

mathematical structure differ in many ways, the most significant, for our purpose, being that grammar does not aim at the overall structural unity of mathematics. Grammatical structure and meaning are consonant with the sentence unit; mathematical structure and meaning are not so confined. While discourse based on habits of mind relating to the mathematical paradigm would most likely aim at achieving overall structure, that based on the grammatical would concentrate on the sentence as the structural entity deserving most attention.

At this point I must introduce a personal experience: my continued puzzle at the seeming lack of structural integrity of many Vedic hymns, especially those not held together by obvious structural principles like narrative (as in the so-called "Hymn of Creation," *Rgveda* X.129) or by the more frequent repetition-with-variation (*Rgveda* II.1), or by the mere brevity that creates *by* brevity a single effect (*Rgveda* X.191).⁴ I say "seeming lack of structure" because I believe I was looking for what was never intended and looking from the very parochial western view which expects, to use the word metaphorically now, geometric or mathematical development in its poetry; that is, a poetry whose overriding character is the unity we have called aesthetic. It is this expectation of unity that must lie behind Aristotle's giving the advantage to tragedy over epic because of the former's economy: "What is concentrated is always more effective than what is spread over a long period . . ." ⁵ Horace is more explicit: "In short, be the work what you will, let it at least be simple and uniform."⁶

Tradition abounds with such *dicta*, and the Romantics' attempt to give the conception a more vital representation by terming it "organic" does not at all lessen the belief in the necessity of the unity itself. Without unity, there are so many mere fragments; and that unity, I submit, was, as I have been using the term, mathematical: an order whose conclusion was implicit in its own premises, in its own beginnings, and whose principle could be abstracted by a careful analysis of its parts *as they develop*.

If this seems too broad a definition of mathematics or too narrow a definition of typical western poetic structure, let me give an example. The following, the opening of a "Hymn to Dionysus," is chosen because it is a fragment and because it is rather bad verse. That it is a fragment

⁴ In point of fact this example is "flawed" by a first distich that is addressed to Agni, while the remainder of the hymn seems to be a separate and self-contained unit, at least by western standards.

⁵ Aristotle, *The Poetics*, trans. W. Hamilton Fife, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), XXVI, 6-14, p. 115.

⁶ Horace, *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica*, trans. H. R. Fairclough, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass., 1955), line 26, p. 453.

tions in most instances are better understood in the ritual context than by recourse to western aesthetic criteria; they therefore affirm the habit of composition based on the principle of belonging more clearly than do more typical hymns.

If one looks to the western tradition for exceptions to mathematical structure, one is most apt to find them in medieval poetry where a major principle of organization was accumulation with a heavy reliance on repetition with variation.¹⁶ It may be straining the parallel too hard, but it is tempting to see compositional principles based on religious habits of mind, whether in the East or the West, inevitably leading to exactly the kind of verse that we have been describing as characteristic of the Vedic hymns—with this major difference: the medieval poetry of the West (and I speak here generally of the Latin literary tradition and its imitators, not the popular or underground poetry of the time) lacks the richness and profundity of Vedic hymns, simply because the western religious tradition lacked the richness and profundity of the Vedic culture, if only because the latter was far more mature and pervasive in the life of its people.

If my argument is at all true, then it is not so great a leap to assume that the habit of mind governing the composition of Vedic hymns might carry over into the Sanskrit literary tradition. Thus it seems more than accident that the literary tradition that grows out of the Vedas and dominates poetic composition for so many centuries should locate as its central concern the creation and understanding of *rasa*. For *rasa* also indicates an aspiration to get through, or behind the words to a deeper reality, and does so by intense units of expression that are often detached (and therefore in some sense detachable) from the works which house them—*mahākāvyas* and dramas primarily, although even the Indian epic seems to lend itself, despite the forward momentum of the narrative, to excerpts, the “examples” in which Sanskrit commentators often found their proof for the effects they termed *rasas*. If one assumes that the habit of mind that came out of Vedic composition and understanding carried on into later tradition, then much seems explained: negatively, the lack of critical interest in overall structure; the best critics seemed satisfied with the more general notion of *aucitya* or propriety (the principle of belonging?) which did not demand developmental ordering so much as appropriateness of material to the topic.

Veda, particularly in the 19th book. See for example, XIX.60, a prose hymn which develops by tracing the human anatomy from head to foot and concludes by capping the particular with the general. Here, also, ritual efficacy seems to have dictated the ordering of parts.

¹⁶ See for instance *Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Carleton Brown (Oxford, 1939).