishnu gets into direct conflict with Indra himself. This fits into the category of younger gods emerging in place of "olden gods." It should be remembered that Indra was not killed by Krishna, but was accepted as the god of the celestials, thus pushed to a separate sphere of activity, whereas Indra acknowledged Krishna as the supreme lord (see chapter II).

In the Ugaritic texts, when El is recognized as a titular head of the pantheon, there are constant fights among the young gods for kingship, which is parallel to the conflicts between the sectarian gods (Vishnu, Siva, and Brahma) in the Puranas. As Baal emerges as the ultimate victor, Krishna also emerges as the victor. While the other

gods acknowledge Krishna's superiority, he also recognizes their place. This mutual recognition is similar to Yamm's recognizing Baal's supremacy and Yamm being confined to his proper sphere, the seas.⁶² This is also the case with Mot.

But there are certain major differences between the two. First, in the fights between Krishna and other gods, there is no mutual killing. Second, Krishna does not experience any defeat in the hands of other gods as Baal does. He is always the victor. Third, the sharpest contrast between the two is that Krishna is believed to be the incarnation of the supreme god. This means, that even though he must be understood as a "young god," he is actually an "olden god" who appears age after age. This does not have any parallels in Ugaritic mythology.

Krishna in the Puranas appears also as a demon killer. The demons which he confronted were the same ones which he, as Vishnu, had vanquished in the previous yuga. The doctrine of the yugas and the repetitious nature of the conflicts age after age is absent in the Ugaritic literature. This is part of the Vishnavite doctrines of cosmology, incarnation and reincarnation, and so forth. In the Ugaritic mythology also there is the phenomenon of the gods dying and rising again. But the doctrine of avatara in the Puranas has broad significance as explained in chapter II. While the emphasis in the Ugaritic mythology is the agricultural year, the emphasis in the Puranas in "yuga" which means millions of years; thus a broader time reference is given in the Puranas.

⁶²Ginsberg, p. 131 footnote.

Conflicts of Deities and Building of the
House or Temple

Baal's victory over the sea is followed by the building of a house or temple for him. As pointed out earlier, it is similar to the building of a temple for Marduk in the Enuma elis of Babylonian mythology. "The conflict with Prince Sea, the victory over him, the building of the temple, and its subsequent dedication are characteristic elements in what is related about Baal."⁶³ The building of the house signifies two things: first, it signifies the fact that Baal has become the king of the earth, who has sway over the gods, men, and the earth, and who feeds them. Second, it signifies the establishment of the cult. According to Ugaritic mythology, Baal's house is located on Mount Zaphon. This feature is similar to Krishna's establishing his cult in Mount Govardhana. By establishing his cult, Krishna made the people of Vraj abandon the worship of Indra. On the basis of this parallelism it may be assumed that Baal-cult was established in the place of an earlier existing cult.

A basic difference between the two is that in the Puranas, Krishna identifies himself with Govardhana. Therefore, people who worship and offer sacrifices to the mountain worship Krishna himself in the form of the mountain. We do not find such identification of Baal and Mount Zaphon in Ugaritic mythology.

In Canaanite religion Baal's temple plays a prominent role. Scholars are generally agreed that his "temple with its dominating position shows that his position in the Ugaritic pantheon was one of special

⁶³Kapelrud, p. 45.

importance. This temple was the center of Baal's cult; and it was there that the events involving Baal which are narrated in the texts were reenacted."⁶⁴ According to the cultic interpretation, events such as his death and resurrection, Anath's mourning, building of the temple and its dedication, and so forth, were recited and reenacted.⁶⁵ Therefore, the cult was not simply a drama. It was considered to be creative reenactment of the past to bring about a favorable future.⁶⁶ Thus, cult becomes creative, and favorable conditions of life depend much on such reenactment of the myth.

Worship finds a major place in Krishnabhakti also. But the major thrust of the Puranas is that Krishnabhakti or devotion is the way of salvation of the soul, which ultimately means emancipation from the cosmic recurring cycle of rebirth. Accordingly, bhakti is union with the god. Such emphasis is absent in Baal mythology.

Baal's Victory and Its Relation to Fertility

Scholars are divided in their opinion regarding the victory of Baal and its connection with the process of nature.⁶⁷ As Beyerlin has stated, there are weighty arguments in favor of arguments on both sides, one stressing the connection between the two and the other denying such connection.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the majority of scholars believe that Baal's victory in particular, and the myth in general, is connected with the

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 67.

⁶⁵Authors such as Kapelrud, Beyerlin, and Gray follow this line of interpretation.

⁶⁶Kapelrud, p. 45.

⁶⁷Beyerlin, pp. 191-92.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 192.

autumnal New Year festival when it was ritually recited. Even those who reject theory that Baal cult was connected with the cycle of seasons do not entirely rule out the possibility of this connection. Cassuto, for example, admits that the nature myth may have been one of the elements that went into the making of the epic.⁶⁹ As observed in the preceding pages, motifs such as theogony and establishment of a house for the deity, signifying sovereignty and supremacy, find emphasis in the myth. At the same time, according to the nature of the texts it is the character of a fertility god which figures largely in the picture we get of Baal.⁷⁰ We have observed earlier that Baal was regarded as the god of fertility - of men, flocks, cattle and vegetation. Therefore, it is a god of fertility who attains supremacy over gods, men and the rest of the creation.

The two major battles which find articulation in the Ugaritic texts are Baal's battle with Yamm and Mot. The battle with Yamm is not described in detail. But the analogy of myths in the ancient Near East such as the battle between Marduk and the waters give clues to the understanding of the Baal myth. In the Ugaritic texts it also become obvious that Yamm is an associate of Mot. According to the mythological pattern, the monster or the dragon must be defeated and the powers of chaos repulsed.⁷¹ Baal and Mot thus represent destructive forces. Previously in this paper, it was explained how Baal's defeat and victory over Mot affected fertility. Baal's death and descent into the depths of the

⁶⁹Cassuto, "Baal and Mot in the Ugaritic Texts," p. 77.

⁷⁰Kapelrud, p. 40.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 42.

earth and his return were features closely connected with the cycle of the seasons, agriculture, pastoral life, and fertility in general, "Because of the possibility that the rains would fail and drought and bad harvest ensue, it was necessary to secure in advance the help of all favorable powers and to give a dramatic representation of the kind of future which was desired."⁷² Thus the myth was creatively enacted in the cult.

According to the above understanding of the Baal myth and its implied cult, the conflicts of Baal with the destructive forces take place within the cycle of the agricultural year. His death and revival also take place within this period of time. There is an apparent resemblance between the cyclical nature of Baal mythology and that of Krishna. But according to the Puranas, the cyclical time has a much broader meaning. Avatars are not interpreted as events happening within a period of agricultural year, but as events happening "age after age." This difference leads to further questions regarding the meaning and purpose of avatara. As explained in chapter II, the purpose of avatara includes relieving the earth of its burden (that is, relieving it from the oppression of the demons, asuras, and so on, and establishing order), salvation of the individual soul, and even the demons. Ultimately, salvation is understood in terms of evolution and dissolution of the world. Such themes are absent in the Ugaritic mythology.

⁷²Ibid., p. 45.

CHAPTER IV

YAHWEH AS WARRIOR IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Much study has been made in this century on the subject of warfare in the Old Testament with the emphasis on "Yahweh as God of War."¹ To evaluate the various approaches of different scholars and to propose new theories is beyond the scope of this paper. An attempt will be made to outline the major theological dimensions behind the theme of wars of Yahweh in the context of the history of Israel during the successive periods in order to compare the major themes with those found in the Puranas as explained in the previous chapters of this paper.

Yahweh as Warrior in the History of Israel

Yahweh as Warrior in the Patriarchal Period

The most decisive event in the history of the people of Israel is the deliverance from the bondage of Egypt and the subsequent entry into the land of Canaan. "This theme was of prime importance both for

¹C. Millard Lind, Yahweh Is a Warrior (Ontario: Aerald Press, 1980), pp. 23-34. Most recently the author has made an analysis of different types of interpretation on this subject. According to him one type of interpretation is represented by Frederick Schwally, Johannes Pederson, Gerhard von Rad, and Patrick D. Miller who propose that the miraculous nature of holy war is not derived from the historical event, but is a product of later theological reflection. The other school of interpretation is represented by Rudolf Smend, A. Glock, Fritz Stolz, and Manfred Weippert who disagree with the above-stated interpretation, and postulate earlier historical or mythological considerations such as Israel's early experience of covenant, her theo-political self-understanding, and her exposure to similar mythological expressions of her Near Eastern neighbors.

national self-consciousness and for the religious self-consciousness of Israel."² Even though it is true that Israel came to existence as a "people," or a "nation," with the event of deliverance from Egypt and entry into the promised land with the covenant at Sinai the focal point, her history goes farther back. It starts from the history of the patriarchs which is significant for her understanding of the past, present, and future as remembered in her ancient creed in Deut. 26:5-10, "A wandering Aramean was my father . . ."

The history of the patriarchs is not marked with violent political struggles. The basic theme which runs through the narratives of patriarchal history is "called to be blessed and to be a source of blessing to many" (Gen. 12:1-3; 18:18; 22:17-18; 26:3-5; 28:13-14). The promise includes making of a great nation, a great name, and gift of the land of Canaan. The realization of these promises were often met with obstacles during the course of their life in Canaan. Abraham had to go to Egypt due to famine in the land (Gen. 12:10-20), Isaac had to go down to the land of the Philistines for the same reason and was even attempting to go to Egypt (Gen. 26:1-5), Jacob had to flee to Haran because of his own behavior (Genesis 28), and ultimately Jacob and his family left for Egypt to escape from the famine in the land.

Their life and existence in the land were also threatened several times. Abraham twice lied in the matter of his wife (Gen. 12:10-20; 20:1-18), and Isaac did the same once (Gen. 26:6-11). Isaac also suffered hardships from the Philistines during his sojourn in their land

²G. W. Anderson, The History and Religion of Israel (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 22.

(26:12-33). In these narratives one finds that the patriarchs were not warlike people. They appear as people who did not believe in fighting, but in peaceful co-existence. This may be due to their weakness in political terms. But what transcends political weakness as well as their own weakness is,

the religious experience of the patriarchs, namely, their experience of promise in encounter with the God of the fathers identified as El. What was impossible to achieve in the present they were promised for the future. They were thus given a "politics of promise" which sustained them in their political weakness helping them to develop an identity and maintain a way of life independent from that of the Canaanite city states.³

It shall be noticed that violence is not altogether absent from the patriarchal narratives. One such instance of violence is recorded in Genesis 34 in which Simeon and Levi avenged the violation of their sister Dinah by Shechem. This "act of violence is probably referred to in the Testament of Jacob" (59:5-7) where as judgment the tribes would be "driven from Jacob/scattered from Israel."⁴ This shows that the act of violence was not approved by Jacob. (See also 34:30 where Jacob expressed his displeasure over the action). The other narrative of violent conflict is in Genesis 14 where Abraham fought with the kings of the East. But this "fighting is a rescue operation of a related clan, and is connected with neither covenant nor land."⁵ Nevertheless, the blessing of Melchizedek, "Blessed be God Most High () who has delivered your enemies into your hand" (v. 20) reflects the language of holy war,

³Ibid., p. 36.

⁴Ibid., p. 42. Quoting from Fritz Stolz, Jahweh und Israels Kriege (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1972), p. 7.

⁵Ibid., p. 45.

although no other phenomena such as promise, miracle, and so forth, are attached to it.

In general, the language of holy war or of Yahweh fighting against the enemies of Israel is not prominent in the patriarchal narratives, although His protection and guidance for them in times of crises find significant place. The narratives depict "the way in which God carries his promise in every human failure."⁶

Warfare During the Period of Exodus and Conquest

The Song of the Sea, Ex. 15:1-21

This song has been characterized in different ways by different authors such as a hymn, enthronement psalm, litany, victory psalm, hymn and thanksgiving psalm, and the song of the sea.⁷ The song is placed immediately after the event of the crossing of the sea by the Israelites and the destruction of the Egyptians in chapter 14. That Yahweh the warrior is "terrible in glorious deeds," is nowhere more vividly described than here in the Song of the Sea."⁸

The song begins with a shout of praise in verses 1-3. The God who is praised is specifically identified as Yahweh. He is mentioned as "God of my father" in verse 2. This epithet reminds one of Yahweh's revelation to Moses in Ex. 3:15, "Yahweh, God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." The one who

⁶Gerhard von Rad, God at Work in Israel, trans. John H. Marks (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980), p. 20.

⁷Bevard S. Childs, Exodus, ed. Peter Ackroyd et al (London: SCM Press, 1974), p. 243.

⁸Patrick D. Miller, The Divine Warrior in Early Israel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 113.

delivered them is the one who had chosen them and made covenant with the forefathers. It amounts to saying that it was the God of "election and covenant" who redeemed them from bondage and oppression. Redemption that was accomplished on their behalf was not an accident; rather it was the fulfillment of Yahweh's promise. Here, the historical connection between "election and covenant," and redemption is explicitly stated. Thus Yahweh "may be described as an 'historical' God, namely, one who guides the social group in its peregrinations, its wars, in short through historical vicissitudes to its destiny."⁹

Yahweh is praised by Moses with a series of first person singular suffixes in verse 2: "my strength," "my song," "my salvation," and "my God." Similar phenomena echo throughout the book of Psalms (for example, 18:2; 27:2; 28:8; 54:5, and so forth). This is characteristic of both individual and communal psalms. The faith and trust of the individual as well as of the community find strong expression in these words.

Yahweh is described as a man of war in verse 3. The theme that Yahweh is a man of war which is set forth in verse 3 "is succinctly stated in verse 4: he has cast Pharaoh's chariots, his army, and picked officers into the sea."¹⁰ The enemy had determined to destroy the people (verse 9, but Yahweh as a mighty warrior had triumphed gloriously by throwing the horse and his rider into the sea (verse 2), and with his majesty and fury overthrew the enemies and consumed them (verse 9).

⁹Ibid., p. 144. Quoting from Frank Moore Cross, "Yahweh and the God of the Patriarchs," Harvard Theological Review 55 (1962):228.

¹⁰Lind, p. 49.

In verses 4-12 the battle of the sea is recounted. The manner of the destruction of the enemies is said to be by sinking into the sea, the flood, and the depths (verses 4-5, 8, 10). The right hand of Yahweh, his majesty, his fury, the blast of his nostrils and the wind (verses 6-8, 10) are said to have caused the destruction. According to Miller, the imagery indicates Yahweh's destruction of the enemy by storm,¹¹ "a storm blown up by the blast of wind from his dilated nostrils."¹² Verse 12 states that the earth swallowed the enemies. All these imageries emphasize the miraculous nature of the event.

It is to be noted that the sea is not portrayed as Yahweh's enemy with which he had to struggle in order to establish his supremacy; the sea is not a threat to Yahweh, and Yahweh does not fight with it. He uses it as an instrument or means to fight the enemies. The real enemies in the poem are not gods or the "chaos monster,"¹³ but an historical entity, the Egyptians. Through His victory over Pharaoh and his army, He has demonstrated that He is above all gods.

Verses 13-18 outline the effect of this victory of Yahweh. The terms used to describe the effect on other peoples are "dismayed," "trembled," "melted," and became the object of "terror" and "dread." The very fact that Edom and Moab refused to let Israel pass through their territory (Num. 20:18-21; 21:13) is the result of their fear. The episode in Numbers 22-24 in which Balak, king of Edom, sought the help of Balaam

¹¹Miller, p. 115.

¹²Frank Moore Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 131.

¹³Miler, p. 114.

to curse Israel is a testimony to such effect. It is further demonstrated by the statement of Rahab who said,

I know that the Lord has given you this land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you . . . for the Lord your God is he who is God in heaven above you and on earth beneath (Josh. 2:9-11).

Few parallelisms have been observed between the motifs found in verses 1-12 and verses 3-18. The danger from the Egyptians in the first section parallels the threat of the enemies in the second. In both cases Yahweh renders the enemies helpless. That the Egyptians went down into the depths like a stone (verse 5) recurs in verse 16, "they are as still as stone."

Thus the effect of the exodus as a paradigm for Yahweh's saving action in Israel's difficult experiences of the future is found within the poem itself. The passage of Israel through the Reed Sea was the archetype for Israel's passage through the paralyzed sea of the nations.¹⁴

The redemption of the people through the sea is followed by the march of the people. Yahweh led them to his holy abode (verse 13). The "holy abode" has been interpreted in different ways. Coert Rylaarsdam suggests that it may refer to the whole land, but he also suggests that in verse 17 Mount Zion is unmistakably singled out.¹⁵ Patrick Miller suggests that it means Sinai, and proposes that it is possible that it refers to Shittim from where Israel began the conquest across the Jordan and where the Ark was taken across in the Joshua tradition.¹⁶ As Millard

¹⁴Lind, p. 50.

¹⁵Coert J. Rylaarsdam, The Book of Exodus in The Interpreter's Bible, 12 vols., ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1952), 1:944.

¹⁶Miller, p. 115.

Lind states, "for our purpose, it makes little difference whether the march is to Sinai or Canaan, for the point is the same."¹⁷ Victory is followed by Yahweh's enthronement on his sanctuary. The song climaxes with the kingship of Yahweh, for he will reign forever and ever (verse 18). In the light of parallelisms found in Baal mythology, it seems probable to us that "the holy above" refers to Sinai.

The connection between the redemption through the sea and the march to Sinai has profound significance for the understanding of the history and faith of Israel. It is at Sinai that Yahweh entered into a covenant relationship with the people. Redemption is thus followed by creation of a people, a people of the covenant. It is the same God referred to in verse 2 (God of my father) who established the covenant. Thus a historic connection is brought between the "election and covenant in the patriarchal narratives and the covenant at Sinai.

Summary of the themes observed in the Song of the Sea: (1) The song "provides the response of faith by the people who have experienced their redemption from the hands of the Egyptians at the Sea."¹⁸ (2) Yahweh as the warrior fought for the people. He is celebrated as the sole agent of redemption. (3) The one who redeemed them is the God of the fathers. The victory of Yahweh over the Egyptians is followed by the establishment of the covenant with the people which is an historical sequence of the covenant made with the patriarchs. (4) Victory is followed by leading the people into the promised land. (5) He became the king of the people enthroned in his sanctuary. (6) Yahweh did not fight the sea, but used it as his instrument. (7) Yahweh's authority was not

¹⁷Lind, p. 50.

¹⁸Childs, p. 248.

challenged either by other gods or any other powers; He is God almighty.

The narrative source of the Sea event,
Ex. 13:17-14:31

Major themes in chapters 13 and 14 compared to chapter 15.

Chapters 13 and 14	Chapter 15
Israel's departure and encampment, and the Egyptians' pursuit after the Israelites (13:17-14:1).	The enemy's determination to destroy the Israelites (15:9).
Israel's fear, and Moses' assurance that Yahweh will fight for them (14:10-14).	Yahweh is the warrior (15:1-3).
Yahweh's instruction to Moses. The angel of Yahweh and the pillar of the cloud moving between the Egyptians and the Israelites (14:15-20).	
Yahweh causing east wind, Israelites passing through dry ground, and the waters standing like a wall (14:21-22).	The blast of Yahweh's nostrils, his sind (15:8, 10); waters piled up, floods stood (verse 8).
The plight of the Egyptians (14:23-25).	The terror of the nations (15:14-16).
The destruction of the Egyptians, and the Israelites walking through the dry ground (14:26-29).	Destruction of the enemies, and the Israelites passing through the dry ground (15:4-7, 10, 12, 19).
The Israelites feared Yahweh, and believed in him and in his servant Moses (14:30-31).	The Israelites praised Yahweh (15:1-3, 21).
	Yahweh leading his people to his holy abode, and becoming king forever and ever (15:13, 17-18).

On the basis of the comparison between the two accounts the following observations can be made. Basically the same motifs and outline run through both of them. At the same time certain differences in emphasis are also obvious. In the prose narrative, the assurance that

Yahweh would fight for the people of Israel is stated before the event itself. It implies that the people had to trust in the promise and providence of Yahweh who was about to accomplish redemption on their behalf. Also, the appearance and protection offered through the angel of Yahweh and the pillar of cloud - both objectifying the presence of Yahweh in their midst - are more vividly stated in the prose narrative than in the song. Again, the event of the East wind, the dry ground, and the standing of the waters like a wall in the narrative emphasize the miraculous act of Yahweh more dramatically than the song. On the other hand, the song emphasizes Yahweh's leading his people into the promised land. In the narrative, the emphasis is placed on the plight of the Egyptians, whereas in the song the emphasis is on the terror of the nations, and Yahweh's becoming king forever and ever. Both accounts look back to the event as the mighty act of God, even though the song places more emphasis on the future, the basis of which is what he has done for the people through his miraculous act in history.

Crossing of the Jordan by the Israelites
Joshua 3-5

In the crossing of the Jordan there was no battle in the conventional sense of the word. At the same time, the crossing of the river and the battle of Jericho were seen in ancient Israel "as paradigmatic of the entire conquest"¹⁹ of the land, and the motif of Yahweh as warrior is vividly presented in the narrative. In chapters 3 and 5 the following main themes are brought out.

¹⁹Lind, p. 77.

The process of the occupation of the land was a matter already decided by Yahweh. In 1:2 Yahweh said to Joshua, "go over this Jordan, you and this people, into the land I am giving () to them," and "you shall cause this people to inherit the land which I swore to their fathers to give them" (1:6). So the basis for the gift of the land was Yahweh's promise, and his decision. It did not depend on the military strength of the Israelites.

The crossing of the river is presented in holy war terminology. "The procession began with sanctification which was required in holy war or in approaching a sanctuary."²⁰ Before crossing the river Joshua said to the people, "Tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you" (3:5), "he will without fail drive out before you the Canaanites . . ." (3:10), and "the Lord is mighty" (4:24). In 5:1 the effect of the crossing of the river on the inhabitants of Canaan is mentioned:

They heard that the Lord has dried up the waters of the Jordan for the people of Israel . . ., their hearts melted, and there was no longer any spirit in them because of the people of Israel.

The effect on the people was the same as mentioned in Ex. 15:14-16. It is a recognition of the fact that Yahweh fought for the people of Israel.

The procession was led by the Ark which was "the palladium of battle."²¹ In Num. 10:35 the Ark and Yahweh are wholly identified.²² The Ark carried the function of a guide, and served as a sign for the presence of Yahweh. The procession led by the Ark is identical to being led by Yahweh himself. The fact that Yahweh was fighting for the

²⁰Ibid., p. 78.

²¹Ibid.

²²Albert J. Soggins, *Joshua*, trans. R. A. Wilson, ed. G. Ernest Wright et al (London: SCM Press, 1972), p. 56.

Israelites and that he was leading Israel is further demonstrated by the event of the appearance of the commander of the army of Yahweh to Joshua after the crossing of the river (5:13-15). Verse 13 read that "a man stood before him with his drawn sword in his hand." In verse 14 the one who appeared introduced himself as "commander of the army of the Lord." Then "Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and worshiped, and said to him, "What does my Lord bid his servant?" It means that Yahweh himself appeared before Joshua as the commander of the army. The appearance of Yahweh to Joshua serves to demonstrate that it was he who was leading Israel and was fighting for them.

The miraculous nature of the event is explained in 3:14-17. In the exhortation to 4:21-24 the people of Israel were reminded to teach their children how miraculously Yahweh caused them to cross the river, as he dried up the Red Sea. The event at the Red Sea is explicitly referred to as a paradigm for the Jordan crossing. Just as the crossing of the Sea was followed by the theophany of Yahweh at Sinai, the twelve stones set up at Gilgal served as a reminder of the theophany of Yahweh in his mighty act so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of Yahweh is mighty and the people of the covenant may fear him forever (4:19-24).

Other Battles in the Book of Joshua

The other battles recorded in the book of Joshua are the battle of Jericho (chapter 6), the battle of Ai (chapter 8), the battle with the Jerusalem confederacy (chapter 10:1-15), the southern campaign (chapter 10:28-43), and the battle with Hazor and the Northern confederation (chapter 11:1-15). The following themes of holy war are brought

out in these battles: (1) Yahweh won the battle for the Israelites as the warrior and leader of his army (6:3; 8:1; 10:8, 10, 14; 10:30, 32, and so forth). (2) Victory accomplished through miracles (6; 10:10, 11, 13-14; and so forth). (3) Israel did not fight for the land, but it was given to them by Yahweh. (4) Whenever the Israelites pursued the enemies and smote them, it always happened only after Yahweh had defeated the enemies. (5) Specifically in the battle of Jericho the theme of "herem," the devotion of the spoils to Yahweh and the destruction of all life (6: 17-9, 21) as a holy war institution is emphasized.²³

We may summarize as follows the observations made under the above sections: (1) Yahweh is the warrior and leader of the army who fights for the people of Israel. Therefore, the battles which the Israelites confronted are really battles of Yahweh. (2) The purpose of the battles is to give the land to the people of Israel according to the promise made by Yahweh to the forefathers. The battles had been already decided by him, (3) Victory in the battles does not depend on the participation by the Israelites. (4) Promise to the patriarchs, redemption from Egypt, and the gift of the land - each form a part of the total history, the history determined by God.

Battles During the Period of Judges (Up to the Time of David)

The period of the Judges is one of the most significant periods in the history of Israel. According to Judges 1, Israel was still in the process of consolidating her position in the land. Not all the inhabitants of the land were driven out. This created a serious spiritual

²³Lind, pp. 81-82.

and religious crisis in the life of Israel (2:1-5). It was also a period which saw significant disintegration of political and social life²⁴ along with spiritual and religious integration which eventually forced the people of Israel to demand leadership of a king. The period of Judges "appears in the Biblical narratives as a time of conflicts and battles with numerous neighboring tribes and nations."²⁵

The nature and significance of the conflicts of this period has to be understood in the light of the statements in 2:1-5, and 2:-3:6. According to 2:1-5 the conflicts which the Israelites experienced were the results of the breach of the covenant by them. The section in 2:6-3:6 gives a comprehensive summary of the period of Judges. The generation which had experienced the mighty and gracious acts of Yahweh remained faithful to Yahweh, but the later generations drifted away from him and worshiped other gods. Indignant at this unfaithfulness, Yahweh gave them into the power of their enemies who subjugated and oppressed them. Moved by their distress, Yahweh raised up leaders who delivered them from the enemies. But once they were redeemed and enjoyed periods of peace, they relapsed into worshipping other gods again.²⁶ This cyclical pattern is carried throughout the book of Judges. Thus the book of Judges

sustained the principle, established in the Torah, that obedience meant life and peace, whereas defiance or disobedience could only result in hardship, oppression, and death. Such a theory of primary causation constituted a powerful stimulus to the aspirations

²⁴ Roland Kenneth Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969), p. 692.

²⁵ Lind, p. 90.

²⁶ George F. Moore, Judges in The International Critical Commentary, ed. Charles A. Briggs et al (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), pp. xv-xvi.

of the Chosen people, and at the same time served as a warning for the future behavior. . . . Equally important was the awareness that God was always prepared to forgive His penitent people and redress their grievances.²⁷

In the light of the above observations and the basic theme enumerated, two major battles, one led by Deborah and Barak, and the other by Gideon will be analyzed in this section.

The Song of Deborah, Judges 5

"The Song of Deborah, like the Song of the Sea, is a unified victory hymn."²⁸ The first portion of the song (verses 1-18) is a description of the participation and/or non-participation of tribes in the war against a Canaanite coalition. It is beyond the scope of this paper to enter into the discussion about the background of this reference to participation/non-participation. It is sufficient to notice that, unlike in the Song of the Sea, human participation (besides Deborah and Barak, Jael, the leaders, the people, the remnant of the nobles, the people of the Lord, and six tribes by name) in the battle is specifically mentioned in the song. But the role played or not played by the individuals and groups in the outcome of the battle is to be observed in the description of the battle.

Verses 4-5 extols the theophany of Yahweh as the warrior. Yahweh is said to have marched from Seir and Edom - both used as references to the "south." Deut. 33:2 reads, "The Lord came from Sinai, and dawned from Seir upon us; he shone forth from Mount Paran, he came from the ten thousands of holy ones." The emphasis in both these passages is Yahweh marching forth from the south, as a warrior marching for the battle. It

²⁷Harrison, p. 693.

²⁸Lind, p. 66.

also means that Yahweh was marching along with his people. His marching is not described in a mythological sense, but in the sense of his presence with his people in their historic march into the promised land. Even though the song of Deborah is placed in the victory over the Canaanite coalition, the references to Yahweh's march from the south is used in the broader meaning of Exodus and conquest. Verse 4 gives a description of the march of Yahweh: When he marched forth, the earth trembled, the heaven dropped, the clouds dropped water, the mountains quaked. All these descriptions underline the theophany of Yahweh as powerful and mighty. It also presents a picture of Yahweh as the warrior storm god.²⁹

Only in verses 19-21 the actual battle is described. Those who fought against the kings were the stars from the heavens, and the torrents of Kishon. The very forces of nature, under the leadership of Yahweh the warrior, fought and swept away the enemies. Those against whom Yahweh fought were his enemies (verse 31). There is no reference in the song to the fact that the people of Israel fought against their enemies; rather it is Yahweh who fought against his enemies and won the battle. The battle can be summarized as follows:

The absence of human kingship in Israel means that Yahweh was the king of the federation. Yahweh fought, not through his people, but through a miracle of nature. . . . It is this experience of Yahweh as "man of war" that gives specific and unique character to Israel's experience of holy war. . . . The decisive action in the battle was seen as that of Yahweh, who as political leader of Israel again came to the aid of his people.³⁰

²⁹Miller, p. 91.

³⁰Lind, p. 71.

Comparison of the Song of Deborah with the Prose
Narrative of the Battle in Chapter 4

The narrative of the battle in chapter 4 has essentially the same emphasis as in the song. The battle is portrayed as an event of Yahweh's response to the cry of his people against the oppression of Jabin (verse 3). It is followed by the message of Deborah to Barak. The key to the understanding of the battle is implicit in her message: "Does not the Lord, the God of Israel, command you . . ." (verse 6); ". . . and I will give him into your hands" (verse 7). This fits into the scheme of the book of Judges discussed earlier in this section. In verse 14 Deborah said to Barak, "Up, for this is the day in which the Lord has given Sisera into your hand. Does not the Lord go out before you?" Therefore, it is Yahweh who commands the battle, leads the battle, and wins the battle (see also verses 15, 23). Victory belongs to Yahweh. Israel's participation in the battle follows only after Yahweh's initiative, his promise of victory through the prophetic word of Deborah, and the pursuit of Israel after the enemies is followed only after Yahweh had routed the enemies miraculously (See verses 15-16). Israel's participation amounts to trust in his promise and obedience to his call.

Battle of Gideon, Judges 6-8

The battle of Gideon against the Midianites is another example which delineates the concept of holy war. Chapter 6:1-6 gives the description of the oppression which the Israelites experienced at the hands of the Ammonites and the Amalekites. It was Yahweh who gave the Israelites into the hands of the enemies because of their sin. It is followed by the cry of the people of Israel to Yahweh and the indictment of the author. The point emphasized in this indictment is that the cause

of the oppression was the failure of the people to keep the covenant stipulations, and at the same time Yahweh is available to redeem them from oppression.

The battle of Gideon against the Midianites is portrayed as a battle of Yahweh himself against the enemies. It was Yahweh who sent Gideon, and assured him that he would be with him. Yahweh did not choose him because of the strength of Gideon's clan (6:14-16). Success in the battle does not depend on the military superiority of a clan or the people of Israel as a whole. The point is further articulated by the fact that the number of the participants in the battle was limited to only three hundred (7:1-8), and Yahweh promised Gideon that he would deliver Israel with the small number of men.

The battle was not won by Gideon and the band of men with him. Yahweh said to Gideon, "Arise, go down against the camp; for I have given it into your hand (7:9). The decisive battle was fought by Yahweh himself who caused confusion with the enemy's camp (7:19-22). Only after the confusion caused by Yahweh did Gideon and his army pursue the enemies. That victory belongs to Yahweh, and not to the strength of the army is the theme underlined in this event.

Victory was followed by the request of the people to Gideon to rule over them (8:22), but he did not accept the offer. His answer was, "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you" (8:23). "Gideon saw the rule of Israel by a man as a contradiction to the rule of Yahweh."³¹ As pointed out in the Song

³¹Ibid., p. 95.

of the Sea, the kingship of Yahweh was rooted in the experience of redemption. The one who redeemed the Israelites is their king. It is pointed out by scholars that in the Near Eastern religious literature also there are references to the concept that human rule and divine rule are incompatible.³² But the distinct feature of faith in the Old Testament is that Yahweh is the king who redeemed his people and entered into a covenant relationship with them. Redemption, covenant, and kingship are inextricably linked together.

Among the rest of the Judges, five of them are simply said to have "judged over Israel" (Tola 10:1-2; Izban 12:8-10; Elon 12:11-12; Jair 10:3-5; and Abdon 12:13-15). In these cases there is no reference to oppression, prayer of the people, Yahweh's response or battles. But it has to be noted that they all appear within the context of the general theme explicated in 2:6-3:6. In the case of the rest of the judges who were engaged in the battles there are always references to the initiative of Yahweh, his raising of the judges, his empowering of the men with his spirit, and his giving victory over the enemies. Thus the redemptive activity of Yahweh continues throughout the history of his people.

Battles During the Time of Samuel and Saul

The concept of Yahweh as warrior played a significant role in the history of the Ark during the period of Samuel. After the initial defeat of the Israelites by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4), the Ark was in the land of the Philistines. But the return of the Ark was regarded by the

³²Ibid.

Philistines as well as by the Israelites as a defeat for the Philistines. While the Ark was in the midst of the Philistines, it is stated that "the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them." The Lord afflicted them with tumors, and deathly panic, and terrified them (1 Sam. 5:6, 9, 11). Ultimately the Philistines confessed that "these are the gods who smote the Egyptians with every sort of plagues in the wilderness" (4:8), and exclaimed, "Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts?" (6:6). The similarity between the plague which the Philistines experienced and the deliverance from Egypt was obvious to the ancient writers.³³ The events described in this narrative demonstrate the intervention of Yahweh in history for his people, with his presence symbolized by the Ark.

That Yahweh was fighting for the people of Israel is emphasized in 1 Sam. 7:7-14: "The Lord thundered with a mighty voice," threw the Philistines into confusion, and they were routed before Israel. Only after Yahweh had defeated them did the Israelites pursue them and defeat them (the same sequence appears in 1 Samuel 14 also when Jonathan went against the Philistines). The help accorded by Yahweh is described as an "answer," manifested as an intervention from heaven, as in the case of the walls of Jericho, the miracle of the sun in the valley of Aijalon, or the stars at the brook of Kishon. The decisive action comes from Yahweh. It is he who deals with the enemies; the human share in the action is faith.³⁴

³³Lind, p. 97.

³⁴Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, I and II Samuel, trans. J. S. Bowden, ed. G. Ernest Wright et al (London: SCM Press, 1964), p. 68.

In 1 Samuel 15 the theme of "herem" in the holy war is brought out, Saul was advised by Samuel to destroy everything among the Amalekites. But, contrary to this advise, Saul and his men kept the best things and destroyed only the worthless things. Since this was contrary to the concept of the holy war, Saul was rebuked by Samuel and rejected from being king.

Battles of the Monarchical Period in Israel

During the period of monarchy Israel went through dramatic changes within a period of five centuries. It grew from a tribal confederation to a powerful dynasty, becoming an empire during the time of David and Solomon. "With the rise of monarchy Israel found herself in profound crisis. The reign of Solomon was particularly drastic. Israel has now stepped out into the political stage. She was drawn into international diplomacy."³⁵ Confrontations and/or alliances with the foreign nations in different periods of this time brought serious repercussions with respect to her faith and life. In addition to international diplomacy and confrontations/alliances, the division of the kingdom after Solomon became a serious threat. The relationship between the two kingdoms was one of tension and conflicts except for a brief period during the reign of Omride dynasty in the northern kingdom. Mutual confrontation often forced one or the other kingdoms to seek the assistance of foreign powers who took advantage of the situation and inflicted heavy blows. Thus the period of the monarchy in Israel witnessed a series of wars, and

³⁵Von Rad, p. 21.

both kingdoms had to pay a heavy price with respect to national existence and religious integrity.

Besides political crises, the kingdom(s) of Israel experienced religious, moral, and social crises also. The messages of the prophets of ninth and eighth centuries B.C. depict the gravity of the crises which had overtaken the people of Israel. The conflicts which Israel experienced during this period have to be understood in such context also. The summary statement in 2 Kings 17:7-18 regarding the fall of the northern kingdom, and the one in 2 Chron. 36:17-21 regarding the fall of the southern kingdom give a comprehensive interpretation of the conditions in Israel during this period. In the light of these statements, it is obvious that whenever God intervened on behalf of the people of Israel, it was always an act of grace and mercy who was faithful to his promises in spite of the unfaithfulness of the people.

Warfare During the Period of David and Solomon

References to Yahweh as warrior are relatively rare in the battles conducted by David and his army. The Davidic wars were of an aggressive nature, and emphasis given to his use of a private army which fought battles for him. There are, however, tacit references to Yahweh giving him victory over the enemies. After the capture of Jerusalem and building of the city a reference is made that "the Lord God of hosts was with him" (2 Sam. 5:10). A general statement is made in 2 Sam. 8:6 and 14 that "the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went."³⁶ Only in one instance, for example, in his war against the Philistines

³⁶Lind, p. 117. But Lind holds that it is a later insertion.

(2 Sam. 5:17-25) are there explicit references to Yahweh's promise that he would give the Philistines into the hands of David, and to Yahweh's going before him in the battle. On the basis of these and the general references it may be concluded "that the Lord stood at the side of the king with 'saving power.'"³⁷ The period of Solomon passed without any serious warfare.

Warfare After the Division of the Kingdom

The kingdom of Judah and Israel saw a great number of wars during this period. Besides fighting with each other, Judah was fighting with Edom, Philistia, Ammon and Syria. According to 2 Chron. 14:9-14 Judah had to face a threat from the Ethiopians also. Probably it refers to some raid into Judean territory by some Bedouins from the outlying areas in the south.³⁸ Israel was fighting with Syria throughout the ninth and eighth centuries B.C. The greatest threat to both the kingdoms came from the great empires of Assyria, Egypt and Babylon. It can be said that it was a period of wars for the kingdoms of Judah and Israel.

The theology of Yahweh as warrior fighting for his people is vividly depicted both in Deuteronomistic history and in the Chronicler's account. Whenever there was a major battle in which Israel and/or Judah won the war, victory is always attributed to Yahweh's intervention on their behalf.

³⁷Hertzberg, p. 292.

³⁸Peter R. Ackroyd, I and II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah (London: SCM Press, 1973), p. 137.

Battles in the "Deuteronomic History"

Two invasions of Israel by Beh-hadad are recorded in 1 Kings 20. In both instances Ahab seemed to be helpless. He replied to Ben-hadad's demand, "My lord, O king, I am yours, and all I have" (verse 4). When Ben-hadad demanded more than what Ahab was willing to give, he helplessly counselled with the elders of Israel. When the Syrian army invaded the second time it is reported that "the people of Israel encamped before them like two little flocks of goats, but the Syrians filled the country" (verse 27). This demonstrates the fact that the army of Ahab was relatively weak to face the threat of Syria. In each of the instances, a prophet approached Ahab and assured him that Yahweh would give the enemies into his hands (verses 13-15, 28). In the ensuing battles the enemies fled before Israel who pursued after them and defeated them (verses 19-21, 29-30). Victory of Israel over Syria the second time is followed by a peace treaty between Ahab and Ben-hadad. But Ahab was indicted by a prophet for letting Ben-hadad go, when Yahweh had "devoted" him for destruction (verses 35-43). Here, the idea of "herem" is brought out.

The other battles which involved prophetic word, victory through miracle, and victory attributed to Yahweh are recorded in 2 Kings 3:4-27; 6:8-7:20; and 18-19. In 19:35 it is said that "the angel of the Lord went forth and slew a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians." The concept of Yahweh as warrior fighting for his people is explicitly stated in these battles.

Even though the kings of the northern kingdom are given a negative evaluation in the Deuteronomic history with specific reference to

Jeroboam and his sins, and very particularly the Omride dynasty comes under the drastic judgment of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, the victories of Israel over the neighboring countries are attributed to Yahweh alone. It underscores the fact that Yahweh's forgiveness, and his covenant promises are the basis for his intervention on behalf of his people. Deliverance of Jerusalem from the attack of Sennacherib is also portrayed as an act of grace. Through the prophet Isaiah Yahweh announced, "I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David" (2 Kings 19:34). Victory always depends on Yahweh, not on human strength.

Battles in the Chronicler's History

The theme of holy war is very explicitly presented in the Chronicler's history, (for example, 2 Chron. 13:1-20; 14:9-14; 16:1-10; 20:1-30; 25:5-14; and 32). An analysis of Jehoshaphat's battle with the combined forces of the Moabites and Ammonites (2 Chron. 20:1-30) shall be taken as an example. The following steps should be observed:

A great army invades

Result: Fear of the king

Calling of the assembly and fast

Prayer of the king. Appeal to Yahweh on the basis of Yahweh's sovereignty, gift of the land as the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham, his presence in their midst, and acknowledging their powerlessness and trust in Yahweh.

Yahweh's response through the prophet Zechariah.

The battle is God's; do not be afraid. You need not fight, Yahweh will fight.

Response of the king and the people.

Worshipped Yahweh and praised Him. The king encourages the people on the basis of the assurance of Yahweh.

The battle.

Judah did not fight. Yahweh caused an ambush in the midst of the enemies who killed each other.

Judah's pursuit

The men of Judah took the spoils and returned praising Yahweh

The same points can be observed in the rest of the battles also even though not all the above steps are present in every battle. It will be also noted that the details of the theme that Yahweh is the warrior discussed in the other battles earlier in this chapter are also present in these battles.

The most significant factor in these battles are the words spoken by a prophet, and the prayer and/speech made by a king before or during the war (for example, 1:4-12; 14:11-12; 16:7-10; 25:7-10). The themes which run through them are: (1) Yahweh is the ruler of all the earth, and he watches over the earth to show his might on behalf of those who trust in him. (2) Yahweh is the God of the covenant. He made a covenant with the forefathers on the basis of which he led them from Egypt and gave them the land of Canaan. He made a covenant with David on the basis of which he had established his kingdom in the hands of the sons of David. (3) Yahweh's continuous presence in their midst is assured as signified in the presence of the temple. (4) Israel/Judah is powerless and helpless in the face of powerful armies of the enemies. But Yahweh is their God who is their God who is available to help them always. (5) To fight against his people amounts to fighting against Yahweh himself. The people of Yahweh do not have to fight its enemies because the battles are Yahweh's. He fights against the enemies and wins the battles for them without their participation in the fighting. (6) The

response of the people is to confidently trust in him and to give thanks and praise him.

These observations on the basis of the prayers and speeches give insight into the nature of God involved in the holy war, his relationship with the people of covenant and with the rest of the world, the meaning of history in relation to Yahweh's covenant promises, and the response of the people in times of crises as well as of peace.

Battles of Israel and the Theology of Defeat

To enumerate all the instances in which Israel was defeated in its battles is beyond the limit of this chapter. Nevertheless, a brief description of the theology behind the narratives of defeat will be made in this section.

Earlier in this chapter reference was made to Israel's experiences of conflicts on the basis of the statements found in Judg. 2:1-5 and 2:6-3:6. Yahweh gave them into the hands of their enemies as a result of their breach of the covenant. Reference was also made to 2 Kings 17:7-18 and 2 Chron. 36:17-21, which give a summary statement of the reason for the fall of the northern kingdom and of the southern kingdom respectively. From these references it becomes obvious that the defeats which the people of Israel experienced were also caused by Yahweh.

To illustrate this point Lind suggests three examples under the heading "A Theology of Defeat." (1) The defeat experienced by the Israelites in Kadesh Barnea (Num. 14:39-45) elucidated the fact that Yahweh's presence was essential for victory, and that his absence resulted in defeat. (2) Israel's defeat at Ai (Joshua 7) as a consequence of Achan's sin which illustrates the fact that the things devoted to Yahweh (herem)

had to be destroyed. (3) The capture of the Ark by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4) as a judgment upon the leadership of Eli and his sons.³⁹ A few references from the Chronicler's history offer more theological insights into the theology of defeat. In 2 Chron. 12:1-12 it is reported that Shishak, king of Egypt came against Judah with a vast army, captured the fortified towns, and plundered the treasures of the temple. The prophet Shemaiah appeared and announced that the reason for this defeat was because they had abandoned Yahweh, Yahweh had abandoned them in the hands of Shishak. In 2 Chronicles 18 the defeat and death of Ahab in the battle against Syria is attributed to the decision made in the divine council according to the words of the prophet Micaiah (see also 1 Kings 22). After the war was over, the prophet Jehu approached Jehoshaphat who had allied himself with Ahab in the battle and rebuked him as follows: "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord?" (2 Chron. 19:2). This is probably a reference to the apostasy during the period of Ahab, and the breach of the covenant stipulations as evidenced in the instance of the vineyard of Naboth (see 1 Kings 22:37-38). Edom and Libnah are said to have revolted against Judah during the days of Jehoram "because he had forsaken the Lord, the God of his fathers" (2 Chron. 21:8-10). Ahaz was defeated by the Syrians because of the apostasy and the abominable practices he had promoted in the kingdom of Judah (2 Chron. 28:1-6). Of particular interest is the reference to the death of Josiah by the hand of Pharaoh Necho because he refused to listen to the words of warning from Yahweh (2 Chron. 35:20-24). "Necho is here depicted as sending a strong warning to Josiah not to interfere with him since he is

³⁹Lind, pp. 109-10.

acting at God's command. Such a divine word, though coming through a strange mediator, ought to have been enough for a king like Josiah. But Josiah was blind to it."⁴⁰

To summarize the above observations, (1) Victory depends always and only on Yahweh's fighting. (2) Defeat in the battle is the result of Israel's and/or her leaders' sin against God and their disobedience. (3) The principle which underlies in these narratives is "rooted in the Mosaic covenant itself."⁴¹

Ex-mythological, Prophetic, and Apocalyptic Understanding of Yahweh as Warrior

The above three themes are dealt together for the following reasons. First, ex-mythological language of warfare is used, among other places, in the prophetic books often. Second, ex-mythological language is used with reference both to Israel's experience of the past and to the future.

Prophetic View of Yahweh as Warrior

Earlier in this chapter we observed the role played by prophets in the battles of Yahweh/battles of Israel (for example, Moses, Deborah, Samuel), and also that of the prophets who appear in the Deuteronomic and Chronicler's history. While some of them took leadership in the battles, others appear either as giving counsel regarding wars, as rebuking or encouraging the kings/people, or interpreting the events of battles. Such prophets play a significant role in the battles of Yahweh/Israel. Prophets who played a most significant role in the wars of

⁴⁰Ackroyd, p. 205.

⁴¹Lind, p. 112.

Israel are Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 17-2 Kings 13), both of whom lead a prophetic revolution in the ninth century B.C., thus playing a significant part in the shaping of the history of Israel.

There are passages in the prophetic oracles which reflect the holy war motif: Isaiah 13 with oracles against Babylon, 15-16 against Moab, 18 against Damascus, 19 against Egypt, Jeremiah 50-51 against Babylon, 46-49 against other nations; Amos 1-2 against various nations, including Israel and Judah. The prophets announced God's judgment on the nations, both Israel and others alike. This phenomenon illustrates the sovereignty of God over all the nations, his guiding the history of the nations as well as of Israel, and the expression of divine judgment and love for all. God does not deal exclusively with Israel; he deals with all the kingdoms of the earth.

Special reference must be made to the redemption of Israel from the Babylonian exile. Even though Israel was not involved in a battle in the process of restoration the imagery of warfare is frequently used in Isaiah 40-55. Restoration from exile is understood as a great act of redemption (41:14; 43:14; 44:5, 24, and so on). Yahweh avenges himself upon those who have violated what belongs to him (41:14-16; 43:14; 47:5-11). He is to bring judgment of wrath upon the enemies of Israel (41:11-12; 49:25-26, and so forth). The redeemer of Israel is also the executor of judgment over the enemies of Israel.

Military imagery is illustrated by the references to Yahweh's coming with might (40:10), his hand/right hand/victorious right hand (40:10; 41:10, 13; 43:10; 45:1). The "arm of Yahweh" is used as a symbol of his power to redeem Israel and to avenge their enemies. This

military imagery is similar to the passages in Ex. 15:3-4; Num. 10:35-36; Judges 5 and other references mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Redemption from exile is also described as a second exodus (43:3-7). The reference to the highway in the wilderness (40:3-5), water in the wilderness (41:18), way in the sea (43:16), the "new thing" (43:18-19), and so forth, are descriptive of the restoration from exile as a "new exodus" which will be accomplished by Yahweh in his might. The references in Isaiah illustrate the fact that Yahweh who once fought the battles of Israel in the past intervened in present and future, thus bringing the past memories alive in the present context of their life.

Ex-mythological Language Used to Describe Yahweh's Battles in the Past

There are several passages in the Old Testament in which Yahweh's war-like activity is presented in ex-mythological terms. The various expressions used to describe the opposing forces are (1) Rahab (Is. 30:7; 51:9; Ps. 89:10; Job 9:13; 26:12-13), (2) Tannin "the dragon" or "the monster" (Is. 51:9; Ezek. 29:3; 32:2; Ps. 74:13; Job 7:12), (3) "the serpent" (Is. 27:1; Amos 9:3; Job 26:13), (4) the sea (Is. 51:10; Hab. 3:8; Ps. 74:13; Job 7:12; 26:12; 38:8),⁴² and (5) "the great deep" (Is. 51:10).⁴³

The best example in which ex-mythological terms are used is

⁴²R. B. Y. Scott, The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39 in The Interpreter's Bible, 12 vols, ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), 5:310.

⁴³See Chapter III, Yam-Nahar, Lotan, the Sea Dragon and the seven-headed serpent are used to mean the same thing.

⁴⁴Cross, p. 136.

Is. 51:9-11, sometimes called "Ode to Yahweh's arm."⁴⁴ The object which is mentioned to have been overcome or tamed by Yahweh are Rahab, tannin, yam, and (in Aramaic) t^ehom rabba'. All those terminologies were familiar throughout the Near East. We observed earlier in this paper the mythology of the Baal-Anath conflict against Yam (the sea) in the Ugaritic literature. The Ugaritic myth is similar to the Akkadian account in the Enuma elish in which Marduk slayed Tiamat, the great dragon. Marduk after slaying Tiamat, with the two halves of her body formed the heaven and earth.⁴⁵ But it has to be noted that Israel's faith is not based on cosmogonic mythology, but on revelation; interpreting her experience in history of the mighty acts of Yahweh. The main thrust of the poem is redemption from Egypt, and the deliverance through the sea. Redemption for Israel is not a myth, but an historical event. So, the emphasis is that the same Yahweh who is the Lord of creation and established order over against the powers of chaos is also the one who has acted in an historical situation. "The magnificent apostrophe to the arm of Yahweh is developed by reference to primeval time when the world was created and to Israel's most ancient time in which she was delivered through mighty wonders from the land of Egypt."⁴⁶ This is not merely an indication of universal Near Eastern terminologies used in the Old Testament. Rather, a profound theological significance lies behind the usage of such imagery. Yahweh formed a way for his people to pass through the sea: "The cosmic combat has been transformed into the history of the

⁴⁵James Muilenberg, The Book of Isaiah, Chapter 40-66 in The Interpreter's Bible, 12 vols., ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), 5:596.

⁴⁶Ibid.

Exodus and the crossing of the Sea of Reeds."⁴⁷ The song expresses also the hope that the same or similar event of Exodus will be repeated. The God who once redeemed Israel from bondage is the one who is going to redeem them from exile. Thus, history repeats, not in the manner of cosmogonic "cycle," but as a continuation of the pattern of Yahweh's intervening in history in times of crises. The miraculous deliverance through the Sea is not only a past event, but also an event in the immediate future. It is from Yahweh's action in history that Israel knows the God to whom she appeals.⁴⁸ The community's lament or appeal is followed by the divine answer in verses 12-16 that Yahweh was about to act again.

The same theme is found in several Psalms also, for example, Ps. 74:13-15 alludes to the miracles both of the Exodus and of the entry into the promised land. Dividing the sea by Yahweh's might, breaking the heads of the dragons, crushing the heads of Leviathan, cleaving open the springs and brooks, drying up the ever-flowing streams - all these probably refer to the event at the Sea and at the River Jordan (see also Ps. 77:16-20; 89:9-12; 93:3-4; 107:29-30). The theme of combat of the gods against the powers of chaos was this "historicized" within the framework of the Heilgeschichte as the account of the judgment which Yahweh passed on his own and his people's enemies.⁴⁹ It is to be remembered that the poems referred to above do not speak of Yahweh's victory over other gods in combat with him - as the Old Testament faith is monotheistic over

⁴⁷Ibid. 5:598.

⁴⁸Claus Westermann, Isaiah 40-66, trans. M. G. Stalker, ed. G. Ernest Wright et al (London: SCM Press, 1969, p. 243).

⁴⁹Arthur Weiser, The Psalms, trans. Herbert Hartwell, ed. G. Ernest Wright et al (London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 51.

against the polytheistic beliefs of the Near Eastern religions - but as his victories over the historic enemies of Yahweh and his people.

In the Psalms the exodus and conquest event is described as the march of Yahweh (see Ps. 77:19-20). The "march of the people" is itself the "march of Yahweh." Yahweh as the warrior marches before and with his people as the leader of the army and as a shepherd leading his people into the promised land. Yahweh does not fight for his own benefit, but for the benefit of the people. His march to the promised land is not a mythological one, but a historical march with the people of his covenant. The ex-mythological language is used both to show Yahweh's cosmic and universal might, and that he is involved in the life of his people. This forms the basis for hope in the future, that Yahweh will again act for them. "In spite of all their memories and crippling impressions, their faith enables them to hold on in a boldly daring resolve ('and yet') to things which comprised the particular content of the cult of the covenant (in which the Psalms were recited) and which cannot be destroyed."⁵⁰ As Yahweh marches in his warfare, Israel also marches from one step in history to the other with the banner of faith that the one who acted in the past acts in the present and will act for the future, shaping the events of history according to his established purposes.

Yahweh as Warrior in Eschatological-Apocalyptic Literature of Old Testament

Definition

There has not been a consensus among scholars regarding the definition of the terms "eschatological" and "apocalyptic," as well as on

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 519.

the relationship between the two. Even an outstanding scholar like von Rad would say that "the proper definition of 'eschatological' is anything but settled even today."⁵¹ In some literature "'apocalyptic' and 'eschatological' are used as virtual synonyms, . . . More often, however, 'apocalyptic' or 'apocalyptic eschatology' is contrasted with the 'eschatology of the prophets,' the latter allegedly more sober, immanentistic and this-worldly in contrast to the other-worldly and supernaturalistic apocalyptic."⁵² The supernaturalistic eschatology is also called "transcendent eschatology."⁵³ According to this interpretation, prophetic eschatology is the age which is to happen "within history,"⁵⁴ and the transcendent eschatology (apocalyptic) "expects a direct and universal act of God, beyond the possibilities of ordinary history, issuing in a radically transformed world."⁵⁵ One may not argue with such a definition of apocalyptic eschatology. But if such an interpretation denies the direct and universal act of God in the prophetic eschatology, it will have to be questioned. It is true that some of the literary characteristics of apocalyptic literature in its most developed form as found in the book of Daniel are not found in the prophetic eschatology; but they are not totally absent. Any denial of direct and universal action by God in

⁵¹Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, 2 vols., trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper and Bros., 1965), 2:114.

⁵²Horace D. Hummel, The Word Becoming Flesh (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), p. 550.

⁵³R. J. Bauckham, "Apocalyptic," The Illustrated Bible Dictionary, 3 vols., ed. J. D. Douglas et al (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1980), 1:73.

⁵⁴Von Rad, Old Testament Theology, p. 115.

⁵⁵Bauckham, p. 73.

the prophetic eschatology amounts to discrediting the continuity of the two testaments as well as the continuity of God's action in history, and particularly in the salvation history as found in the Old Testament. It has to be admitted that "the eschatological victory is not only future but present and 'existential'"⁵⁶ and vice versa, that is, it is both present and future.

Yahweh as Warrior and the Day of Yahweh

The expectation of Day of Yahweh has been often regarded as the very heart of prophetic eschatology.⁵⁷ The ultimate origin of the concept of the Day of Yahweh, whether holy war or cult, is a debated question. Von Rad holds the view that its origin is a holy war.⁵⁸ It is very possible that the concepts had its roots in holy war and cult,⁵⁹ especially in the cultic procession.⁶⁰ The term "the Day of Yahweh" or a similar expression such as "that day" is frequently used in the prophetic oracles. In these passages the Day of Yahweh is described as the day of terror, of agony, or wrath, of vengeance, of destruction, of wailing, and so forth. It is due to the result of Yahweh coming against the enemies. The effects of Yahweh's coming against the enemies are described as cosmic: it will have its effect upon men, the heaven, the earth, and all that is found in them. The enemies against whom Yahweh marches are the

⁵⁶Hummel, p. 556.

⁵⁷Von Rad, Old Testament Theology, p. 119.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 119-25.

⁵⁹Hummel, p. 197.

⁶⁰See Is. 2:12; 13:6, 9; 22:5; 34:8; Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 7:10; 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1; 2:31; 3:14; Amos 5:18-20; Obad. 15; Zeph. 1:7, 8, 14-18; Zech. 14:1.

people of Israel in some instances, and the nations in others, particularly the historical enemies of Israel. The reasons are stated to be against Israel because of their sins, and against the nations because of their sins, particularly because of their cruelty toward Israel. It is depicted thus as a day of judgment. At the same time it is described as a day of salvation. It will be a day of salvation for Israel when he avenges the enemies, and restores Zion. Yahweh will establish his rule in Zion. It is also promised that it will be a day of salvation for all the nations who call upon his name.

According to the descriptions in these passages the following dialectics can be found in the message of the Day of Yahweh: (1) Judgment and salvation, (2) Particularism (Israel) and universalism (the nations), and (3) present and the future (already and not-yet). Yahweh's purpose includes both the people of his covenant for whom he fights, and at the same time it includes the nations also. The warfare of Yahweh is projected in the immediate future when he deals with his historical enemies, and at the same time it is projected into the farthest future when he will deal with the entire world.

Yahweh as Warrior in the Proto-apocalyptic Passages

Within the Old Testament Canon, apocalyptic eschatology (in the strict sense, as defined above) is represented exclusively by the book of Daniel. But already within the prophetic books of the Old Testament, there are passages which, in effect, pronounce apocalyptic eschatology (Isaiah 24-27; Ezekiel 38-39; Joel 3-4; Zechariah 9-14). They are often termed "proto-apocalyptic" passages. The messages of Joel and Zechariah are similar to those of the rest of the "Day of Yahweh" passages. Brief

reference will be made to the passages of Isaiah and Ezekiel.

Isaiah 24-27

This is a collection of eschatological prophecy, psalms of thanksgiving and prayers. Critical scholars attribute this section to the later post-exilic period and assume that it was appended to earlier traditions in the book of Isaiah.⁶¹ Such observation is based on the assumption that apocalypticism is a later development and that there is little or no historical connection between the prophetic message and the apocalyptic message. As pointed out earlier, such a view does not do justice to the text as well as the continuity of the message.

The themes which run through this section are: the land has become polluted by the sins of the people; Yahweh will conquer the powers of heaven and earth; there will be salvation for Judah and Israel which will conquer the powers of heaven and earth; there will be salvation for Judah and Israel which will be united as one nation; there will be salvation for all the nations; Yahweh will establish his rule on the mountain; and people will gather to worship him. It thus points to judgment on Judah and Israel, as well as to the fact that the judgment will be cosmic; there will be salvation for Judah and Israel, and also for the whole world.

Yahweh is portrayed as warrior in his combat against the cosmic forces of evil. Isaiah 27:1 begins with the term "in that day." It reiterates the message of the Day of Yahweh. He will punish Leviathan, the fleeing serpent, Leviathan, the twisting serpent, . . . the dragon that

⁶¹Scott, p. 297.

is in the sea. As we have observed earlier, all these expressions refer to the same thing. We have also observed that ex-mythological imagery is used to describe Yahweh's fighting for his people in historical times, in times of crises. This message is now projected into the future. The message which underlies this passage is: it is Yahweh who created the world and established order, subduing the powers of chaos. The very same God redeemed the people of the covenant from the bondage of Egypt through the miracle at the Sea. He will again redeem them from exile, and ultimately his sovereignty over the entire cosmos subduing the powers of chaos. Thus, ex-mythological imagery is used not only to show Yahweh's victory in the past but also his future and ultimate victory. Here, the prophet is using a phrase which "was traditional in the ancient Levant, ready to be understood and applied in many ways depending on the hermeneutics."⁶² What happened in primordial times, and in historical times, continues to happen and will climax at the end of time. History thus moves from one stage to another until its consummation which is to be brought about by the decisive act of Yahweh.

Isaiah 25:6-8

The prominent motifs found in this section are the eschatological banquet for all the nations, and the final victory over death.⁶³ The ex-mythological imagery of Yahweh as warrior is again used to depict Yahweh's victory. His ultimate victory will benefit not only Israel, but all the nations.

⁶²Hummel, p. 211.

⁶³The theme of Baal's victory over Mot and banquet is a familiar one in Ugaritic mythology.

In verse 6 "the mountain" is portrayed as the site of the feat. According to the context of the text as well as the context of Old Testament theology "the mountain" means Zion. Zion plays a significant role in the Old Testament theology. We have observed earlier that in the Exodus-conquest tradition Mount Sinai has a significant place. It is connected with the covenant theme, not a mythological identification of Yahweh and the mountain. Yahweh is not "bound" to one mountain or the other. "In the course of his history with Israel, Yahweh chose Zion."⁶⁴ Psalm 132 relates how he moved to Zion. He loved it (Ps. 78:68, 87), desired it (Ps. 132:13), and chose it (Ps. 132:13; 68:16). His choice of Zion is an act of grace. In this free election of Zion lies the act of divine condescension,⁶⁵ or his "name" or "glory" becoming incarnate.⁶⁶

Through Yahweh's manifestation in Zion, his lordship will include all nations (Psalm 87; Is. 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-3), and his salvation will be offered to all the nations. In Is. 25:6-8 the salvation is described as a great eschatological banquet. The significant event to happen is his swallowing up of death forever. Death is depicted as the enemy to be ultimately overcome (Hos. 13:14; 1 Cor. 15:54-56; Rev. 21:4). Thus Yahweh's battles and his victory go beyond the horizons of present history and his decisive victory will be accomplished for the sake of the salvation of the whole world. "The affirmation of the triumph of life over death represents the main line of thought of the Old Testament as well as

⁶⁴Othamar Keel, The Symbolism of the Biblical World, trans. Timothy J. Hallett (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), p. 120.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Hummel, p. 427.

of the New Testament, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the definitive manifestation of the power of the living God."⁶⁷

Ezekiel 38-39

The oracles in this section describe how Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, will invade the land of Judah. But the Lord will vindicate his holiness by massacring the invaders. The identity of Gog is uncertain. Magog, with Tubal and Meshech appears in the table of nations in Gen. 10:2. Several suggestions like Gyges king of Lydia, Scythians, Babylon, Alexander, and Antichus Eupator have been made as to the identity of Gog.⁶⁸ But the language of this section is that of apocalyptic. The imagery of the "Day of Yahweh" resounds in this section (38:8, 14, 16; 39:11), which is a familiar terminology used by the prophets to describe the eschatological events.

In these chapters, a massive, final invasion of Israel by the hordes from the north is predicted.⁶⁹ It reflects "other similar pictures of the final assault on Israel or Jerusalem and the last great battle of the nations (see Is. 29:5-8; 63:1-3; 66:15-19; Joel 2:28-32 Hebrew 4:15-16 ; 3:15-16 Hebrew 4:15-16 ; Zech. 12:1-14;21; Obad. 15-16; and so forth)."⁷⁰ At the same time "the elements of the ideology of the cosmological conflict between the god of light and the forces of darkness

⁶⁷E. Jacob, "Death," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, 4 vols., ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 1:802.

⁶⁸Herbert G. May, "The Book of Ezekiel" in The Interpreters Bible, 12 vols., ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), 6:273.

⁶⁹Hummel, p. 278.

⁷⁰May, p. 273.

and chaos are involved in these chapters."⁷¹ The focus of these chapters, in the light of the imagery and language, is the eschatological battle in which Yahweh is the victor.

Yahweh as Warrior in the Book of Daniel

It is beyond the limits of this paper to enter into any discussion on various topics such as the origin of the book, the interpretation of the different world powers represented by the symbolism of the image of the metals or the beasts, and so forth. However, the main motifs which represent holy war will be discussed briefly.

In the earlier section of this chapter reference has been made to the connection between eschatology, proto-apocalypticism, and apocalypticism. It must be noted that even though apocalyptic literature in the strict sense is represented only by the book of Daniel in the Old Testament, there is a distinctive connection between this book and the earlier prophets. The book of Daniel "shares with the oracles of the great eighth, seventh, and sixth-century prophets the view that history has an end which will be brought about by God and that, when that consummation comes, there will be judgment which will manifest who are on God's side and who are at enmity with God."⁷² Like the prophets, "the author of Daniel thought in terms of a unified approach to history, in which the coming of the Messiah was the culmination of a series of world empires, and the winding-up of the age as a matter for divine rather than human decision."⁷³

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Norman W. Porteous, Daniel, ed. G. Ernest Wright et al (London: SCM Press, 1965), p. 14.

⁷³Harrison, p. 1131.

The decisive action is God's, who alone is responsible for the consummation of history. This is distinctively brought out in the visions and interpretations of the book (for example: 2:45; 4:24; 5:26; 7:27, and so forth).

Through the visions, the history of the world is presented as a series of conflicts between the powers of evil and God. It is not to suggest that God and Evil are co-existent. To maintain a view that both are co-existent is contrary to the message of the Scriptures; it reflects only the gnostic teaching of the early Christian centuries, and pagan mythologies. According to the Scriptures, God alone is eternal. "Evil enters the picture only with the primordial rebellion of Satan and man, and it maintains power only by the sufferance of the Almighty. It is one of apocalyptic's central proclamations that the Evil One and all his works have in principle already been judged, and that the time is but short before his final elimination."⁷⁴ The conflicts have a terminus ad quam, when God will effect the final overthrow of the Evil One, and establish his eternal kingdom.

The apocalyptists, as represented Biblically in the book of Daniel, considered the present world order to be under the control of the demonic powers, who using godless rulers as their instruments wage war against the covenant community. They take special delight in their attack against the people of God (for example, 7:24-25; 8:23, and so forth). Thus, war and persecution appear as a test to the faith and endurance of the people of God. According to the apocalyptists, "since the course of history is a record of increasing degeneration and decadence

⁷⁴Hummel, p. 555.

(Dan. 2:31-45), wars will increase in intensity, brutality, and destructiveness, and an uncontrolled outburst of warfare is a sign of the imminent end of the age"⁷⁵ (Dan. 8:23-26). The imminence of the end of the age of warfare and the establishment of the kingdom of God is the consolation and hope for the people of God.

That God himself will fight against the evil powers and overthrow them in the final battle is further illustrated by the fact that he employs the patron angel as the leader of his army (Dan. 11:13, 20-21; 12:1). This clearly shows that no earthly leader of king leads the army but Michael, the archangel, leads God's armies in the final eschatological battle. It also points to the fact that the outcome of the battle has been already determined by God.⁷⁶ The introduction of the angel as the leader of God's army reminds one of the appearance of the angel of Yahweh to Joshua in the account of the conquest of Canaan (Joshua 5:13-15). Victory was accomplished in the battles of Israel throughout the history only by Yahweh, and the same motif is projected into the future eschatological battles.

A uniquely new phenomenon introduced in the book of Daniel is the "Son of Man" in chapter 7. He is presented before "the ancient of days," and to him was given the eternal dominion. The picture is reminiscent of a heavenly court (see also Psalm 82; Deut. 33:2; Job 1-2). Whether the Son of Man is an individual or collective, representing the saints of

⁷⁵L. E. Toombs, "War, Ideas of," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, 4 vols., ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 4:800.

⁷⁶Hummel, p. 590.

Israel is the point of debate among scholars.⁷⁷ On the basis of the other writings of the inter-testamental period, and Jesus' own use of the term for himself, it can be said that it is definitely a Messianic title. For our purpose it is sufficient to say that the ultimate victory belongs to God who overthrows the kingdoms of the world and establishes his eternal kingdom. As it is summarily stated, "the final act in the cosmic drama is the everlasting and universal kingdom of the Son of Man and His saints."⁷⁸

Summary

The motif of "Yahweh" as "Warrior" does not appear prominently in the patriarchal history. But the themes of Yahweh's promise, protection, and guidance find significant place in the life of the patriarchs. At the same time the theme of "election-promise" provides the basis of Yahweh's fighting for his people. This theme is carried throughout the battles of Yahweh.

Yahweh is portrayed as Warrior who fights for his people in each stage of their history. The principles of holy war are followed in the battles. He is present with them as "incarnated" in the Ark, temple, and so on. He marches before them as the leader of the army and fights the battles. The battles are ultimately not Israel's, but Yahweh's. Israel does not fight and win the war. Battles are not fought "synergistically." They are basically decided by Yahweh beforehand, and won by him; Israel only follows Him, and pursues the enemies trusting in Yahweh.

Victories do not depend on Israel's political strength or moral strength. In spite of their political-military weakness, and rebellion

⁷⁷Hummel, p. 556.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 580.

against Yahweh, He acts on their behalf because of his faithfulness to His covenant promise and out of His grace. The theme of judgment and grace runs through the battles.

Yahweh does not fight with other gods. He always fights with His historical enemies and those of His people. His power and authority are unchallenged, and unthreatened, so he does not have to strive to establish his authority. In the course of his battles he performs miracles and wonders by which he defeats the enemies.

Through the battles of Yahweh, history is presented as a unified scheme. The one who created the universe is the same one who wins the battles through history, and will win the battles of the eschatological times and establish his eternal kingdom. Thus history from beginning to the end is presented as a unity.

Prophets and prophetic word play a dominant role in the battles as well as in the interpretation of the battles in terms of Yahweh's design for his people, and their responsibility to repent, and to trust in Him.

Even though Yahweh wins the battles without the aid of man, man does play a part in bringing about crises to himself and to the community as a whole through disobedience, rebellion, and so forth. Thus, the individual is not negated to a non-existing factor. God's concern for the "people" is reflected in his concern for the "individual" also, who is called to face the challenges of life and to look forward with trust in God.

In the description of Yahweh's battles, the available ex-mythological terms and imageries are also used. But the sharp differences

between the mythologies and Yahweh's involvement in history are clearly brought out in the narratives.

CHAPTER V

DISTINCTIVENESS OF OLD TESTAMENT THEME OF "YAHWEH AS WARRIOR" OVER AGAINST THE MYTHO-POETIC LITERATURE OF UGARIT

As indicated at the beginning of chapter III, Ugaritic mythology and Old Testament developed on the same soil within the same cultural milieu. The study of Old Testament will provide ample evidence of the "recurrent motif of conflict between the faith of the jealous God of Israel and the religious culture of Israel's environment."¹ The proximity of the two cultures often resulted in Israel's accommodation of Canaanite faith and practices to their own religion. We have observed in chapter IV how frequently this fact of apostasy became the object of condemnation by the prophets, both of the leaders such as the kings and of the people of Israel as well. At the same time, in a positive way the available language structures, and ex-mythological imageries and concepts of the environment were used in the Old Testament writings to underscore the distinctive character of Israelite faith. Thus, the same terminologies and imageries often connote radically different meanings and messages. This is very true of the theme of the battles of Yahweh in the Old Testament and those of the gods in the Ugaritic literature. Several

¹Norman C. Habel, Yahweh Versus Baal: A Conflict of Religious Cultures (New York: Bookman Associates, 1964), p. 13.

scholars have made extensive study of the various terminologies used in the Ugaritic literature and in the Old Testament to point out the similarities and dissimilarities. Therefore, no new attempt is made in this chapter to analyze comparatively the terminologies and imageries. An attempt will be made only to underline the distinctiveness of the Old Testament with reference to the nature of the deities who appear in the conflicts, the role of the deities in history, the meaning of redemption, and the role of man in history in order to formulate a basis for the comparison of specific themes between the Old Testament and Krishna mythology.

Nature of God in the Old Testament Conflict Motif
And of the Deities in the Ugaritic Literature

Monotheism Versus Polytheism

In the passages analyzed in chapter IV, Yahweh is portrayed as the warrior God who led the people of Israel victoriously through the various stages of history, and his victory is projected into the future eschatological battles also. In the Ugaritic literature, Baal and Anath appear as the warrior deities par excellence. At the same time several other deities such as Yam, Mot, and several other minor ones are also involved in the conflicts. Thus a plurality of deities is accepted in the Ugaritic texts, whereas in the Old Testament Yahweh alone is God. According to the Ugaritic texts, the major deities involved in the combats belong to the same family whose head is El. There seems to be a territorial division of authority among the deities - Baal in the sky, Yam in the waters and Mot in the underworld. Therefore, the conflicts are among the deities themselves in order to establish the supremacy of

one or the other over the others, and the struggles continue constantly. In the process of the battles, gods die and rise again in a repetitive manner. In the Old Testament narratives of conflicts, Yahweh does not fight with gods; no gods or powers threaten his authority, and His sovereignty is incomparable. Ex-mythological imageries are used in the Old Testament only to emphasize His sovereignty over the powers of chaos and the historic nature of the battles. The whole creation is under his power so that he uses them in the battles (the sea, stars, thunder, waters, rain, and so forth) only as tools to accomplish his purposes. Neither those who assist him nor those who oppose him are recognized as gods. Yahweh alone fights the battles.

Another factor to be considered in this connection is the notion of the divine assembly in the Old Testament and in the literature of Ugarit (and the surrounding cultures). We have observed in chapter III that in Ugaritic mythology El appears as the head of the pantheon, and that consultations are held between the deities as to the course of action to be taken in a given situation. There are several passages in the Old Testament which refer to the assembly of Yahweh (Jer. 23:18; 1 Kings 22:5-28; Psalm 82; Is. 6:1-12; Job 1-2; Zech. 3:1-10, and so forth).² Although there are similarities of terminologies and concepts, there is a fundamental difference between the Old Testament concept and that of the Ugaritic (and other Near Eastern) texts. As Patrick Miller has stated:

Israel's was basically a monotheistic faith in which these heavenly beings were not independent, self-sufficient, major deities, but

²Frank Moore Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 186-90.

simply a part of the large group of divine beings subject to the will of Yahweh, whereas elsewhere they maintained independent status as major deities.³

We have observed in chapter III that among the gods in the Ugaritic pantheon the deities used various techniques such as threatening, flattering, lamenting, pleading, and so on, to achieve a desired decision, whereas in the Old Testament there is no competition among the members of the divine council. The decision is always Yahweh's, and the rest of the members of the council, either a prophet or an angel, is only an agent to execute his decision or to announce His decree. The monotheistic faith of Old Testament does not compromise with the polytheistic faith of the surrounding cultures.

Nature Versus Life

Closely related to the point discussed above is the relation between the deity and nature. In the Ugaritic mythology, the death of Baal results in the sterility of the soil, and when he is revived the world of nature responds with joy, and fertility returns - heavens raining oil and wadies running with honey. Thus fertility and/or sterility depend upon the life and death of a god. In the Old Testament also we read of material blessings conferred by Yahweh. The promised land is also a "land flowing with milk and honey" (Deut. 26:9). The imageries of fertility appear in the eschatological message when the hills will flow with wine (Amos 9:13), waters will run like oil (Ezek. 32:14), and so forth. But such material blessing in the Old Testament is "nowhere a symbol of Yahweh redivivus, but of the material and physical dimension

³Patrick D. Miller, The Divine Warrior in Early Israel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 70.

of Yahweh's blessing of Israel."⁴ The identification of nature and deity is foreign to the faith of the Old Testament; rather creation is subject to Yahweh's purposes.

The identification of the deity with nature in the Ugaritic literature is further demonstrated by the descriptions of the deities in the texts as well as in the accounts of the sexual relationship between the deities such as El and Asherah, and Baal and Anath who perform sexual intercourse. It may be argued that these representations are only suggestive of the fact that virility and fertility are caused by the deities, and that the revival of a deity from death is a symbol of life, represented by the revival of fertility. But it must be noted that according to mythology revival of life depends on the reenactment of the myth in the cult, and that cult has a creative function. Contrary to these concepts, Old Testament never entertains such ideas as sexual relationship between gods for the fertility and life of the world; such an idea is considered as abomination. The creative word is the cause of life according to the Old Testament (for example, Genesis 1; Is. 40:18-26; 41:17-20, and so on).

The Relationship Between the Deity (Deities) and History

Mythological Versus Historical

According to the Ugaritic texts, as we have stated earlier, the conflicts occur between the deities. They are mythological in the sense that they need to be reenacted in the cult for the sake of fertility.

⁴Habel, p. 106.

The main motif is the fertility of the land, not the history of a people. The combat among gods falls into the category of "theogony" in the sense that it describes the emergence of one or the other god as supreme. It is also "cosmogonic" in the sense that it describes the origin and maintenance of the cosmos: each reenactment, that is, it is cyclical and timeless, to be repeated. In the myth there is no historical or time reference, no reference to people. In the epics of Keret and of Aqhat there are no references to individuals, but even in those references certain mythological patterns are adopted to the extent that the stories are brought to a level of semi-mythological narratives. Keret is identified as "El's beloved lad" (Keret A.i.40, 61), a god (C.i.104-105); the son who was to be born to him through the lady Hurria was to "draw the milk of A(sh)erah, such the breasts of the maiden Anath, the two wet nurses (of the gods)" (B.i.20-21). In these references it is not clear whether the other characters are gods or demigods or men. The overtones of fertility cult are also reflected in the epics. When Keret was ill,

The plowmen raise their heads,
Upward growers of corn,
Spent is the bread corn (from) their jars,
Spent is the wine from their skin-bottles,
Spent the oil from (their) jugs (Keret G.iii.11-16).

Similarly when Daniel, son of Aqhat was slain by Yatpan on the instigation of Anath, Daniel's sister Phaghat weeps for him and cries,

Seven years shall Baal fail,
Eight the Rider of the clouds,
No dew, no rain;
No welling up of the deep
No sweetness of Baal's voice (Aqhat C.i.42-46).⁵

⁵Quotations cited from Keret and Aqhat are taken from H. L. Ginsberg, "Ugaritic Myths, Epics, and Legends," in Ancient Near Eastern

Thus, in the epics also the themes and patterns of mythology are followed with specific emphasis on fertility. There is no concept of a continuous history in the myths and epics of Ugarit.

In contrast to the mythological thrust of the Ugaritic texts, battles of Yahweh in the Old Testament are historical. He was always fighting against historical enemies, for example, Egypt, Canaan, Syria, Assyria, and so on. The historical enemies of Israel are the enemies of Yahweh. These are not battles without time references. They occur in historical times with historical sequences. Even though ex-mythological imageries such as Yam and Mot are used, they serve to interpret theologically the historical battles of the past, present and future including the eschatological battles. According to the Old Testament concept of Yahweh's battles, "eschaton" is not repetitive as in mythology, but it is an event to happen at the end of the times. History moves from one stage to another; and Yahweh is always in control of history. He is not a God "absconditus" who once acts and resigns from history; rather He always acts through historical events and historical persons in order to accomplish His purposes.

According to the Old Testament, history moves from one stage to the other with a definitive scheme, from the creation of the world in the primordial times to the eschatological event when the kingdom of Yahweh will be ultimately established. Such a definitive theme is totally absent in the Ugaritic and other literature of the Near Eastern religions.

Texts, ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), pp. 143-55.

Relevance of Prophetic Word in the
Understanding of History

A major factor in the understanding of history in the Old Testament is the prophetic word. In the battles of deities in the Ugaritic mythology no such phenomenon as the prophetic word occurs, whereas in the battles of Yahweh the prophets played a major role. It is not that they cooperated with Yahweh in fighting the battles, rather they served as spokesmen of Yahweh who gave direction, advise, warnings, and so forth. The most significant factor is their proclamation as messengers of Yahweh. The prophetic idea of the deity's intervention in history is also found in Egyptian, Accadian, and Hittite texts. But,

what distinguishes the prophetic view of history from that of other oriental peoples is not the thought that Yahweh works in historical events, but rather that the prophets regarded history of Israel as a coherent history directed by moral principles and in accordance with a fixed plan. At the beginning of that history stood the fact of election, manifested in the deliverance from Egypt. The events which followed were the consequences of this historical fact; and the final goal of this historical sequence was the full realization of the idea of election. Other peoples had nothing corresponding to this view of history.⁶

While Israel discovered its own history in the light of the historical election, it also had a concept of the history of all mankind. The history of mankind provided a framework to the history of the people of Israel.⁷ The prophets were able to proclaim the meaning of events in the history of the nations, particularly as they affected the life of the people of Israel, as the intervention of Yahweh, directing the history of the peoples according to his definite fixed plans. It is true of

⁶J. Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), pp. 324-25.

⁷Ibid., p. 325.

the eschatological message of the prophets as well as the apocalyptists.

Equally important is the prophetic word of divine judgment and grace. The prophets of Israel categorically denounced the sins of Israel as well as of the other peoples - their leaders (and kings) and people alike. They also announced grace to Israel as well as to all the peoples. This dialectic of judgment and grace is totally absent in the mythological texts of the Near East.

The Meaning of Redemption

Israel's History as History of Salvation

We have observed in the last section that the people of Israel perceived Yahweh as the Lord of history through both divine revelation and their experience of his acts for and on behalf of them. This theme runs through the narratives of conflict in the Old Testament. What made the characteristic impact on such understanding is the concept of election and covenant. "The greatest gift given by history to the people of Israel was the consciousness of being chosen by Yahweh to be his people in a special sense."⁸ We observed in chapter four such themes as "Yahweh the God of the fathers," the election of Abraham and the covenant promises made to the forefathers, the covenant promise to David. Similar ones are repeatedly asserted through the narratives of conflicts. The prophets also emphasized the fact "that Yahweh, in sovereign love, had chosen Israel out of all the peoples of the earth to be his own people, an object of His special care and education, destined to realize His divine will and make His name glorified in the world."⁹ Yahweh's

⁸Ibid., p. 326.

⁹Ibid.

entering into a covenant relationship with Israel is emphasized in the Sinai event in a unique way.

The foundation of an enduring covenant order appears as the purpose and consummation of the mighty deliverance from Egypt; the power, the ready assistance, the faithfulness of Yahweh experienced thus far in offered to the people for their permanent enjoyment.¹⁰

Through His election and covenant Yahweh made Israel His inheritance () Deut. 32:9. It is the covenant relationship which gave meaning to the history of the people of Israel, its destiny and goal, and shaped the life and faith of the people. This unique expression of a relationship between God and His people is not found in the mythological texts of Ugarit or any other Near Eastern literature.

The mighty acts of Yahweh on behalf of His covenant people derived their unique stamp on the basis of the covenant relationship which Yahweh had established with His people. They are not simply events, but salvation events. Deliverance from Egypt, the gift of the promised land, deliverance from the hands of the surrounding peoples and the great empires, and deliverance from Exile - all are revealed and understood as redemptive acts of Yahweh on behalf of Israel. Thus Yahweh the Warrior becomes the Savior of His people. His mighty acts are repeated and adumbrated in the worship of Israel. The history of Israel moved from the level of ordinary secular history to that of salvation history.

According to the Old Testament, salvation history is not limited to the history of Israel alone. Although Yahweh's redemptive purpose is revealed in the history of Israel in a special and concrete way, His

¹⁰Walter Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, 2 vols., trans. John Baker, ed. G. Ernest Wright et al (Great Britain: SCM Press, 1961), 1:38-39.

purpose encompasses the whole world. The eschatological and apocalyptic passages in the Old Testament pronounce that Yahweh's conflicts project into the future also. He offers His salvation for the whole world, and it is announced that He will ultimately defeat all the powers of evil and establish His eternal kingdom. The fact that thus the entire history of the world is brought under the framework of salvation is a unique message in the Old Testament.

Salvation of the Individual

Conflicts in history have a reflection in the life of individuals also. This theme does not appear primarily in the context of Yahweh's fighting against individuals as enemies. Individual prayers, laments and confessions in the book of Psalms reflect how individuals who are oppressed and tormented by enemies, by their own guilt, by the feeling of aloofness of God, calamities such as illness, fear, and so forth, approach God with their petitions and prayers and long for the assurance of God's favor. Furthermore, the question of suffering, and especially of the suffering of the righteous in contrast to the prosperity of the wicked has been an age-long and vexing question. The oracle of Habakkuk begins with the agonizing question, "How long?" (Hab. 1:2). Psalm 22 opens with the question, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God permitted Satan to afflict Job in order to test his faith (Job 1-2). But the entire book of Job revolves around the question of the suffering of the righteous and prosperity of the wicked. No rational answer is given to the "whys" of life. The book of Habakkuk appeals to faith: "The righteous shall live by his faith" (2:4). The explanations given by the friends of Job do not answer the question either. The answer lies in

the final statement of Job: "I had heard thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5). After having the vision of God, he no longer desires a philosophical answer to the question, but accepts life in trust and hope. According to the "Servant Songs" in the book of Isaiah, suffering has a positive meaning, that is, redemptive purpose which finds ultimate fulfillment on the cross.

In the light of these pericopes according to the Biblical understanding the believer accepts the challenges of life with the assurance of God's favor. Redemption in such instances does not mean the individual becoming absorbed into the deity, or becoming non-existent; rather individuality is accepted and restored, and life becomes meaningful within the providence and grace of God. Thus the eschatological victory of Yahweh with its ramifications for the present and future becomes relevant for the life of the individual also. This concept of the individual and salvation of the individual is unique in the Old Testament.

The Role of Man in History

It was observed in chapter 4 that in the battles of Yahweh, He fights alone. Victory does not depend on human participation or aid. But this phenomenon does not suggest that the historicity of the covenant people or of individuals in the community is negated. While Yahweh goes before them as the leader of the army and fights for them, they follow him with trust and obedience. There are even several battles which are reported to have been fought by Joshua in which there are no references to miracles or any explicit statements that Yahweh defeated the enemies

(see Joshua 10:28-39). But they all understood within the context that Yahweh commanded to fight, and also that He fought for Israel (Joshua 10:40-42). On the one hand man does not cooperate with God, but at the same time man's individuality and responsibility are affirmed. This tension is resolved only if the individual is viewed within the context of the theology of election and covenant.

Election and covenant are acts of God's grace alone. When God chose a people for himself as his possession, it was not by virtue of some a posteriori or accident in history.¹¹ It is not by virtue of Israel's moral superiority over the other nations or political strength. It was a definite act of grace. But election-covenant was not a purposeless action. In the narratives of the patriarchs the theme which runs through is "called to be blessed and to be a blessing to the world." A similar motif is found in the making of the Sinaitic covenant: "You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6). According to this stipulation, the people of the covenant who are called to be in a special relationship with God are also called with the responsibility of being a "kingdom of priests" who have to be a channel of God's grace to the world. The people of the covenant cannot ignore their responsibility to the world as they live in close relationship with God, relationship with whom was founded in grace.

Correlary to the responsibility to the world is the individual's responsibility toward others within the community of the covenant. The laws of the covenant demand such responsibility of the individual. It is not to suggest that the fulfillment of the law is the basis of the

¹¹Habel, p. 43.

covenant grace, but it is a response to the act of grace which is explicitly manifested in the redemption from Egypt (Ex. 20:1-2). As observed in chapter 4, violation of the covenant stipulations brings judgment on the people, either by individual or group. The message of the prophets, particularly of the ninth, eighth and seventh centuries B.C. clearly demonstrates this point. Jeremiah (31:39-30) and Ezekiel (chapter 18) emphatically announced the responsibility of each individual in the society. They sought not only to disprove the popular notion that the sins of the fathers were the cause of the sufferings, and specifically of the tragedy of the Babylonian exile, but also to bring home to the people that each one of them stood responsible before God. The redeemed community and the individuals within the community always stand in a unique relationship to God grounded on grace, but also involving unique responsibility toward the members of the covenant community and to the world. This deep understanding of Old Testament has no parallel in the literature of the Ancient Near East.

Summary

The concept of the deity's battles is basically common to the literature of the Near Eastern religions. The theme is found in the Old Testament also in the portrayal of Yahweh as Warrior. Some ex-mythological fundamental teachings of the Old Testament stand out in sharp contrast from those of the other literature.

While the cosmogonic and theogonic interests predominate in the Ugaritic literature, Yahweh's activity and intervention in history are the focus of Old Testament. The underlying principle of history is that

it is understood in the light of covenant and election. Thus history is viewed as a unified scheme within the purpose of God.

As history has a meaningful purpose and goal within the framework of salvation history, salvation becomes relevant to the people of the covenant and to the individuals within the covenant community as well as to the entire world. Thus life becomes meaningful as the community and the individuals live in a meaningful relationship with God.

CHAPTER VI

DISTINCTIVENESS OF OLD TESTAMENT MOTIF OF "YAHWEH AS WARRIOR" OVER AGAINST "CONFLICTS OF KRISHNA" IN THE PURANAS

To compare all the salient features of the Puranic literature about the conflicts of Krishna with those of Yahweh in Old Testament is beyond the limits of this paper. A summary evaluation of certain fundamentals related to the subjects of history and salvation which emerge from the narratives of Krishna's conflicts, and how they are related to human life will be made, as well as an attempt to delineate the distinctive features of Old Testament.

Preliminary Observations

Krishna is celebrated more than any other of the incarnations of Vishnu. One of the chief activities of Krishna which is portrayed in the Puranas is his battles - battles with demons, asuras or rakshasa, men, and other deities of the Hindu pantheon. After a close examination of the battles of Krishna and of Yahweh, the following similarities can be traced.

In the Puranas, Krishna appears as a warrior, who emerges as the victor in all his battles. Even Indra, the celebrated supreme god of the Vedas concedes her defeat and accepts Krishna's supremacy. In the Old Testament also, Yahweh is a warrior, a man of war, who defeats all his

enemies. As Yahweh is the leader of his army in the Old Testament, Krishna is also the leader of an army.

The battles of Yahweh are historical ones fought against His historical enemies (and the enemies of the people of Israel). The battles of Krishna are given a historical setting, that is, the history of Yadhavas. As Yahweh has a special relationship with the people of Israel (election-covenant), Krishna is portrayed as having an intimate relationship with the Yadhavas, the cowherds.

In the Old Testament, victory is attributed to Yahweh alone, who fights the battles without human assistance. The same emphasis is given in the Puranas with respect to Krishna's battles. The only exception given in the Puranas is that Balarama also wins battles along with Krishna, and sometimes independently. But it must be noted that Balarama who is Krishna's brother is the other half of Vishnu. That means that, in essence, both are the same.

The enemies are no match for Krishna; he easily annihilates or subdues them. He even fights with his enemies in a sporting manner. In the Old Testament Yahweh defeats His enemies utterly, that is, those enemies are no threat to him. It must be remembered at the same time that while Krishna engages himself in the battles physically, Yahweh does not struggle personally with his enemies in order to overcome them.

As in the battles of Yahweh, miraculous aspects are also exemplified in the battles of Krishna.

During the times of crisis the people of Israel appeal to Yahweh for help, and he responds favorably. In the mythology of Krishna, when people are confronted with dangers, they look up to Krishna seeking his

protection and relief, and he immediately responds. When he relieves people from peril they sing his praises, and his victories are remembered in the cult. This is a familiar theme in the Old Testament also. Yahweh's magnalia are remembered and recited in the cult.

Two of the battles of Krishna deserve special reference, namely, the taming of Kaliya the serpent, and the Govardhana episode (defeating Indra). Taming of the waters is a familiar theme in the Old Testament also. Krishna's taming of the serpent (the waters) is represented as the reflection of Vishnu's taming the waters in primordial times and establishing order in creation. Yahweh's victory at the sea and His primordial victory over the powers of chaos are also remembered and recited in the Old Testament. In the Govardhana episode Krishna institutes his own cult, replacing that of Indra, and claims, "I am the mountain." It resembles the Old Testament theme of Yahweh making a covenant with His people after the victory at the sea and His becoming the King of Israel. It must be emphasized at this point that while Krishna fights with gods, Yahweh does not fight with gods.

An exhaustive list of parallels between the battles of Yahweh and of Krishna is not attempted here. Several other parallels such as the divine council, the deity punishing the wicked and even his own people, could be traced. Some of them will be dealt with in appropriate sections of this chapter. The above parallels are cited simply to illustrate that one can find similarities of themes between the Old Testament and the Puranas. In contrast to the fact that the cultural setting of Old Testament and the Ugaritic mythology is the same, the cultural and geographical setting of the Puranas is entirely different. Yet, the apparent

similarities between the Old Testament and the Puranas provide a case for comparative study and for elucidating the distinctive features of Old Testament.

Deity and History

Theories Implied in the Perception of History

The Puranas and the Old Testament represent radically different theories of history, namely "cyclical" and "linear." Theoretically, the Puranic view of history is similar to that of Ugaritic mythology, since both represent a "cyclical or eternally repetitive view of history."¹ At the same time there is a major difference between the two. While the focus of history as projected in the battles of the deities in the Ugaritic mythology is "agricultural year," the emphasis in the Puranas is "yuga" or "age." In this respect the Puranic view of history is much broader than the Ugaritic since an yuga means millions of years. Hence, in the Puranas the involvement of the deities is not restricted to one or even several agricultural seasons, but has a broader scope.

Indian philosophical systems view the world and history basically in three different ways, namely, advaitam (non-dualism or monism), dvaitam (dualism), and Visudhatvaitam (or modified non-dualism). Whether the Puranas represent dvaitam or Visudhatvaitam is a debatable question. It is generally believed that the Puranas represent mostly the Vedanta and Samkya schools of philosophy.² The Samkya school of philosophy

¹The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1977 ed., s.v. "Religious Dualism," by Ugo Binachi,

²S. Radhakrishna, Indian Philosophy, 2 vols. (London: George Allen and Union, 1931), 2:663.

represents a form of dualism based on two eternal and opposed cosmic principles: Prakrit (original matter) and Purusa (spirit), the name of the ancient primordial man.³ According to this dialectical dualism there is a constant conflict between the two eternal principles. It has been pointed out in chapter 2 that creation is differentiated into different entities according to the three different gunas (or qualities) of Brahma, namely Sativa, Tamas and Rajas. So conflicts continue eternally according to these different qualities in creation. One can find a blending of the Samkya system and of theism in the puranic literature. The theory of dialectic dualism comes close to Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, and the gnosticism of the early Christian centuries which holds that both good and evil are eternal and opposing principles. But a basic difference between those systems and the Puranas is that in the Puranas the opposing principles find unity within Brahma himself. That would mean that the conflicts are within the realm of the deity himself. This is further illustrated by the fact of the unity between the waters, the serpent, and Vishnu as pointed out in chapter 3. A further difference between gnosticism and the Puranic doctrine is that while the former "affirms the final annihilation of evil with the eternal destruction of the material world,"⁴ there is no such final victory according to the latter, because yuga follows yuga in an endless repetition. Thus the Puranic understanding of history is one of an eternal process of conflict.

The above observations lead them to the question of what kind of emphasis is made in the conflicts of Krishna/Vishnu, whether it is historical or mythological. Although a historical context is provided for

³Binachi, "Religious Dualism:"

⁴Ibid.

the battles of Krishna, the main emphasis of the Puranas is undoubtedly mythological. As observed in the second chapter, history is pushed aside and the conflicts of Krishna are presented as a repetition of mythological ones, namely, of the primordial battles of Vishnu with the powers of chaos, which will continue age after age. Because of the mythological frame of reference, interests in theogony and cosmogony take precedence over history.

Reference must be made at this point to another cardinal Hindu doctrine, the Karma. The repetitive or cyclical nature of history is ascribed to the principle of Karma which determines the history of the universe as well as of the individual. The universe as well as the individual are "bound up" in the karmic cycle of birth and rebirth, which is an endless one.

The Biblical concept of history, as observed in the conflicts of Yahweh, is a radically different one. History is "linear" in the sense that it is constituted by a series of unrepeatable events.⁵ Such an observation does not deny the fact that "former" events serve as models for "later" or "new" events as first exodus (deliverance from Egypt) serving as a model for the new exodus (redemption from Babylonian captivity). Such a portrayal of events does not imply repetition of history in a cyclical manner, however. In the Old Testament, "past events" are remembered as mighty acts of Yahweh which form the basis of trust and confidence in the present and hope for the future. The realities of events are accepted as factual. All historical events are portrayed as

⁵Ibid.

"hanging together" within a unified scheme of world view and history, as described in chapters 4 and 5.

The idea that evil is eternal, and that, therefore, conflicts are eternal, is contrary to Biblical faith. According to the Scriptures, God is not the author or the source of evil. Evil entered the world due to the rebellion of Satan, as well as the disobedience of man. If God is the source or author of evil, man has no hope of redemption as implied in the cyclical view of history. According to the Biblical view God is sovereign and in control of history. Final victory has been won on the cross and the kingdom of God has been established. But until the consummation of the kingdom, evil exists in the world due to God's suffrance. History moves from beginning to end according to God's eternal scheme. This perspective of history is basic for the understanding of a nation's or people's destiny, purpose and goal. The contrary view can lead only to pessimism and hopelessness.

The Involvement of Deity in History

We observed in chapter 2 that a decision was made in the divine council to remove the burden of the earth. The idea of divine council appears in Ugaritic literature as well as Old Testament. There is some similarity between Ugaritic literature and the Puranas in that one deity appears as the supreme god, El in Ugaritic and Vishnu in the Puranic literature. (We observed in chapter 2 that in the Saivite literature Siva is portrayed as the supreme god, and that the question of who is the supreme god remains an unsettled one among the theistic sects). In both instances there is the phenomenon of polytheism or henotheism (henotheism: belief in several gods among whom one is greater than the

others). However, when we study the conflicts of Krishna, the nature of the deities which are reflected is not very simple. On the one hand multiplicity of gods and rivalry between them are affirmed, while on the other hand unity is affirmed apparently because of compromises between them. In several places they are even identified as one. One can come to a conclusion that in the Puranas there has been a constant effort to synthesize different philosophies such as monies, dualism, and theism together. As pointed out in the introduction to this paper, Hinduism can be described as a synthetic religion which can absorb within itself various philosophies and beliefs.⁶ In this respect Hinduism stands on a higher level of philosophical thinking than the Ugaritic religion.

Old Testament faith does not entertain the idea of several gods or of Yahweh fighting with other gods. Yahweh alone is God, and He is sovereign. In the Old Testament we do not find a synthesis of conflicting ideas as found in the Puranas. God does not reveal himself in the Old Testament narratives as a mere idea or principle who determines the course of history. He reveals himself as a "person" who involves himself in and intervenes in history. This differentiation between the Puranic view of the deity (deities) and Old Testament concept of God is fundamental for the understanding of the role and place of the individual in history.

The understanding of the deity's involvement in history is also radically different between Old Testament and the Puranas. We pointed out earlier that the entire course of the universe is governed by the

⁶We can find in India today several orthodox as well as non-orthodox Hindus who will accept Christ as one of the avataras or incarnations of God. It is a reflection of their synthetic view of religion.

principles of Yuga and Karma in the Puranas. Related to these doctrines is the doctrine of incarnation or re-incarnation. We also observed that the cardinal principle of incarnation stipulated in the Gita is illustrated in the Puranas. According to this principle, even gods are not exempted from the application of this theory. What happens to man and to the rest of the creation happens to gods also. As the rest of the creatures or objects re-arise or re-incarnate age after age, gods also re-incarnate. It occurs not only out of the necessity that evil had taken control of the earth once again, but the nature of the deity itself is such that this phenomenon of re-incarnation is a natural process. It is the result of the projection of the tension between the eternal and opposing principles. Even though a decision on the part of the deities is made to become incarnate themselves, the process is also a result of the eternal principles of cause and effect. Personal decision becomes only subsidiary. As gods become incarnate, demons (asuras and rakshasas) also become incarnate. The conflicts are eternal. The enemies whom Krishna confronted were the same ones he had (as Vishnu) vanquished in the previous ages. So it is an eternal process without an end. Thus battles are transported to the level of mythology. History becomes meaningless.

We further observed in chapter 1 that just as Krishna and Balarama were incarnations of Vishnu, the other principal characters in the Kurukshetra war were also incarnations of deities. In the Puranas the members of the Yadhu dynasty are said to be incarnations of deities, as are the gopis with whom Krishna was involved in a circular or rasa dance. Therefore, the participants in the conflicts are all portrayed

as incarnations either of deities or of demons. Once again, according to such a view of the conflicts, one must arrive at the conclusion that real history is not the interest of the Puranas, but mythology and its components, cosmogony and theogony.

The development of Krishna's conflicts and other aspects of his activities in the Puranas also serve to strengthen this conclusion. The original purpose of Krishna's incarnation is set within the context of the oppression of the earth by the demons and others born in the various royal families, headed by Kamsa the tyrant and oppressor. As had been decided in the divine council, the purpose of the incarnation of Krishna and of other deities was to relieve the earth of this burden. But as the story progresses (as we observed in chapter 2), other themes such as Krishna's battles with other deities including the hitherto venerated supreme god Indra, the circular dance with the gopis, and bhakti (devotion) take precedence. Historical context and meaning in history thus recede into the background.

Contrary to the Puranic idea of history, Old Testament affirms the reality of history. Yahweh's battles are not mythological, and his enemies are not mythological ones either. He fights with historical entities such as Egypt, Syria, Assyria, and so forth, as well as with individuals as we observed in chapters 4 and 5. History is understood to follow a unified theme within the purpose of Yahweh, not as an accident or series of accidents or series of events eternally governed by some eternal dialectical principles. Moreover, history has a unity and purpose in the light of salvation history. The theology of election and covenant in the Old Testament are thus unparalleled in the Puranic literature.

Cosmos - A Stage for the Deities "Play"
(lila or dance) or Stage
for Human Life

Previously it was explained that one of the exciting themes which runs through the Puranas is Krishna's playful activity (dance or lila). His extraordinary feats of childhood, combat with and annihilation of the enemies, and the intimate relationship with the gopis are all explained as his lila or play. In Siva Puranam, Siva is portrayed as a dancer. Obviously, in both Saivite and Vaishnavite systems the idea of dance plays a dominant role. What is implied is that just as the dancer takes delight in what he/she does, so the spectator also takes delight in observing the play. It has a psychological effect on the observer. There is an implicit invitation to the devotee to participate in the delight of the deity. In a dance the spectator is supposed to forget the real world and be carried into a different world of feeling. So the moment of dancing becomes his/her delight also. Likewise, when Krishna dances, the devotee is also invited to participate in his delight.

It may be claimed that the concept of dance posits a positive outlook toward creation. Clifford Hospital in his article emphasizes this aspect. He even suggests that Christians can learn some lessons from it with respect to their attitude toward creation.⁷ But it must be remembered that one cannot isolate the dance of Krishna from all the theories which dominate the Puranic literature. The questions to be asked are: What do Krishna's activities mean at all? What does the world mean? What is the purpose of creation or is there any purpose at

⁷Clifford B. Hospital, "Kṛṣṇa and the Theology of Play," Studies in Religion 6 (1976-77:285-91,

all? According to the theory of yugas, there is no purpose in creation. It is simply the result of an eternal process of evolution and devolution without a specific purpose. It almost amounts to an event of accident. So also are Krishna's conflicts. They are but repetition of the same battles with the same pernicious forces that he as Vishnu had confronted in the previous ages. There is nothing new. Moreover, the opposing principles emerge from the body of Brahma himself. Therefore, it is not surprising that his activities are his delights. The world provides a stage for his delight, and it becomes a playground for the deities. The devotee's role in the world is merely to watch his lilas, forgetting the real world of life, to sing the praise of the deity and be saved.

Nevertheless, the new idea which is promoted in the theistic system is bhakti or devotion. Krishna's sportive activities are expanded from the main context of confronting Kamsa and his associates to the delightful lilas of his childhood and youth. His delight in his own sportive acts excites admiration and devotion. According to the Vaishnava Puranas, Krishnabhakti is both the way to life and the way out of it.

According to the Old Testament, however, the world is not an accident which occurred as a result of conflict between some eternal principles. It was created by Yahweh's definitive decision and action. He created it for the benefit of man to live in it (Genesis 1-2). The themes of "land," "earth," and "world" have a significant meaning in the history of salvation, and particularly in the history of the covenant people. In the covenant promises of Yahweh the gift of the land is a major emphasis. Israel understand the entire creation on the basis of

the covenant promises. Hence, the whole world is a gift of God for the benefit of mankind as a blessing. It means that the world has a positive meaning within the redemptive purpose of God. The people of the covenant firmly believe that creation is an act of grace for which God should be glorified with thanksgiving (Psalm 8; 19:1-6, and others). The Old Testament affirms that the world is a place created by God for man to live, and where Yahweh performs His redemptive acts for the benefit of mankind; it is not a stage for God's delightful and purposeless sports. While the Old Testament affirms the reality and meaningfulness of the world, the Puranas imply negation and purposelessness. The application of such different faiths with respect to the role and place of man in the world will certainly lead to different conclusion.

Deity and Salvation

Salvation Related to the World

As has been pointed out the concept of salvation assumes a broader meaning in the Puranas than in the Ugaritic literature. One can discern a combination of two major themes in the Puranas. According to the Gita the purpose of incarnation is "the protection of the righteous and the destruction of the evil-doer, and for the proper establishment of the law of righteousness." It was pointed out in chapter 2 that the theme stipulated in the Gita is restated in Harivamsa, and the battle of Kurukshetra is viewed from this perspective. The same theory is further demonstrated in the Puranas as Krishna engages himself in destroying Kamsa the tyrant and his associates, and in relieving the Yadhus from oppression. In the Puranas as well as in Mahabharatha, the purpose of incarnation is given

a cosmic significance: besides the theme laid down in the Gita, "relieving the earth of its burden" (which is expressed in several different ways as has been shown) is emphasized, The crux of the meaning of salvation according to the Puranas lies in this explanation.

Viewed on the surface of the above stated purposes of incarnation one can find parallels in the Old Testament also. Themes such as that the whole world is under the power of sin and is corrupted, that God alone can save the world, that Yahweh is God of righteousness, that the entire creation awaits redemption, and so forth, look similar to those emphasized in the Puranas. Of course, these themes can serve as points of contact in a dialogue with the Hindus. But the crucial issue is the meaning of "salvation" as explicated in the Puranas, which is entirely different from the Old Testament (Biblical) concept of salvation.

A clear illustration of the meaning of the "relieving of the earth of its burden" is provided by the last scenes of Krishna's life. He declares that "the earth is not relieved of her load until the Yadhavas are extirpated. I shall speedily bring it about in my descent." Following this statement the entire race of Yadhus for whose benefit he was supposed to have been incarnated, and who were also supposed to be the incarnations of deities, are destroyed (chapter 2). This event must be understood in the light of the doctrine of Yugas. The cyclical nature of time and history demands devolution and evolution of the world, age after age. Following this theory, and as explicated in the destruction of Dwaraka and the Yadhavas, "salvation" of the earth simply means devotion, emancipation, or annihilation. It is again a repetition of the mythological battles and the conflict of eternally opposing principles,

with their primary interests in cosmogony and theogony, not the reality of the world and human beings. The Biblical doctrines of judgment and grace, and of the reconciliation of the world to God are far from the Puranic doctrine of "salvation" for the world.

Salvation of the Individual

Salvation of the world as explained in the last section provides the basis for the understanding of "salvation" for the individual also. According to the Puranas, the individual is caught up in the cosmic and eternal cycle of devolution and evolution. Added to this theory is the doctrine of karma, according to which the life of an individual in one life determines the state of life in the next. "The karmic principles make rebirths a necessity, and the rebirths make it possible to absorb and liquidate part of the karmic debt that burdens the individual and determines the cycle of his future existence."⁸ Different schools of philosophy offer different solutions as to how the individual might free himself from this eternal process of rebirths, of devotion and evolution. According to Vaishnavism as explained in the Puranas, the way to salvation is "bhakti" or devotion. This is explained in various ways, as observed in the conflicts of Krishna, such as seeking his protection, clinging to him, singing and praising his glory, and so on. The aspect of bhakti is manifested in a supreme manner through his play or dance with the gopis, and the gopis' longing for him which is interpreted as the soul's longing for unification with the deity.

⁸ Mircea Eliade, Cosmos and History, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), p. 98.

Then the questions have to be asked: What does "salvation" mean for the individual? Does it affirm the existence of the individual or deny it? Does salvation mean anything for the life of the individual? According to the Advaita philosophy, the existence of individual beings is only "maya" (illusion), and "salvation" means the "realization" of the identity of the individual self with the impersonal Brahman.

The Puranas do not promote such an idea. They are subject to different interpretations, varying between dviatam (dualism) and modified dualism. On the one hand, salvation means emancipation or liberation, emancipation according to the theory of yuga, or liberation from the ever recurring cycle of rebirth. On the other hand, Liberation can also mean isolation of the self within its own eternal and timeless essence. Strange as it may look, as in the case of demons and asuras or rakshasas killed by Krishna, salvation can mean attaining the highest positions in the transcendental world.⁹ Whatever interpretation one may accept, one thing is certain, that is, the redeemed or liberated one loses his/her/its identity or individuality. Thus individuality becomes extinct. It is toward this goal that one should adopt the way of bhakti. Such a way is called mysticism which is "usually defined as union or desire for union, of the self with something greater than the self, whether that be defined as a principle that pervades the universe or as a personal God."¹⁰ In the case of Vaishnavism, it is a personal God who is Krishnan, the supreme incarnation of Vishnu. Existentially, the purpose of bhakti is

⁹See chapter 2.

¹⁰The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1977. ed., s.v. "Hindu Mysticism," by Edward C. Dimock.

to withdraw oneself from the historical moment and its baneful consequences.¹¹ Thus, the world is not a place for the redeemed or the liberated one to live, since life on earth is meaningless.

In the light of the above observations regarding the salvation of the individual, two distinctive features in the Old Testament in contrast to the Puranic teaching have to be mentioned. First, each individual is considered as a distinct "person." Man is neither a part of God or of a universal soul, from which he was originated and into which he has to merge. God accepts each person as a separate individual and deals with him accordingly. In the Old Testament we read that God intervenes in the history of the people of the covenant as well as with all the nations. But that does not mean that the individual is forgotten or negated. Each individual stands directly responsible to God and in relation to his fellowmen. Therefore, each individual is responsible for accepting or rejecting the offer of redemption. God is the cause and perfecter of salvation. But it does not become available to man automatically; man has the freedom to willfully reject it. For example, even though all the people of Israel were redeemed from Egypt, not all of them entered the land of promise (Ps. 95:9-11; also 1 Cor. 10:1-5). The message of judgment and grace confronts each individual in given historical situations to respond. A proper response constitutes repentance, trust and hope. The emphasis on individual response, decision making, and ethical considerations are lacking in the Puranic understanding of salvation.

Secondly, according to the Biblical understanding of salvation "to be redeemed" does not imply "cease to exist." Salvation does not

¹¹Eliade, p. 151.

put an end to the individuality of human beings, nor does it mean that the individual is transported into a different world immediately. This can be explained in different ways. (1) The individual prayers and laments in the book of Psalms give testimony to the fact that salvation does not mean removal of the individual from the world, but protection from the perils of life. Extremely important in this context is that the worshipper longs for the assurance of God's presence and love even if he/she has to endure pain and sufferings in the world. Job is a clear example for this. Ultimately when the vision of God was granted to him, he could confidently confess, "I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be thwarted. . . . I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:2-6). Such statements show the magnitude of faith. The believer's longing is not for emancipation from the world, but for the courage and confidence to accept life situations because they are realizing that a loving God has a purpose for every one of them. (2) We have several times observed before that the entire history of the people of the covenant can be understood in terms of salvation history - a history in which God constantly intervenes and guides. Salvation is not understood in terms of a dichotomy between soul and body of the people. The individual prayers and thanksgivings in the book of Psalms also illustrate the fact that salvation encompasses the entire life of the individual - physical, psychological, political, and spiritual crises, as well as guilt and sin. "Salvation" in this respect is not a dissolution of the individual, but an affirmation of the individual's real place in the given historical situation and moment. (3) Even in the

apocalyptic message of the eschatological battle and the ultimate establishment of the kingdom of God, the individuality of persons is affirmed particularly in the emphasis on the resurrection. The resurrection emphasized in the book of Daniel (also in the book of Revelation in the New Testament) is not national resurrection or resurrection of mere "souls," but of individuals as distinct persons. From these observations one can conclude that in the redemptive purpose of God, every individual has his/her unique place. The affirmation of individuality is unique in the Old Testament when compared to the Puranic literature.

Role of Man in Society

In the preceding sections it has been pointed out that when one compares the Old Testament view of history, salvation, and the place of individual with that of the Puranas, one will recognize two fundamentally different viewpoints. According to the Biblical teaching, time is real, as well as history. Time and history have meaning because redemption is the center of history and provides a meaning and purpose for history. Israel understood the meaning of the world and history only on the basis of revelation and its experience of Yahweh's redemptive acts. Redemption is the focus of time and history. This is further illustrated by the fact that the "Christ-event" happened once for all, not repetitiously. The redemptive purpose of God revealed in His mighty acts gives specific meaning and value to a given time, history, and person. According to the Puranic teachings, history, time, and man have no significant meaning and role to play because of the cyclical nature of things.

The Old Testament does not view mankind and individual human beings as mere entities or accidents of nature, encircled by the

terminus-less evolution and devolution process, but as distinct persons. God confronts them in each specific moment of history with judgment and grace. While God deals with the whole world and mankind in its totality (which is in a profound way demonstrated in His dealing with the people of the covenant as a unit), the place and role of the individual is not obscured, but rather affirmed.

It follows that every individual stands responsible before God. Neither for the evils in the society nor for the challenges in it, can he evade his responsibility. Scripture tells us that God is not the source of evil and that evil entered the world only because of the rebellion of Satan and the rebellion of man. It also tells us that not only Adam is responsible, but every individual is responsible before God and stands condemned. The only way out of this situation is repentance and accepting the forgiveness offered by God. "The way" does not lie in escaping or attempting to escape from the real world of life; it is rather accepting the life offered by God and living as responsible individuals.

The individual has a two-fold responsibility on earth, responsibility toward God and toward fellow human beings. Such responsibility is expressed in a unique way in the covenant stipulations which emphasize the individual's response to God as well as his/her responsibility toward the other members of the community. The prophets of the Old Testament, as the "conscience" of the nation, never failed to remind the people of Israel of this unique factor, and condemned them without any reservation when they broke the covenant regulations.

Prophets like Hosea and Amos even went as far as to proclaim that justice, righteousness, and love are preferred to (mere) sacrificial

worship (Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21-25). It is not that they were negative toward worship forms, but insisted that worship without concern for others in the community, which was prevalent in the eighth century B.C., was meaningless. The demand for love and justice is not limited to the people of Israel only. It is demanded of other peoples also who were not members of the covenant community (Amos 1:3-2:3). Two things become clear from these passages: first, each individual is responsible for evil, injustice and so forth, and second, justice and love must be shown to others.

While we find such a radical message in the Old Testament, and especially in the prophetic oracles, in the Vaishnavite literature emphasis is on bhakti which promotes mysticism and withdrawal from the world because "escape" of the "soul" from the cycle of births is the object of salvation. Thus, here one finds fundamentally different outlooks in the Old Testament and Vaishnava literature with respect to individual responsibility and value, and consequently with respect to the development of a nation or a people. It needs to be repeated that while the Old Testament takes the life of the individual and of the society seriously with all its ramifications within the purpose of God, in the Puranas individual life, or to say human life is dispensable and meaningless. In the light of this observation one will surely reach interesting conclusions if a study is undertaken as to how the religions which promote mysticism on the one hand, and societies influenced by Christian ideals on the other have influenced the shaping of their respective societies with respect to attitudes about the value of life, dignity of man, and social development.

Summary

The theme of Yahweh as Warrior in the Old Testament and the conflicts of Krishna in the Puranas provide a case for a comparison of the basic theologies underlying the conflicts, and for delineating the distinctive aspects of Old Testament.

The Puranas are characterized by a cyclical theory of history based on mythology (with strong emphasis on cosmogony and theogony). Hence value and meaning to history are negated; instead, we find a purposeless and accidental repetition of mythological times. The Old Testament understanding of history is linear, the focus and center of which is salvation. History has a unified scheme within the purpose of God centering around the theme of salvation and covenant. Thus history has value and meaning whereas in the Puranas there is none.

According to the Puranas, since the contemporary world and individual life are only a consequence of the eternal and cyclical conflicts between the eternal and endless principles of good and evil, the only hope left for the world and the individual is devolution or emancipation from the world. Salvation is understood only in terms of devolution (and evolution) or "emancipation." But, according to the Bible, although evil entered the world God still controls the events of history and He is the author and perfecter of salvation. Salvation has been accomplished once for all on the cross, the final consummation of which is awaited. Salvation is reconciliation, not emancipation or annihilation.

On the basis of the principles summarized above, the Puranas promote the way of bhakti or devotion (eventually mysticism) which means withdrawal and negation from the reality of life as the "way out."

According to Old Testament the way of life is trust in God and confidence and hope of His guidance and providence.

According to the Puranic view of history, the nature of the world and of man, individual life does not have value or dignity, but is dispensable. But according to the Biblical teaching individual life has value and dignity provided by God expressed in His redemptive purpose. This basic different approach and attitude toward life will lead to different outlooks toward accepting and exercising one's responsibilities in the society.

CONCLUSION

It needs to be stated at the outset, that as observed in the first two chapters of this study, the sublimation of Vishnu-Krishna as the supreme deity and the identification of the two in the Vaishnavite theology is not a product of a single period. It was a long and gradual process. Any claim that Vishnu-Krishna was the recognized supreme deity from the "beginning," and that his supremacy was not challenged by other sects (for example, Saivites), is untenable on historical grounds. The literature analyzed for the purpose of this study shows that conflicting claims were made by different sects. We have also observed in chapters 1 and 2 that several devices appear to have been adopted to bring some harmony between the conflicting claims, but each sect continued to emphasize its unique claims. A deeper understanding of such developments in Hinduism on historical grounds will help Christians confront the challenges posed by the different sects of Hinduism.

A phenomenal feature of Hinduism is its "synthetic" nature. It was observed that according to the Puranas, there is a blending of different schools of philosophy, namely, Vendanta, Samkya, and theism. Such a "blending" has far-reaching consequences in the understanding of the nature of the deity, world, history, salvation and human beings. There is a sharp distinction between other systems of "dialectic dualism" (such as gnosticism, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism), including the Ugaritic religion, and the system developed in the Puranas. According to the

Puranas the Purusa-Prakrit dialectic finds its unity in the deity itself. This feature of Hinduism also highlights the distinctiveness of the Old Testament, specifically its teachings on the nature of God, the origin of evil, the nature of the world and of mankind, the meaning of salvation, and so on.

It was pointed out in chapter 3 that theoretically the Ugaritic literature and the Puranas belong to the same genre, namely, mythological. But, with respect to the doctrines of history, salvation, the deity's (or deities') involvement in history, and so forth, the Puranas represent a broader outlook. At the same time, it was observed in chapter 6 that there are several similarities between the conflicts of Krishna and the battles of Yahweh. Such similarities are greater than those found between Old Testament and Ugaritic mythology. Therefore, the conflicts of Krishna in the Puranas and the battles of Yahweh in the Old Testament certainly provide a case for a comparative study. Moreover, it is Hinduism which today presents a challenge to Christianity in India (and also in other parts of the world) rather than the Canaanite religion of the pre-Christian era. So such comparative studies will be helpful for the church's mission endeavor.

Although there are apparent similarities between the conflicts of Krishna and the battles of Yahweh, the fundamental differences in the theologies behind the conflicts in the Puranas and in the Old Testament respectively have profound significance not only for the understanding of the meaning of the world, history, salvation, and so on, but are also relevant for the understanding of man with respect to his place in the world, the dignity and value or purpose of life, and his responsibility

in society. The basic differences on such subjects are discussed and summarized in chapter 6.

General Observations

In the light of the similarities observed between Ugaritic mythology and Vaishava mythology, questions such as whether or not there were exchanges of ideas between Ugarit (Ancient Near East in general) and India in terms of the development of theogonic and cosmogonic mythologies, and as to what kind of influence the one had, if any, over the other, can be a fruitful investigation for further study.

The Puranas promote the way of "bhakti" (devotion), and consequently mysticism, which means withdrawal and negation from the reality of life as the "way out." According to the Biblical message, the way of life is the one offered by God in grace, and the human response is to trust in him with confidence and hope, at the same time accepting the realities of life and responsibilities both vertical and horizontal. Interesting conclusions will surely be found if an empirical study is undertaken as to how the religious systems which promote mysticism on the one hand, and societies influenced by Christian ideals on the other, have influenced the shaping of their respective societies with respect to attitudes toward value of life, dignity of man, and social development.

There has been a tendency among scholars to compare certain themes of Hinduism with the Biblical message on the same level without taking into account the deep theological factors underlying the respective literatures. Each concept should be understood in its own terms to perceive the uniqueness of its teachings.

Hinduism is a system which is an amalgamation of ideas, each section of Hindus having different sets of values in spite of common beliefs. Comparison of specific themes of Hinduism with the Biblical message will help Christians to appreciate the distinctiveness of the Biblical message to enter into dialogue with Hindus, and with the aid of the Holy Spirit to convert some to revealed truth.

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