

# New Insights on Slavic god *Volosъ*/ *Velesъ* from a Vedic Perspective

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In 1973, Ivanov and Toporov developed an attempted reconstruction of the presumably central theme of ancient Slavic mythology, viz. the cosmic battle between the thunder-god *Perunъ* and his adversary *Volosъ* the cattle god, modelled after the analogous examples taken from Baltic folklore and Vedic mythology, whereby the Slavic god *Volosъ* was identified with the Vedic demon, *Vala*. On the same footing, in 2008, came Katičić with similar results, but he identified the Slavic god *Volosъ* with the Vedic demon *Vṛtra*. However, the evidence from the primary Vedic and Sanskrit sources presented in this treatise soundly disproves the above interpretations and identifications and reveals quite a different image of the Slavic god.

KEYWORDS: *Volosъ*, oath, waters, wool, world-tree, *Vala*, *Vṛtra*, *Varuṇa*

## METHODOLOGY

Unlike the attempted reconstructions by Ivanov and Toporov (1973) and Katičić (2008), which were founded mostly on conjecture, the comparative method utilized in this treatise relies on a strict comparative analysis of facts gathered from:

1. Authentic Vedic and Sanskrit texts
2. Data on the Slavic god from historical documents
3. Data on the Slavic god from South Slavic folk-poems
4. Data on the Slavic god from South Slavic folk-tales
5. Some data on Old Slavic funerals from the writings of a medieval Arabic traveller
6. Some pertinent accounts on *Volosъ*'s Baltic correlatives from Lithuanian and Latvian folklore.

Presented are the crucial aspects, features, and functions of the Slavic god in parallel with the fully congruent examples from the Indo-Aryan and Baltic mythology.

## GOD OF OATHS, CONTRACTS, AND PEACE AGREEMENTS

The name of the Slavic god *Volosъ* (*Velesъ*) appears in some historical documents. According to records found in the Old Russian Chronicles, King Oleg made a peace agreement

with a Byzantine Emperor in the year 907; likewise, King Igor repeated it in the year 971, by swearing an oath in the names of gods *Perunъ* and *Volosъ* “the cattle god” (Jakobson 1969/1985: 33). Undoubtedly, *Volosъ* was venerated in antiquity together with *Perunъ* the thunder-god, as the supreme god of the Slavs, since they always appear together as a complementary pair (not as adversaries). Therefore, he could not have authentically been a demon. This is confirmed by the fact that *Volosъ* is recorded in the documents literally as *bogъ* viz. ‘god’, not as demon viz. *běsъ* (Jakobson 1969: 34). Thus, the Slavic god *Volosъ/Velesъ* appears to be the epitome of Social Order, viz. the one who guaranteed the fulfilment of social obligations (such as oaths, contracts, and agreements), and not a representative of *nered* viz. “disorder” (as assumed by Katičić, 2008: 144, 193).

There are also accounts on “civil” usages of oaths by the Russian non-Christianized folk in the city of Yaroslavl, who bonded themselves in the name of god *Volosъ*, as the subjects of their Christianized ruler to pay tributes and serve him faithfully (Katičić: 2008, 127).

On the Vedic side, neither *Vala* nor *Vṛtra*, but the sovereign god *Varuṇa* is the one who performed the same function among the Vedic divinities, as is attested in the Mitanni-Hittite treaty of c. 1400 BCE sworn by the names of the gods *Mitra*, *Varuṇa*, and *Indra* as the guarantors of the agreement on the part of the Mitanni (cf. Fournet: 2010: 36).

There were other occasions, like religious rites, during which the Vedic sacrificers used to swear by *Varuṇa*, e.g., Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, III 8.5.:

Verse 10. dhāmnodhāmo rājamstāto varuna no muñca yādāhūrāghnyā itī varuṇēti śāpāmahe tāto varuṇa no muñcēti tādenaṃ sārvasmādvaruṇapāśātsārvasmādvaruṇyātprāmuñcati  
(From every precept - therefrom set us free, O king *Varuṇa*. That they say, we swear by the “Holy ones [a-ghnyāh, literally not-to-be-killed, in-violable, viz. Cows]”, by *Varuṇa*, therefrom set us free, O *Varuṇa*! Thereby he sets him free from every noose of *Varuṇa*, from every [sc. sin] against *Varuṇa*.)

And Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, XII 9.2. (utilized during the āvabhṛtha viz. sacrificial bath):

Verse 4. yād āpo aghnyā itī varuṇēti śāpāmahe tāto varuṇa no muñcēti varuṇyād evainam énašo muñcaty.

(That we swear by the Holy [a-ghnyāh as above, here attributed to] *Waters*, by *Varuṇa*, therefrom set us free, O *Varuṇa*! - he thereby sets him free from sin against *Varuṇa*.)

As Jakobson keenly observed: *Both Slavic Volosъ and Vedic Varuṇa act as the guarantors of right and guarantors of human treaties who severely punish the infringement of vows by afflicting the violators with a disease* (Jakobson, *ibid.*: 41). However, the etymology of *Velesъ* and *Varuṇa* proposed by him as derived from \**vel* “to see” (Jakobson, *ibid.*: 40) is unlikely, since *the root is unknown to Indo-Iranian and his name is more convincingly explained, as the Vedic poets and commentators understood it, from var(-u-) “to cover, protect”* (West 2007: 146).

The Russian-Byzantine treaty of 971 CE specifies a menacing punishment by *Volosъ* to the violators of the oath in the form of a disease formulated *da budemъ zoloti jako zoloto* viz. “may we become golden as gold”, viz. jaundice (Jakobson 1969: 35, 38).

As for *Varuṇa*, he himself bears the epithet *hari* “gold-hued, golden” (Atharva-Veda V 11.1) and is imagined by the Vedic ritualists (see quotations from the Brāhmanas

further below) in a quite similar form, viz. as “a bald-headed man with yellow-eyes” (cf. also Jakobson *ibid.*: 38). Varuṇa is said to have inflicted a disease described as *dṛ̥t̥ir na dh̥mātó* viz. “swollen like a water bag” denoting oedema or dropsy (an excess of water in the tissue), on Vasiṣṭha the seer of the hymn (Rig-Veda VII 89.1-2), due to his moral weakness. A sick person and sinner is also considered *Varuṇa-gr̥h̥īta* “seized by Varuṇa” (Kāṭhaka Samhitā X 4). And certainly when the *an-ṛta* viz. “dis-order, in-justice, un-rightness” is being done *ánṛte khálu vái kriyámāṇe* Varuṇa seizes *váruṇo gr̥h̥ṇāti* (Taittirīya Brāhmana I 7.2.6). Accordingly, Varuṇa indeed is considered the “injurer”, *váruṇo vá ārpayitā* (Śatapatha Brāhmana IV 5.7.7).

**NB.** There is not a single piece of evidence adduced by Ivanov, Toporov, and Katičić from Aryan history that anyone ever used to swear by the demons *Vala* or *Vṛtra* or invoke them as the guarantors of oaths, contracts, and peace agreements. Therefore, they apparently never shared this function with Slavic *Volosь* and Vedic *Varuṇa*.<sup>1</sup>

#### ASSOCIATED WITH POETRY AND WISDOM

*Velesь* too, like *Varuṇa*, is associated with poetry and wisdom. In the Old Russian epic *Slovo o plьku Igorevč*, (“The Lay of Igor”) the legendary seer Bojan is called “the grandson of Veles” (Jakobson, *ibid.*: 36). Though some other Vedic god may have been, like Varuṇa, considered *kavitama* “the best poet” (Rig-Veda V 85.6), Varuṇa alone is exclusively described as *yásmin víśvāni kāvya cakrē nābhiriva śritā* viz. “the one in whom all Poetry is focused like a nave within a wheel” (Rig-Veda VIII 41.6). Varuṇa with his power made Vasistha a *ṛṣi* viz. “seer” (Rig-Veda VII 88.4). In South Slavic folk-tales, *Velesь* appears as a wise old man named *Velimir*, a compound meaning “great, famous (*-mir* < \**mēros*, cf. Skok 1972: 446) in speech (*Veli-* < *velēti* to speak) and counselling”. Varuṇa likewise is designated *vidvān* “one who knows” (Rig-Veda I 24.13), *pracetas* “attentive, observant, mindful, clever” (*ibid.* verse 14), and *medhira* “wise” (Rig-Veda I 25.20) and is explicitly associated with *medhā* “wisdom” (Atharva-Veda V 11.4).

**NB.** Significantly, there is no adduced evidence by Ivanov, Toporov and Katičić that *Vala* and *Vṛtra* were related to either poetry or wisdom.

#### LORD OF THE WATERS: ASSOCIATED WITH OCEAN/SEA, SHIPS AND WHIRLPOOLS

*Velesь* and *Varuṇa* are generally associated with waters, hence with rain, sea, ocean, wells, springs, fountains, swamps, etc. The deep swamps as waters in general, are believed in Lithuanian tradition to be the favourite abode of *Vėlinas* [Velnias] who easily rides over marshes inaccessible to human beings (Jakobson 1969: 39).

<sup>1</sup> It should be admitted, however, that in some of his later articles Toporov parallels *Velesь* with *Varuṇa* (cf. his article titled *Varuṇa In: Mify narodov mira*, Toporov 1987: 217–218).

Though Varuṇa's association with waters is considered by some researchers to be the result of a later development, the adduced quotations (see further below) from the Rig-Veda disproves such assumptions. Hence, Kuiper seems to be perfectly right when he asserts: On the contrary, it must have been the original function of Varuṇa to represent or impersonate these waters (Kuiper 1979: 27).

Furthermore, Kuiper explains it more elaborately, citing the Rig-Veda VIII 69.12 to justify his view.<sup>2</sup>

Sutherland also argues that *In the just and measured regulation of the life-supporting waters, Varuṇa particularly acquired his reputation as arbiter of cosmic righteousness* (Sutherland 1991: 77).

Varuṇa is Lord of Heaven and of Rain (Rig-Veda V 85.3) viz. *viśvasya bhūvanasya rājā* “the King over all worlds/beings” *yavaṃ nā vṛṣṭīr vūnatti bhūma* “who waters earth as the rain [waters] the barley”.

Varuṇa is also connected with still (stationary) waters, e.g., Taittirīya Samhitā VI 4.2: Verse 3. *vāruṇagrhitā vai sthāvarās* (*All the stationary [sc. waters] are seized by Varuṇa.*) And Śatapatha Brāhmana IV 4.5.:

Verse 10. ... *bhyāveyādetā vā apāṃ vāruṇagrhitā yāḥ*

(...*whatsoever parts of flowing water do not flow, these are seized by Varuṇa.*)

Kuiper further argues that *Varuṇa was also the god of stagnant water because this represents the subterranean waters of Varuṇa's realm of inertia* (Kuiper 1960: 249).

The nether abode of Slavic *Veles* is especially connected with watery whirlpools (Katičić, 2011: 117ff, 231–232). Katičić asserts: *Velesov dom/dvor je u korijenu svijeta, podzemlju, zemlji bogatih zelenih travnjaka. A u proljeće, kako su pokazali analizirani stari obredni tekstovi, iz tog svijeta dolaze ptice selice. Mjesto iz kojeg dolaze, iz Velesova svijeta, naziva se irij, virij, virj. Taj naziv povezuje se sa značenjem vodeni vrtlog, vir...; (Veles' home is at the root of the world, in the nether world, in the land of green pastures. In spring, migratory birds come from there. And this place is called irij, virij, virj. The term is related to vrtlog, vir, viz. watery whirlpool, vortex, etc.).*

As attested by Śatapatha Brāhmana XII 9.2. Varuṇa too is explicitly associated with the whirlpool, Sanskrit *ā-var-ta* viz. “a rapidly rotating current of water, a vortex” which is considered Varuṇa's son or brother:

Verse 4. (continued from above) *yó ha vā ayám apām āvartāḥ sá hávabhṛthāḥ sá haiśá vāruṇasya putró vā bhrātā.*

(*The bath, verily, is that whirlpool in the water, and that indeed is Varuṇa's son or brother.*)

<sup>2</sup> ...before Indra's demiurgic act Varuṇa and the Asuras were the gods of the primordial world which consisted of the waters. After the emergence of the earth floating on the waters and the subsequent creation of the organized world, the waters were thought of being under the earth as its foundation, as well as surrounding it. Varuṇa's association with the waters, therefore, is due to the fact that the primeval waters along with their lord Varuṇa, have been incorporated in the cosmos as part of the nether world. Kuiper further maintains: *Hence, it is that Varuṇa is said to dwell amidst his seven sisters and these seven rivers, when they flow from the central mountain over the earth, are said to emerge from the samudra [ocean] in the nether world through Varuṇa's throat as trough a hollow reed* (Kuiper, 1970: 27).

As is evident from the passages quoted, Vedic ritualists associated the very name Varuṇa by assonance with Sanskrit *ā-var-ta* “whirlpool”, since it contains the syllable *var* (related to water, cf. *vār* “water”, *varī* “streams, rivers”, etc.). According to Hillebrandt (1929/1980: 225) in the Rig-Veda II 38.8, the term *varuṇa* as an appellative means “fish” only, and the word is connected etymologically with *vār* “water”.

In Czech folklore, *Veles* in proverbs commonly appears mostly associated with the sea, his abode being *nekam k Velesu za moře* or *nekam Velesu pryč na moře* “somewhere to Veles beyond or upon the sea” (Jakobson 1969: 36). Moreover, Jakobson argues that *the connection of Varuṇa with the waters could be associated with the aquatic bent of [Lithuanian] Vėlinas [sc. Velnias] and with the bond between the sea and Veles in Czech sources* (Jakobson *ibid.*: 41, 42).

Analogously, the *samudra* viz. “ocean/sea” is specified as the abode of Varuna (Mahābhārata I 19.5, and I 171.24), and full of *gambhīra āvartas* viz. “deep whirlpools” (*ibid.* I 19.8).

**NB.** Note again Varuṇa’s connection with whirlpools.

In the Rig-Veda, Varuṇa himself is spoken of as *veda nāvāh* “one who knows the ships”, and is styled *samudrīya* “pertaining to the ocean/sea” (Rig-Veda I 25.7). Furthermore, Varuṇa is titled *jaleśvara*, “Lord of the waters” (Mahābhārata II 9.7) and *apām ādhipati* “Overlord of the Waters” (Atharva-Veda V 24.4). Incidentally, the identification of Vedic Varuṇa with Avestan/Vedic *Apām Napāt* as proposed by Boyce (1975: 48) is unfounded, since her proposition also presupposes the identity of the Vedic character of the same name with Varuṇa himself, which is untenable, as all such attempts to prove it have failed (cf. Hillebrandt *ibid.*: 6). Furthermore, the Avestan hypothetical form \**Vouruna* proposed by her is impossible by any phonetic law (see below). Moreover, the name of the latter, viz. *nāpat* designates him specifically as “the offspring, viz. son of the Waters”, whereas Varuṇa is “Lord and Overlord of the Waters”.

Varuṇa’s connection with ships and ocean is vividly described by the seer Vasiṣṭha, Rig-Veda VII 88:

Verse 3. *ā yād ruhāva vāruṇaśca nāvam prā yāt samudrāmīrāvāvamādhyam ādhi yādapām snūbhiścārāva prā preṅkhā īṅkhayāvahai śubhé kam*  
(*When Varuṇa and me [sc. Vasiṣṭha] embark together and urge our ship into the midst of the sea/ocean, when we two voyage over the ridges of the waters, we will swing with that swing for beauty [sc. of the verses].*)

Verse 4. *vāsiṣṭham ha vāruṇo nāvāyādhād, rṣim cakāra svāpā māvobhiḥ*  
(*Varuṇa placed Vasiṣṭha on the ship, and skillfully with his might made him a seer.*)

After the conversion to Christianity, the Slavic god *Veles* often appears disguised under the name of his Christian substitute, viz. St. Nicholas (cf. e.g., Uspenskij, 1982, chapter III Nikola i Volos/Veles; cf. also Katičić 2008: 53). In South Slavic folk tradition, *Veles* as Nicholas is invariably associated with the sea and ships as his main domain (just like Vedic god Varuṇa), e.g., an ancient folk-poem from Boka in Montenegro, titled *Car Nebeski kad ženjaše Sunce* viz. Wedding of the Sun (Vrčević 1883: 71,72; Nodilo 1886: 216) narrates how the Tsar of Heaven invited all the saints to attend the wedding of his son the Sun, and St. Nicholas/*Veles* as the bridesman (viz. the best man):

Verse 8: ...*starog svata svetoga Nikolu (the best man St. Nicholas)*

At the bride's house, the gifts were presented to the saints, fitting to their particular divine domains and functions:

Verse 21: ...*a Nikoli more i brodove (...to Nicholas the sea and the ships).*

Another folk-poem titled *Najveći grijesi viz.* The greatest sins (Karadgitch, 1823, Book I, Poem No. 209) adds more elaborate details on the subject, viz. Thunder-god Peru, who, like Veles, appears in Slavic folk-tradition disguised under the name of his Christian substitute St. Elijah (cf. Katičić 2008: 53, 117, 124, 128, 133, 135, 140, 173), invites Nicholas/*Veles* to join him in their common divine function, acting as protagonists of the same divine cause, not as antagonists, analogously as the Vedic pair Indra and Varuṇa.

Verses 16-20 ...*ta ustani Nikola, da idemo u goru, da pravimo korabe, da vozimo dušice, s ovog sveta na onaj.*

(...*well, get up, Nicholas, that we go into the mountain, that we build the ships, that we carry the souls [of the deceased] from this world to the other).*

The last three verses are indicative of his function as King of the netherworld. With regard to the preceding verses, it should be noted that the realm of the dead is called *nav* in Slavic (the term is related to Sanskrit *nauh, nāvah* “ship(s)”, Latin *navis, navigium* “ship, vessel”) due to an ancient custom of building a funeral pyre on a ship. The burning of the dead among the Slavs in medieval times (analogous to Hindu custom) is attested by the Arabic explorer Ibn Foslan (cf. Leger 1901: 202).

NB. There is no evidence adduced by Ivanov, Toporov, and Katičić that either Vala or Vr̥tra were associated with the ocean/sea, ships and whirlpools.

## BLACK WOOL (BLACK FLEECE) BENEATH THE WORLD-TREE SACRED TO GOD

In an attempted reconstruction of authentic Slavic ritual formulas, Katičić (2008, 254) adducing various comparative examples from Lithuanian, Latvian, Belarusian, and Russian folklore, the thunder-god Perkūnas/Perkōns or Perun appears involved in the battle against a serpent or dragon (Slavic parallel of the mythical fight between Vedic Indra against demon Vr̥tra), extracted presumably a common ancient mythical formulation:

A) *Perunъ бѣjetъ змѣjъ* (viz. *Perun smites a dragon*).

B) *Perunъ бѣjetъ џьртъ* (viz. *Perun smites a devil*).

With regard to Katičić's claim that *Indra as the name of the thunder-god is not Indo-European* (Katičić 2008: 213,214), it should be pointed out that the name “Indra” appears in a sequential relationship with the term *bhaga* attributively to form a single expression, viz. *Indra-bhaga* literally “Strong-dealer, i.e. „Strong-god” ( (cf. Rig-Veda III 30.18, III 36.5, etc.) of which a perfect match in Slavic divine terminology is the name of *Jako-bogъ*, the Vedic term “Indra” having been successfully translated by the Slavic synonymous word expressive of the very essence of its authentic meaning. The Slavic *Jako-bog* is attested by Orbini: *Della religione di questi Anti scriue Geremia Russo ne gli Annali di Moscouia, fra gli altri Dei...e lo chiamauano Iacobog, cioe Dio forte* (Orbini

1601: 19). In South Slavic folk-poems, Jakobog appears under his cryptic hypocoristic name *Jakša* < *jak(ostan)* “strong, powerful” (cf. Nodilo 1885: 84).

On the Vedic version of the myth, Kuiper remarks *It has long been recognized by several students of Vedic mythology that the Rigvedic myth of Indra’s combat with the dragon Vṛtra has no bearing on natural phenomena such as thunderclouds and rain, but represents an Aryan myth of creation*<sup>3</sup>...*Indra, while slaying the vṛtrá- (viz. the power of resistance of the inert Chaos, residing on the primordial hill), at the same time splits the hill (giri-)... and Fire and Water (Agni and Soma) are forced to leave the undifferentiated world of inertia and to join the heavenly gods. Indra further separates Heaven and Earth, by which act a cosmic dualism of upper world (represented by Devas) and nether world (represented by Asuras) is constituted* (Kuiper 1960: 218, 219).

Katičić assumes the identity between the dragon/devil and the Slavic god Veles. However, there is no adduced evidence, either by Ivanov, Toporov, or Katičić, of the existence of formula *Perun smites the god Veles*, as the indisputable proof (instead of mere conjecture), which is to be expected by an objective explorer. There is no necessity for further conjecture, since the Veda has preserved intact the authentic story in its pristine form, viz. after killing of Vṛtra, Indra invites Varuṇa to join him in their common divine function, cf. Rig-Veda X 124.:

Verse 5. *nīrmāyā u tyé aśurā abhūvan tvam ca mā varuṇa kāmāyāse ṛténa rājann anṛtaṃ vivinčān máma rāṣṭráyādhipatyamehi*

*(These Asuras [viz. gods endowed with the power of māyā “magic” literally “change”] have become devoid of māyā. But thou O, Varuna [viz. an Asura himself] mayst favor me; discerning the Order [ṛta] from Dis-Order [an-ṛta], O, King, come over here [sc. from the nether world to the celestial sphere] and be the overlord of my kingdom.)*

As Kuiper correctly observed, the demon Vṛtra was killed, but Varuna was incorporated among the gods of the upper world viz. celestial sphere (Kuiper 1979: 34), naturally, as the guardian of *ṛta* viz. (natural and social) world order.

Kuiper maintains that *To Varuṇa, the ancient god of the waters of Chaos, a new function is now assigned as the guardian of the cosmic law (ṛtá-)...As a result of this process of differentiation, the undifferentiated Chaos now constitutes itself as a nether world in opposition to the upper world* (Kuiper 1960: 219).

Furthermore, it is specified explicitly in verse 7 that Varuṇa, not Vṛtra, released the Waters:

Verse 7. *kaviḥ kavitvā divi rūpāmāsajadaprabhūtī vāruṇo nirapāḥ sṛjat*

*(The Poet [kavi, sc. Varuṇa] has put on his form by poetry [kavitvā] in heaven: Varuṇa without predominance let the waters flow.)*

Analysing various Belarus magic spells, Katičić (2008, 137ff, 153ff) equated god Veles with the serpent lying in the nest of black wool (or: on a black fleece) beneath the World-Tree, even though no single spell ever mentioned the name of Veles.

<sup>3</sup> The same view had been expressed earlier by Bâl Gangâdhar Tilak, a noted Indian scholar, in his book *The Arctic Home in the Vedas. Being Also a New Key to the Interpretation of Many Vedic Texts and Legends*, published in 1903 (cf. Pleterski 2014: 86, 87).

Veles indeed, like Vedic Varuṇa, is connected with the World-Tree, but neither as a serpent nor as a dragon. The previously cited folk-poem *Najveći grijesi* describes this connexion marvellously:

Verses 1–5: *Raslo drvo sred raja, plemenita dafina, plemenito rodila, zlatne grane spustila, lišće joj je srebrno* (There's a tree in the midst of heaven, the noble daphne, it has brought forth noble fruits, bowing down its golden branches, its leaves are silvery).

Verses 5–11: *Pod njom sveta postelja, svakog cveća nastrta, ponajviše bosiljka, i rumene ružice; na njoj svetac počiva, sveti otac Nikola; k njem dolazi Ilija...* (Beneath is the holy bedding, made of flowers of all kinds, mostly of sweet basil and red roses; a saint rests on it, the holy father Nicholas; to him comes Elijah; afterwards Elijah/Perun invites Nicholas/Veles to join him, just as Indra invited Varuna above).

Vedic Varuṇa is depicted almost identically along with the World-Tree, Rig-Veda I 24.:

Verse 7. *abudhne rājā varuṇo vanasyordhvaṃ stūpaṃ dadate pūṭadaṣṣaḥ nīcīnā sthur upari budhna*

(In the baseless space, King Varuṇa keeps raised the stem of the Tree, He [viz. Varuṇa] of pure rightness, with those [sc. branches] hanging downwards, and root high above.

Verse 8. *urūṃ hī rājā vāruṇaścakāra sūryāya pānthāmānvetavā u*

(Wide indeed, King Varuṇa made a pathway for the sun to go after...)

Obviously, the World-Tree is not a concrete earthy tree as it appears to be in the common *interpretatio rustica* by unlearned village folks, and regrettably by modern scholarly interpreters. This the most ancient of poetic riddles, this Riddle of Riddles, viz. “the Cosmic Tree” stands as the metaphor for the *Sūrya* “Sun” (mentioned explicitly in verse 8). Thus, it makes the solar viz. celestial aspect of both Veles and Varuna absolutely undeniable. It is further confirmed by the Kauśītaki Brāhmana XVIII :

Paragraph 9. *yó ásau tápati ...ástam yanta... sá vā eṣo apáh praviśya vāruṇo bhāvati* (He who gives heat [viz. the Sun]...at the setting [sc. in the evening]...having entered the waters becomes Varuna.)

The (subterranean) waters (of the ocean) is the hiding (viz. resting) place of the *ṛta* “Cosmic Order” during night-time.

This can be inferred from the Rig-Veda V 62. devoted to Varuṇa and Mitra:

Verse 1. *ṛténa ṛtám ápihitam dhruvám vāṃ sūryasya yátra vimucánty áśvān*

(By the order of you two [sc. Mitra and Varuna] the hidden Order [ṛta] is established there where they unloose Sūrya's horses.)

Moreover, Varuna appears as one of 108 holy names of the Sun in the Mahābhārata III 3.24. (On Varuna's solar aspect, cf. also Sutherland 1991: 77; on Veles' solar aspect, cf. Petrović 1999: 446, 449; on Varuna as celestial deity, cf. Kazanas 2001: 259; for more peculiar views on Varuṇa, e.g., as the evening star, cf. Simson 1997: 1–35; or on Varuna as the constellation Aquarius, cf. Anghelina 2013: 129, 130).

Varuṇa, like Veles, is also associated with (hairy) bears, in the above mentioned hymn Rig-Veda I 24 immediately after mentioning the World-Tree and the Sun:

Verse 10. *amí yá ṛkṣā nihitāsa uccā náktam dáḍṛśre kúha cid díveyuḥ adabdhāni varuṇasya vratāni*



(*Those Bears [Ṛkṣāh viz. 7 stars of the constellation Ursa Major] that are placed high to be seen at night, they depart somewhere by day. Undeceived are Varuṇa’s ordinances.*)

Naturally, those Ṛkṣāh “Bears” are not wild hirsute beasts (as by *interpretatio rustica*) but the 7 heavenly ṛṣayah “seers”, and are associated with the *Kṛttikās* “7 stars of the Pleiades” which were considered the wives of the Bears (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa II 1.2.4). And again quite expectedly, the Pleiades in Slavic tradition are related to the god Veles whence their name *Volosožari, Volosyni, Vlašiči*, etc. *The Russian name [viz. Volosyni] is connected also with the god Volos whose cult became associated with that of a bear in the Northern parts of Russia and in regions near the Volga. The link between the Pleiades and the cult of the bear and/or the Great Bear may be confirmed by the Old Russian text of Afanasij Nikitin where both the constellation are mentioned together (Ivanov & Toporov 1973: 25).*

In 19<sup>th</sup>-century Serbia, two stars of the Pleiades even bore personal names *Vole* and *Voleta*, derived undoubtedly from *VolosŦ*. Thus, the Vedic parallels indisputably confirm and give posthumous satisfaction to Nodilo’s interpretation of Veles (like Varuṇa) as a solar/celestial divinity (Nodilo 1887: 145), and at the same time discard unjustifiable criticism against his view by Živančević (1963: 54) and by Katičić (2008: 11–35).

Furthermore, the association of Veles with “wool” actually confirms his identity with Vedic sovereign god Varuṇa himself, namely, the black-coloured ram and “wool” are sacred to Varuṇa, and there is even specified “the woolly navel of Varuṇa”, Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa II 5.2.:

Verse 16. tadyānmeṣāśca meṣī ca bhāvataḥ eṣa vai pratyākṣaṃ varuṇasya paśuryānmeṣastātp Katyākṣaṃ varuṇapāśātprajāḥ prāmuñcati

(*The reason that there are a ram and a ewe is that the ram is clearly Varuṇa’s victim, so that he thereby sets free the creatures from Varuṇa’s noose.*)

and VII 5.2.:

Verse 35. imāmūrṇāyumityūrṇāvalimītyetadvāruṇasya nābhimīti vāruṇo hyāvistvācam  
(*Then that of the sheep, This woolen [viz. ūrnāyum], ‘as they say, or ‘this woolly [viz. ūrnāvalim], ‘as they call it - ‘navel [viz. nābhim] of Varuṇa, ‘for the sheep is sacred to Varuṇa.*)

As for the black colour, it is said that *kṛṣṇam vāso*, viz. “a Black Cloth” is the fee to be given for the oblation offered to Varuṇa, since *tad(d)hi vāruṇam yat kṛṣṇam* “everything what is Black belongs indeed to Varuṇa” (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, V 2.5.17).

Kāṭhaka Samhitā XIII. 2. states explicitly *mṛtyur vai varuṇas* “Varuṇa indeed is death” and “the ram which belongs to Varuṇa” *varuṇam kṛṣṇam petvam*, is equated with *pāpman* “evil”, *petva* “ram” *etad vai pāpmano rūpam* “is indeed of evil form”, *kṛṣṇa iva pāpmā* “for it is Black like Evil”. The Vedic demon *Vṛtra* too (just like Varuṇa himself) is equated with *pāpman* viz. “evil, sin, crime, wickedness, evil demon, devil” (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa XI 1.5.7).

*In Indian mythology, Black is the color of Night, Nirrti [Destruction], of the Manes and of Rain (Hillebrandt ibid.: 15). Kuiper adds that the identification of Varuṇa with pāpman [Evil] should be noted in the light of the same identification of Nirrti ( Kuiper 1979: 72). Naturally, this is in correlation with Varuṇa’s function as “seizer” and “injurer” who brings destruction to the transgressors of his law.*

To the ancient Aryan mind (Hellenic also, cf. Preller, 1868: 313), the ram represented symbolically the fertilizing rain (assigned to Zeus), naturally, since the curled hairs of the sheep resembles visually the waving (viz. whirling, curly) surface of the flowing water. Moreover, this is how it is further associated (through the medium of water as essential natural liquid element) with the divinities of solemn speech and oaths.

In the view of the Vedic seers (viz. to their ears), the very name *Varuṇa* apparently sounded as if related to *ūrna* “wool”, which represents the reduced grade (called *sampras-ārana* in Sanskrit) of the root *var-*. Likewise, Slavic Veles (in its Russian variant Volos) is related to Old Slavic *вѣсна*, Russian *volna*, “wool, but also wave (of water, indicative of this ancient symbolism)” (cf. Pijović 2010: 204).

**NB.** Ivanov, Toporov and Katičić were not able to adduce any evidence of the association of *Vala* and *Vṛ̥tra* with wool and the world-tree, since there is apparently no such association in Vedic and Sanskrit sources.

#### KING OF THE DRAGONS/SERPENTS AND OF THE NETHERWORLD

Veles is considered the King/Emperor of the netherworld (Ivanov & Toporov 1973: 16; Katičić 2008: 149) and lord of deceased souls. In some folk tales, Veles is allegedly conceived (though not explicitly specified by name) as “Tsar<sup>4</sup> Zmiulan (viz. Emperor of the Dragons/Serpents)” (Katičić, 2008: 174-175, 227-230), just like Vedic *Varuṇa* who is described as *rājan* viz. a king sitting in his assembly room *sabhā*, surrounded by many *nāgās* “dragons” and *sarpas* “serpents” in the Mahābhārata epic (II 9.8-11). The *samudra* “ocean/sea” is the home of both *Varuṇa* and the *nāgās* “dragons” (*varuṇasya ca nāgānām ālayam*. *ibid.* I 19.5), abounding with huge aquatic creatures *makaras* “crocodile-like monsters” (*ibid.* verse 3) and *grāhas* “seizers” (*ibid.* verse 4). It is also the abode of subterranean hell known as *Pātāla* the asylum of the Asuras (*ibid.*, verse 6) and is considered *sarva-bhūta-bhayamkara* viz. “the terror to all living beings” (*ibid.* verse 8).

Some critical data on *Varuṇa* from the historical point of view are the inscriptions from 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> c. CE found on the fountain-slabs, called *Varuṇa-deva*, in Chamba state, India.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The Slavic term *tsar* < Latin *Caesar* viz. “imperator, emperor” was in fact used for translating the Greek term *basileus*, viz. “king” in Old Church Slavonic and other medieval Slavic texts. Hence, the Slavic term *tsar* and the Vedic *rājan* (etymologically related to the Latin *rex* “king”) are identical in meaning (cf. Katičić 2008: 206).

<sup>5</sup> *As to the origin [and purpose] of these fountain-slabs, the inscriptions leave no doubt ...that they were designed to secure future bliss of the founder and its relatives, e.g., a deceased wife or husband... The slab itself is invariably designated as a Varuṇa-deva, i.e., “a god Varuṇa” for the obvious reason that Varuṇa, the patron of the waters, is usually carved on it. This name is no longer remembered (Vogel 1911: 33)... Sometimes they [sc. fountain-slabs] are connected with the Nāgās [viz. dragons]... Those at Trilokanāth are locally asserted to have been set up in honor of the Nāga. In epigraphs, however, no mention whatever is made of these demi-gods, so prominent in the popular religion of the Hills. Sometimes these huge stones with their quaint figures and mysterious characters – unintelligible even to the learned Paṇḍit – are looked upon with superstitious dread, and the villagers are often reluctant to give information regarding their whereabouts, for fear that some evil may spring from it (ibid. 34).*

The above is undoubtedly related to the Latvian terms *Velna Acs* literally “the Eye of the demon(onized god) Velns”, denoting “the part of a swamp clear from moss and vegetation”, and Lithuanian *vandens akis* “ibid.”, literally “water’s eye” denoting “well-spring” (Ivanov & Toporov 1974: 129, 130). There is an analogous toponym in Croatia called *Devil’s Eye*, derived from the name of a well-spring which Katičić relates to Slavic god Veles (Katičić 2012: 59, 60). However, it has nothing to do with Vala or Vṛtra, but with sovereign god Varuna instead, as is perfectly clear from its Indian parallels.

Kuiper opines that *the well-spring is the place where Man comes in contact with the nether world and, since Rta [Order] resided in these waters, also with Rta itself* (Kuiper 1960: 249).

The Balto-Slavic *Velna Acs* and *Devil’s Eye* undoubtedly received in antiquity the same level of honor and veneration as the well-springs devoted to Varuṇa and the Nāgās [Dragons], but unlike their Indian parallels, they were not artificially designed with stones and sacred inscriptions, but rather left intact in its natural estate (On the connection of Varuṇa with the Nāgās and serpents, cf. also Eliade 1978: 199–204).

In addition, cf. Atharva-Veda XII. 3. 57, Varuṇa is closely associated with the *ṛdāku* “a viper, adder, serpent”:

Verse 57. *ṛatīcyai tvā diśé váruṇāyādhipataye ṛdākave rakṣitré ‘nnāyēṣumate*  
(*To the western region, to Varuna as Overlord, to Ṛdāku as Protector...*)

The connection between Varuṇa and the serpents and dragons has been noted by several researchers, e.g., Coomaraswamy enumerated the identifications of *Varuṇa* and his realm (*viz. Varuṇaloka*) with the *nāgās* and their realm (*viz. Nāgaloka*) in various Sanskrit texts (Coomaraswamy 1935: 390, 391), which is also corroborated by the findings of the fountain-slabs in Chamba State devoted to both of them. In the abovementioned verse from the Atharva-Veda, Coomaraswamy even equated Varuṇa directly with the serpent *Ṛdaku*. Earlier, Bergaigne identified the sovereign god Varuṇa with the serpentine demon *Vṛtra* himself (Bergaigne 1883: 147). Based on the references assembled by Coomaraswamy, Eliade had taken virtually the same standpoint: *It is to be noted that his [viz. Varuṇa’s] mode of being – terrible sovereign, magician and master of bonds – admits of a surprising closeness to the dragon Vṛtra...What is more, Varuṇa is assimilated to the serpent Ahi and to Vṛtra* (Eliade 1978: 202-203).

In this connection, Sutherland also maintains: His [sc. Varuṇa’s] *punishing, judgmental side is thought to be responsible both for the constriction or “binding” of humans in the bonds (pāśa) of sin and for withholding or “binding” of the waters. In this sense, he has been assimilated to the primordial Vedic asura Vṛtra, the supreme serpentine power imprisoning the waters* (Sutherland 1991: 77); *Their names have a common derivation, from the root ṛ “to cover, conceal, surround, obstruct”* (Sutherland 1991: 181). As regards etymology, it should be emphasized here that the name of the other demon *Vala* as an appellative designates “enclosure” and is derived from the root *val* ((Monier-Williams 1899: 927; being a variant of *ṛ* < *VAR* cf. Mayrhofer 1996: 524) of which the Zero Grade would read *vḷ*, meaning “to cover or enclose or to be covered”, being congruous and synonymous with the root *ṛ* “to cover, etc.” (from which derived both *Vṛtra* and *Varuṇa*). Thus, Hillebrandt’s remark *It is likely that the designation valá has been*

*borrowed from another dialect...* (Hillebrandt *ibid.*: 153) seems well-founded and quite in place. It should be borne in mind that in Vedic language, both Indo-European sounds *r* and *l* often merged together into one indistinctive phoneme *r* (e.g., Latin *sol* “the sun”, but Vedic *svar*, *sūr-ya* “the sun”).

As for the identity between Varuṇa and Vṛtra, Pleterski also developed a theory that Varuṇa and Vṛtra are one and the same figure, and that the personages can shift or change (cf. Pleterski 2014: 86, 87).<sup>6</sup>

It should be emphasized here again that the demon Vṛtra (just like Varuṇa himself) is equated with *pāpman* viz. “evil, sin, crime, wickedness, evil demon, devil” (in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa XI 1.5.7), thus, it is the Evil, which they share as a common characteristic.

However, Kuiper while objecting to Bergaigne’s view, argues: *Bergaigne, who rightly stated that there was a mythological relationship between Varuṇa and Vṛtra, was wrong in identifying them directly* (Kuiper 1979: 34).

In point of fact, however, Varuṇa himself is portrayed by the Vedic ritualists not as a serpent or dragon, or any other aquatic or tellurian (viz. theriomorphic) beast or monster, but rather as a man called *jumbaká*, described in the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa III 9.3.15, which represents Varuṇa’s true and awe-inspiring formidable form:

*Paragraph 15. váruṇo vái jumbakáh antatá evá váruṇam ávayajate khalatér viklidháśya śukláśya piṅgākśáśya mūrdhán juhóti etád vái váruṇasya rūpám rūpéṇa evá váruṇam ávayajate*

That this is not just one of the many images of the god but the true and most essential and awe-inspiring form of Varuṇa is confirmed by the quotes from other most significant ritual texts, e.g., almost the same phrasing is found in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa XIII 3.6.:

Verse 5. váruṇo vái jumbakáh sākṣádeva váruṇamávayajate śukláśya khalatérviklidhasya piṅgākśáśya mūrdháni juhótyetadvai váruṇasya rūpám rūpéṇaiva váruṇamávayajate

(*Varuṇa verily is Jumbaka in person; he [sacrificer] thus redeems himself from Varuṇa. He offers it on the head of a white-spotted, baldheaded leprous man [or: old man in bodily decay] with yellow eyes; for that is indeed Varuṇa’s form: by that form he [sc. sacrificer] thus redeems himself from Varuṇa.*) The term *viklidha* is explained variously as *dantara* “having oversized teeth, bucktoothed” or as *viklinnadeha* “old man in bodily decay” (cf. Hillebrandt *ibid.*: 298; Eggeling 1900: 343).

Moreover, this is corroborated by the Kātyāyana Śrauta Sūtra, which adds that the man representing Varuṇa in the ritual should receive oblation literally *apsu magna* viz. “while standing in the water” (Hillebrandt *ibid.*: 19).

<sup>6</sup> Pleterski, argues: *Vṛitra obkroža vode, zmaj leži okrog njih, Vṛitra jih je ogradiril kot drevo... Če je Vṛitra drevo, to pa postavlja Varuṇa, če sta oba vladarja istega prostora, če oba nadzorujeta tok vode, je smiselna razlaga da gre za isti lik* (Pleterski 2014: 87).

Analogously, Slavic Veles/Volos, like Vedic Varuṇa, was portrayed rather as a man, sometimes with additional bull horns on his head (but never as a beast), as attested in the records of the destruction of Veles’ idols found in Old Russian Chronicles (Leger, 1901: 114, 115; Jakobson *ibid.*: 34; Katičić, 2008: 124, 129).

As for bald(headed)ness, Katičić (2008: 306) brings a bizarre finding about the inhabitants of place Mošćenice in *Istria* (above which the mount *Perun* is located, named after Slavic god of thunder) which still maintain the belief in supernatural powers that operate inside a cave called *Potuklica* on the near-by river *Potok*. Reportedly, on the Body Day of Roman-Catholic calendar, the devil (whom Katičić identifies with Veles) takes the gold [which is “yellow”, the colour of Veles and Varuṇa] from inside out to the entrance of the cave in order to dry it up in the sunlight.

There’s a story told by the locals how a man went with his son on that day into the cave searching for gold, but suddenly returned from the cave utterly terrified, and even baldheaded. Katičić wonders how that might happen to them when supposedly *Veles je zvijer medvjed, kosmat i bradat, pa bi se očekivalo da se vrate potpuno zarasli u dlake* (*Veles is a beast, a bear, hirsute and bearded, so one would expect them to return from the cave with fully grown hairs and beards*). This story and above mentioned Latvian *Velna Acs* and Lithuanian *vandens akis viz.* “bald spots in a swamp” are in fact related to the “bald(headed)ness” of Veles (and Varuna alike) and actually testify of the identity between Veles and Varuna, not Veles and Vala, since the Sanskrit appellative *valá* means only “enclosure, cave, cavern” (Monier-Williams 1899: 927; Hillebrandt, *ibid.*: 150, 151), and has nothing to do with baldness.

The other Vedic demon, Vṛtra, is not identifiable with Veles either. *Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā* IV 5. states explicitly:

Verse 1. girir vai vṛtró (*Vṛtra indeed is a mountain.*)

The Śatapatha Brāhmana repeats three times, cf. III 4.3.13, III 9.4.2 and IV 2.5.15: vṛtro vai sóma āsīt tásyaitachárīraṃ yádgiráyo

(*Soma, indeed was Vṛtra, those mountains [girayah] are his body.*)

Katičić apparently has overlooked the identification of Vṛtra with the *giri* “mountain“, when he says: *Ali goru na kojoj je ležala zmija Veda ne naziva riječju girih koja je etimološki podudarna sa slavenskim gora..., nego s njom sinonimnom riječi parvatah* (*But the mount on which the serpent was lying the Veda does not designate by the word ‘girih’ akin to Slavic ‘gora’ but by ‘parvatah’* Katičić 2008: 214).

Katičić as a former pupil of Paul Thieme (to whom he explicitly dedicated the chapter on Veles as Vṛtra of his work from 2008: 313, titled “Veles kao Vṛtra ispod Plovila kod Novoga Vinodolskog, *Dem Andenken an Paul Thieme*”) has not been able to realize the innate connection of Vṛtra and Varuṇa and to rid himself from the erroneous interpretation of Varuṇa as “True Speech“ developed by his teacher, the theory that has been otherwise demolished by the contributions of many researchers of the Veda from past and present (e.g., Bergaigne, von Bradke, Geldner, Hillebrandt, Coomaraswamy, Eliade, Kuiper, Sutherland, von Simson, Kazanas, Anghelina, etc.). and rejected by most Sanskrit scholars as untenable (e.g., Lommel, Eliade, Kuiper, Sutherland, von Simson, Kazanas, Anghelina, etc.).

Moreover, quite contrary to Katičić's claim, even in the Vedic hymns the mountain on which the Serpent-Demon *Vṛtra* lied is also designated by the term *giri* (instead of *parvata*) within the same context, as in the Rig-Veda IV 17:

Verse 3. *bhinád girim śavasā vājram ...vadhīd vṛtrām vājreṇa*

(*Hurling his bolt he [Indra] cleft the mountain [viz. giri]...He [Indra] slaughtered Vṛtra with his bolt*)

And it appears juxtaposed with *parvatam* as in VIII 64:

Verse 5. *tyām cit párvataṃ girim ...vi stoṭṛbhyo rurojitha*

(*That hill indeed with rocky heights ...thou [viz. Indra] for thy worshipers brakest through.*)

On *Vrtra* as *giri* "mountain", cf. also Dahlaquist 1977: 124; and Kuiper 1960: 218,219, 251.

As Lord of the Netherworld, *Varuṇa* is depicted as ruler holding the *daṇḍa* viz. "staff", cf. Manuśmṛti IX 245: *īśo daṇḍasya varuṇo rājām daṇḍadharo hi sah* (*Varuna is the lord of punishment, he indeed holds the staff over the kings*) just like *Yama*, another Vedic god of the dead. In the local legends of the city of Dubrovnik, Slavic *Veles* (under the guise of his Christian substitute St. Blaise, by then called Sv. Vlasi, viz. the honorific plural of Sv. Vlaho as he is called in Dubrovnik, related to the Old Slavic *volhvъ* "magic" the domain of ancient *Veles*) appears as a captain, an old man (with grey hair and beard), wielding a staff (just like *Varuna*) who saves the city with his wise advice to its defenders against the "Smardo-Dassi", viz. "Odorous Spirits" aiming at conquering the city by night. *Veles* also appears in folk-tales as old wise man called *Velimir* the Hunter, to be succeeded after his death by the young *Veljko Lović* (Nodilo 1885: 86-89), of which the name is just a hypocorism of *Velimir Lovac* (viz. *Hunter*), the term being actually congruous with and indicative of the function analogous to that of the gods *Varuna* viz. "seizer, injurer", and *Yama* synonymous with (the latter is related to Slovenian terms *u-je-ti* "to catch", *je-ča* "prison", *pri-jeti* "to hold, catch, grab" (Zero Grade of the root *yam-*), *pri-jem* "hold", *pri-jemati* "to hold, catch, grab"; and Croatian *kaj*-vernacular *jam-iti* "to catch, seize, snare, take hold, grab, grasp" (Full Grade of the root *yam-*).

**NB.** The justification for this evidence of the function of *Veles* as a Hunter comes from the analogous example found in Baltic folklore, since his Lithuanian counterpart *Velnias* figures as a skilful hunter and sharp-sighted teacher of a chase, who is famous for the wild pursuit of game (Jakobson *ibid.*: 38), which means that this role of his cannot be accidental.

It is said that a deceased soul will see both kings, *Yama* and god *Varuṇa* (Rig-Veda X 14.7) when they go forth on the path of the ancient forefathers, and will rest in a place called *gav-yūti* viz. "pasture-land [literally "cow-land or cattle-place"] replete with *adbhih* viz. "waters" (Rig-Veda, *ibid.* verse 9).

The association of cattle with the realm of the dead coincides with the function of the Slavic god *Veles* as *skotii bog* viz. the cattle god. ... *the line between 'the god of the cattle' and the realm of the dead may be explained by the common Indo-European concept of the netherworld as a pasture*" (Ivanov & Toporov, 1973: 16). However, it is

the realm of the god Varuṇa (and Yama as his double), not of the demon Vala. Furthermore, like Veles, Varuṇa is conceived as protector of cattle, viz. *irya go-pā* “a strong cow-herd” (Rig-Veda VIII 41.4). Varuṇa is also given the epithet *vṛṣabha* viz. “bull” (Rig-Veda V 63.3). The variant name of Veles, viz. Russian *Volos* has been drawn into etymological connection by Gržetić (1900, 31, 71) with the Slavic word *volъ* viz. “ox, bull”. Analogously, the Lithuanian demon(ized god) *Velnias* (related to Slavic Veles) is also said to assume the shape of a bull, cattle being protected by him (Jakobson, *ibid.*, 37, 38). Furthermore, Gržetić identifies Slavic Volos with the Avestan *gōus-uruuan* “soul of the cosmic bull”. Significantly, Avestan *uruuan* viz. “soul/spirit of the dead” has the same meaning as the Lithuanian word *vėles* viz. “spirits of the dead”.

The relationship between the Slavic term *Velesʹ* (god) and Lithuanian *vėles* (spirit/soul of the dead) matches exactly the Indo-Aryan Vedic and Iranian Avestan pair, viz. *Varuṇa* god vs. *Uruuan* soul/spirit (of the cosmic bull, described in the Yasna 29). The variant name of the Vedic god Varuṇa attested in the Mitanni-Hittite treaty of 1400 BCE is spelled in the cuneiform syllabic writing as *U-ru-ua-na*, is congruent with the Iranian form *uruuan*, and this could hardly have been accidental. Thus, it can be concluded that the Avestan counterpart of Varuṇa was authentically *Uruuan* Spirit/Soul (of which *Uruuana* is a dual form, coupled with the preceding *Mitra*), not those “invented” hypothetical names like *\*Vouruna* (proposed by Boyce, *ibid.*). As for the hypothetical non-existent *\*Vouruna*, the form *vouru* is attested in Avestan akin to Sanskrit *uru* “wide” (Mayhofer 1992: 227); hence, it is phonetically incongruent with and impossible to occur in place of the Sanskrit syllable *varu*; consequently, it cannot represent the Vedic *Varuṇa*. As all the prominent Vedic gods, *Varuṇa*, viz. *Uruuan*, quite expectedly, lost his high status during Zarathustra’s religious reform, since *in the Avesta, the ancient pre-Iranian mythology has gone through an advanced stage of corruption* (Hillebrandt *ibid.*: 112).

The association of Veles and Varuṇa with the nether world (analogously as the Iranian parallel *Uruuan*) testify unanimously of their connection with the deceased Souls/Spirits, at least in the mind of the ancient Slavic and Vedic seers, and may well be derived from the root *vṛ* “to cover, enclose, bind”, since the soul is “covered by the body, enclosed/imprisoned in the body, or bound/bonded within the body”, and is apparently related to Tocharian *wal* “to die”, *walu* “the dead”, the feminine plural (oblique cases) *walunt-* that coincides with Luwian *ulant* “*ibid.*” (Ivanov & Toporov 1973: 22). This is further justified by the Baltic parallels, viz. Lithuanian since *Vėlinas* [*sc. Velnias*] is *primarily the god of the dead, and located below the earth; hence the forest pools are said to be his eyes. His name relates directly to the Vėles, the spirits of the dead* (West 2007: 147).

For this reason, both the Aryans and ancient Slavs used to burn their deceased in order to set the soul of the deceased person free from the imprisonment of the body and to send him immediately into paradise.

**NB.** There is no evidence adduced by Ivanov, Toporov and Katičić that *Vṛtra* and *Vala* were considered Kings.

## SWEET BASIL (OCIMIUM BASILICUM)

As for sweet basil, says Nodilo: *Bosiljak, ocimum basilicum ... ima veliku znamenitost sa dvojakog simbolizma: njegov cvijet znači i smrt i ljubav. U Indiji slična bilina, ocimum sanctum, znamenuje isto ovo dvoje ... Što je bosiljkov cvijet sitan i bijel, time označuje boga tvorca, pri sutonu i uranku, a što je miomirisan, dolikuje ljubavi plodnoga boga (Sweet Basil, Ocimum Basilicum ... The plant is significant due to its two-sided symbolism, viz. its flower means both death and love. In India 'Ocimum sanctum' has the same significance ... Its tiny white flower symbolizes the creator god at dusk and at dawn, while his sweet scent appropriately indicates love and fecundity of the god; Nodilo 1885: 92). Its symbolic value is congruent with the symbolism of god Varuna (and Veles alike), viz. beside his designation as *mṛtyu* "Death" he is also designated as *āyu* "Life", since Varuṇa is *samvatsara* "Year", and *Life is the Year* (Śatapatha Brāhmana IV 1.4.10), for a woman, a cow, or a mare *vijāyate samvatsare* viz. "bring forth an offspring in a Year's time" (idem. XI 1.6.2). When invoked alone, Varuṇa represented to the minds of the Vedic seers the unity of opposites all by himself, i.e., the unified wholeness, the totality, like *Prajāpati* "Lord of Progeny" (for *Prajāpati* is the Year, Śatapatha Brāhmana II 2.2.3-5). Significantly, it is stated explicitly about Varuṇa in the Rig-Veda I 25.:*

Verse 8. *veda māso dvādaśa...vedā ya upajāyate (he knows 12 months and one being born besides them viz. intercalary one).*

The 12 months plus one intercalary month undoubtedly represent the Year. Only when invoked in pairs with Indra or Mitra, does Varuṇa appear as the embodiment of the opposite dark principle to either of them.

## AQUATIC MONSTER GOD'S VEHICLE

In Hindu iconography, Varuna is coupled with an aquatic monster called *makara*, which is considered the vehicle of the God. *It is depicted with the head and forelegs of an antelope or a goat, and body of a fish or crocodile. It is also called jala-rūpa "water-form".* (Dalal 2010: 224).

The term *mākara* denotes: a kind of sea-monster, sometimes confounded with the crocodile, shark, dolphin, etc. (Monier-Williams 1899: 771).

The *Rūpamaṇḍana* (classic on iconography) describes Varuna the regent of the west as having four arms. In three of his hands, he holds a *pāśa* (noose), a lotus and a jewel box (lower left hand). Furthermore, his lower right hand is bestowing blessings on the devotee. He is riding a crocodile *nakra-arudam* (Sreenivasa Rao 2012).

The *Śilpa-ratna* (classic on fine arts) gives a slightly different picture of Varuna, viz. he is wearing yellow garments [the colour of Veles as well]. Varuna holds a noose (*pāśa*) in each of his two hands and is riding a *Makara* (Sreenivasa Rao 2012).

The association of the god Varuna (and Veles likewise) with aquatic and tellurian monsters was authentically meant to emphasize his power and control exercised over



those dreadful creatures in order to serve him as the instruments for maintaining Natural and Social World Order, viz. for punishing the sinners and violators of the law.

There is recorded an analogous belief in pre-Christian Europe among the Mediterranean inhabitants at Malta who regarded the function of the serpents to be the same as that of the gods, viz. as the avengers of sins, e.g., when the apostle Paul landed once on the shore of Malta, the *islanders ... built a fire and welcomed us ... Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand...* The islanders concluded that *this man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, the goddess Justice has not allowed him to live* (The Holy Bible, Acts, 28:1–6).

## CONCLUSION

After exploring all the existing data, it is difficult to see how it is possible to reconcile all the characteristics of the Slavic god Veles with that of the Vedic demons Vala or Vṛtra. In light of the materials presented here from Vedic and Sanskrit sources, only the character of the Vedic sovereign god Varuṇa appears to be fully congruent with the Slavic god in all his aspects, features and functions.

**NB.** Even Toporov (1987: 218) later realized his error and changed his mind on the subject, for he wrote: Само имя Варуна исследователи сопоставляли с хеттским морским божеством Аруной [viz. Hittite Aruna], с древнегреческим богом неба Ураном [viz. Ancient Greek *Ouranos*] наконец, со славянским Волосом (Велесом) [viz. Slavic *Volos/Veles*] литовским Велнясом [viz. Lithuanian *Velnias*] и т. д. Поэтому при сохранении ряда неясностей индоевропейские параллели к этому имени несомненны.

## APPENDIX: A COMMON ETYMOLOGY OF THE SLAVIC *VELESЪ* AND VEDIC *VARUṆA*

### THE FUNCTIONS OF VARUṆA AND ITS ETYMOLOGY AS EXPLAINED BY NIRUKTA

The foremost Vedic *nirukta* (viz. etymologist) and the chief authority on Vedic semantics and etymology [viz. *the Nighaṇṭu* and *the Nirukta*] Yāska (7.c. BCE) declares it categorically in the Nirukta X 3:

*Varuṇo vṛṇoti iti sataḥ tasyaiva bhavati* (Sanskrit text, Sarup 1963: 173).

(*Varuṇa is so called because he covers “vṛ”*; cf. Sarup, English translation, 1966: 154).

Yāska justifies his standpoint (on the account that Varuṇa covers the sky with the clouds), citing Rig-Veda V 85.3-4:

*nīcīnabāraṃ varuṇaḥ kavandham pra sasarja rodasī antarikṣam tena viśvasya bhuvanasya rājā yavaṃ na vṛṣṭir vy unatti bhūma* (*Varuṇa sent forth the cloud, opening downwards, and created heaven, earth and the intermediate space. With it, the King of the entire Universe moistens earth as rain the barley*; cf. Sarup, *ibid.*).

Yāska elaborates further his explanation of Varuṇa (Nirukta XII 23), citing Rig-Veda I 50.6-7 (which is to prove Varuṇa's unquestionable Solar aspect)

*yenā pāvaka cakṣasā bhuraṇyantam janānanu tvam varuṇa paśyasi vi dyāmeṣi rajas pṛthvahā mimāno aktubhiḥ paśyañ janmāni sūrya*

*(The eye with which, O pure Varuṇa, thou seest the active sacrifice among men, with that thou reachest heaven in various ways, measuring the wide region and days with nights, and seeing many generations, O Sun; cf. Sarup 1966: 191).*

However, after taking into consideration *kavandham* the key term of the stanza, Sarup's translation of the verb *vṛṇoti* seems somewhat misleading. Thus, a more detailed clarification is needed in this case.

In clarifying the name Varuṇa, the Nirukta X 3 refers to the Rig-Veda V 85.3 for clarification: *nīcīnabāram vāruṇaḥ kavandham pra sasarja rodasī* "Varuṇa sent forth the *kāvandham* (variant *kābandham*) literally "big cask". Yāska explains the *kāvandham* as *megham* "cloud", and identifies it as: *kabandham udakam bhavati* "kabandha is water". The commentary on Nirukta further clarifies the term: *bandhiranibhṛtatve viz. bandhiḥ dhātuḥ anibhṛtatve* "the root *bandh* denotes an unfixed state with an opening below, between heaven and earth in the atmosphere"; (cf. Bhadkamkar 1942:957). However, the prior member *kad* (originally the neuter of the interrogative pronoun *ka*) of the compound *ka-bandha* is defined in the Nighaṇṭu 3.6. as *kad iti sukhasya viz. "kad means happiness, or literally good axle-hole"*, whence *kabandha* originally "good-bond, well-bound" as a designation of cloud, since water is bound within. The verb *vṛṇoti* undoubtedly relates to Varuṇa's function of binding, here the water in the cask (viz. cloud), which he then releases at will (cf. Bhadkamkar 1942: 955–958; Sarup 1963: (Sanskrit text) 17,173–174; Sarup 1966 (English translation) 153,154).

The basic function of Varuṇa is indicated by the verb *bandh* "to bind". The verb is applied to the performance of the officiating priest who binds a sacrificial animal for Varuṇa and loosens what is bound, e.g. *paśūm badhnāmi vāruṇāya rājñā* "I bind this animal for king Varuṇa"; (cf. Kuiper 1079: 73); *baddhām āva syati varuṇapāśād evāine muñcati* "He loosens what is bound; indeed, he releases them from the noose of Varuṇa" (Taittirīya Samhitā VI 2.9.1); *vāruṇo vā eṣā durvāg ubhayāto baddhó yád ákṣaḥ* "The axle which is bound on both sides is Varuṇa of bad voice (viz. sound)" (Taittirīya Samhitā VI 2.9.1). Varuṇa's *bandhá* viz. "bond" is also mentioned: *rājño vāruṇasya bandhó 'si só 'múm āmuṣyāyaṇám amúṣyāḥ putrám ānne prāṇé badhāna* "King Varuṇa's bond thou art, do thou bind a descendant of such a one, the son of a good family in breath and in food" (Atharva-Veda X 5.44). In post-Vedic scriptures the verb *bandh* is utilized in relation to Varuṇa's *pāśa* "noose or fetters" in two verses of the *Manusmṛti* viz. "Law of Manu": *sākṣye 'nṛtam vadan pāśair badhyate vāruṇair bhṛśam* "He who speaks untruth is firmly bonded by Varuṇa's fetters" (Manusmṛti VIII 82); *varuṇena yathā pāśair baddha evābhidṛśyate tathā pāpān nigrhñīyād* "As one (sc. a liar or sinner) is seen bound with the fetters by Varuṇa, exactly so let the king punish the wicked" (Manusmṛti IX 309). Another aspect of Varuṇa's function of binding is expressed by the verb *muc, muñcati* "to be released (sc. from Varuṇa's fetters)" in the Vedic rites which presupposes one's being already "seized, held, or tied by Varuṇa" (cf. Kuiper 1979:67ff.). This is a common

function of both the Vedic god *Varuṇa* and Slavic god *VelesŦ* as the gods of oaths, contracts and peace agreements, viz. of social “obligations” (or bindings), which additionally and unquestionably strengthens the identity between them.

G. Dumézil accordingly has defined *Varuṇa* as “the binder” (cf. Dumézil 1988: 95ff).

Besides, the main function of *Varuṇa* is frequently expressed by the verb *grah* (variant *grabh*) “to seize, grasp, lay hold of, catch, imprison, capture” (analogous to binding), hence the sinners and sick persons alike, are considered *Varuṇa-gr̥hīta* “seized by *Varuṇa*” (Kuiper 1979: 73). When the law is violated *vāruṇo gr̥hṇāti* “*Varuṇa* seizes” too (Hillebrandt 1929/1980:21), or literally: *ánṛte khálu vái kriyámāṇe vāruṇo gr̥hṇāti* literally “Verily, when *án-ṛta* (viz. dis-order, in-justice, un-lawfulness) is being done *Varuṇa* seizes” (Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa I 7.2.6). Even the stationary waters are said to be “seized by *Varuṇa*” (Hillebrandt ibid.13). In accordance with his fundamental function, various aquatic creatures called *grāha* “seizers” (viz. crocodiles, sharks, serpents, alligators, etc.) and *makara* “crocodile-like monster”, along with the *nāgās* “dragons” and *sarpas* “serpents” are assigned to *Varuṇa* whose abode is said to be the *samudra* “ocean/sea”. Of the aquatic animals only those called *nakra* “crocodile” are sacrificed to *Varuṇa* (Hillebrandt ibid. 295). In Hindu mythology *makara* (and sometimes *nakra*) is considered to be the vehicle on which *Varuṇa* rides holding *pāśa* the “noose” in his hands (cf. Dalal 2010: 224; see also Sreenivasa Rao 2012, part VI, *Varuṇa* Iconography). Even *makara* is the creature with whom god *Kṛṣṇa* the “Black one” has identified himself.<sup>7</sup> In this regard compare above the term *kṛṣṇa* as *Varuṇa*’s fundamental designation. There’s even more than that, since *Varuṇa* like *Kṛṣṇa* is also styled *hari* “golden” (Atharva-Veda V 11.1). Needless to repeat, Black (e.g. Black Wool, etc.) is a special characteristic of the Slavic *VelesŦ* and his Baltic cognates. In this respect compare the Latvian expression *melns kā velns* “black like *Velns*” (= *Vēl̥ns*). And *zoloto* “gold” and *zloti* “golden” are the preeminent designations of the Slavic god *VelesŦ* too (Jakobson ibid. 35,38; Katičić 2008: 306). Significantly, Slavic *VelesŦ* is likewise identified with a crocodile, lizard, dragon, serpent, etc. (Katičić ibid. 206, 207, 243–245), in one word, with the creatures which all belong to the class of *grāha* “seizers”.

Besides, the function of seizing or binding performed by *Varuṇa* is essentially the same as the role of Slavic *VelesŦ* (like Lithuanian *Vėlnias*) appearing in folk-tales in the role of a wise old hunter called somewhat cryptically *Velimir* (the assonance with *VelesŦ* being so obvious) who at dying hands over his secrets to his successor a young hunter called *Veljko Lović* (Nodilo 1885:86-89) whose first name is actually a hypocoristic from *Velimir*; whereas his surname *Lović* is a derivative (viz. patronymic but also diminutive as well, indicative of his youthfulness) from the noun *Lovac* viz. “Hunter”. The stories about *Velimir* relate to a temporary death of the god and his rebirth in the form of a young hunter.

<sup>7</sup> Bhagavad Gītā X 31: *jhaṣānām makaraś ca asmi* “Among the aquatics I am *makara*”.

*In the Hindu calendar, Makara marks the end of the Winter Solstice (December/January)... it is the birth of time; and the first day of the New Year. Makara is associated with creation-process; thus it symbolizes time and its cyclical nature. Makara is therefore prominently placed in Sun temples* (Sreenivasa Rao 2012).

## VARUṆA AND YAMA

This is related further to *Yama* of whom is said that a deceased soul will see both kings, *Yama* and god *Varuṇa* (Rig-Veda X 14.7) when they go forth on the path of the ancient forefathers (Hillebrandt *ibid.* 21), and will rest in a place called *gāv-yūti* viz. “pasture-land [literally “cow-land or cattle-place”] replete with *adbhih* viz. “waters” (Rig-Veda, *ibid.* verse 9). In an attempted restoration of a common IE concept of the otherworld as a meadow for the deceased souls, Puhvel brought into connection the Greek *Elýsion pedíon* “meadowy field” and *gāv-yūti* “cow-pasture” the realm of the Vedic god *Yama*, to which he adduced also Old Russian *Volosŭ* (< \**Volsŭ* or *Velsŭ* < \**w<sup>o</sup>/ls<sup>u</sup>/-*) ‘cattle-god’ whose name he explained to mean literally ‘(deified) pasture’ (Puhvel 1969: 66). But he remained completely silent about the fact that the realm of *gāv-yūti* belongs equally to lord *Varuṇa* as specified explicitly in the Rig-Vedic stanza X 14.7 quoted above.

*Varuṇa* is closest to *Yama* in the Veda, both wield the *danḍa* “staff”, both carry in their hands the *pāśa* “noose” which is the attribute of the night, of the *druh* (viz. wrong, harm, falsehood), of death (Hillebrandt *ibid.* 20,21). Semantically, the root *grah* or *grabh* (expressive of *Varuṇa*’s primal function of seizing) is synonymous with the root *yam* “to hold, keep in, sustain, restrain, curb, subdue, control, etc.”. *Yamá* is the god who presides over the *Pitṛis* (viz. deceased ancestors) and rules the spirits of the dead (Monier-Williams 1899: 845, 846). Mallory and Adams treated the root \**yem* as a far eastern Indo-Iranian-Tocharian isogloss, Sanskrit and Avestan *yam* “hold, sustain”, Tocharian B *yäm* “achieve, obtain, reach [ < \* ‘come to hold’ or the like ]” and separate it from \**yemos* > Sanskrit *yamá* “twin” related to Latin *geminus*, and god *Yama* with a possible Latin cognate of Remus, the brother of Romulus, derived from \**yemonos* “twin” (Mallory/Adams 2006: 207, 276, 435). According to Pokorny all these forms are derivatives from Indo-European \**jem* “halten, zusammenhalten, paaren, bezwingen” including Old Indic *Yamá-h* “twin, hermaphrodite” = Avestan *Yimō* (Pokorny/Starostin *ibid.* 1370). In his role as lord of the dead, it is highly unlikely that *Yama* authentically meant “twin”, but rather the term must have indicated the same function of seizing, binding, enclosing, as *Varuṇa* himself. Thus undoubtedly *Yama* by his very name was authentically intended to personify the main function of *Varuṇa* as his mythological double. As for his Avestan counterpart *Yima* who is considered to be the first man, it has no exegetic value since it contradicts the Vedic evidence (besides, in the Avesta, the ancient pre-Iranian mythology has gone through an advanced stage of corruption as stressed by Hillebrandt *ibid.* 112). It is said precisely in the Veda that *Yama* was *prathamo martyānām* “first of the mortals” (not *prathamo janānām* “first of the humans”) which relates equally to gods, since gods also were considered mortals, e.g. the moon is described as a dying god who is always reborn. On the other hand, Veda never refers to *Yama* as *jana* or *manuṣya* viz. “man, human” (Hillebrandt *ibid.* 223). This Vedic concept of the first dying god is confirmed by the stories about *Velimir* the Hunter who dies at the old age but is succeeded by (viz. reborn as) his young double *Veljko Lović* (as demonstrated above).

VARUᅇA AND VELESŦ IN THE TRADITION OF THE INDO-ARYAN PURĀᅇAS

In order to better clarify the historical and doctrinal parallelism between Varuᅇa and VelesŦ the ancient Indic tradition as preserved in the PurĀᅇas offers even more valuable evidence. In the Veda Varuᅇa seems to be subordinated to Indra who was placed above all other gods, but who in turn later became dethroned himself and allowed to occupy inferior position to that of *Hari Kᅇᅇᅇa*. Buddhist tradition made Indra even a worshipper of Buddha (Hillebrandt 1980/1929: 38) On the other hand, in the Buddhist texts Varuᅇa becomes a *Nāgarājā* viz. “King of the Dragons” (Hillebrandt 1980/1927: 248) exactly like Slavic VelesŦ in Russian folklore under the title “Tsar Zmiulan”. But, there are some more striking parallels found in those PurĀᅇic texts which glorify *Hari Kᅇᅇᅇa*. As demonstrated previously above, the terms *hari* “gold-hued” and *kᅇᅇᅇa* “black” are the personal designations of Varuᅇa, expressing the same mythological concept

In the PurĀᅇas (viz. *Harivamsa*, *ViᅇᅇᅇupurĀᅇa*, *BhāgavatapurĀᅇa*) there is a story of the thunder-god Indra, styled invariably *Parjanya* (all three texts verify unanimously the identity of Indra and Parjanya, related to the Slavic *PerunŦ*, cf. Jeᅇiċ 2011: 101), how he was defeated by Hari Kᅇᅇᅇa, who was thus capable of displaying his supremacy over the thunder-god. Since the Hindu god Hari Kᅇᅇᅇa shares the same epithets *hari* and *kᅇᅇᅇa* with the sovereign Vedic god Varuᅇa who lost temporarily his *prabhūti* viz. “predominance” (spoken of in Rig-Veda X 124.7) in opposition to Indra<sup>8</sup>, it becomes clear beyond doubt that Hari Kᅇᅇᅇa impersonates the character of the Vedic god Varuᅇa in this particular story of his clash with Indra, the story actually narrating how did Varuᅇa regain his lost supremacy over Indra. As is self-evident from the perfectly congruent features of Hari Kᅇᅇᅇa Varuᅇa and Hari Kᅇᅇᅇa himself, all their identical characteristics could not have occurred in the PurĀᅇas arbitrarily or accidentally, but were the innate constituent elements of their characters within the same mythological context, viz. their opposition to Indra.

The story of Kᅇᅇᅇa’s lifting of mount *Govardhana* in order to protect the cows and the cowherds of Gokula from the lightnings and thunderbolts sent by Indra (being furious because they were invited by Kᅇᅇᅇa to worship the mount *Govardhana* and their own cows as their divinity, instead of Indra himself). Following Ivanov, Toporrov and Katiċiċ and their earlier erroneous identification of the Vedic demon *Vala* with the Slavic god *VelesŦ*, M.Jeᅇiċ came at a markedly erroneous conclusion: according to him the story does reflect the myth of the struggle between the two main divine contenders in the pre-Vedic myth of *Indra/Parjanya* and *Vala*, or the Balto-Slavic myth of *PerunŦ* and *VolosŦ/VelesŦ*. As is clearly demonstrated above, it was not Vala but Varuᅇa who temporarily lost his supremacy over the thunder-god Indra, nor Vala ever bore the epithets *hari* and *kᅇᅇᅇa*, which only the sovereign god Varuᅇa shares with Hari Kᅇᅇᅇa.

Thus, it is not Vala whom Hari Kᅇᅇᅇa impersonated in the PurĀᅇas, but the sovereign god Varuᅇa, of whom Hari Kᅇᅇᅇa appears to be a double. It is true that “The correlations

<sup>8</sup> The supersession of Varuᅇa by Indra is delineated in the Rig-Veda IV 42 and X 124; cf. Kuiper’s remark on it: “*Bergaigne and von Bradke had rightly stressed the antagonism between the two gods [sc. between Indra and Varuᅇa]*” Kuiper 1979: 22.

in content are strongly corroborated by Indo-European correspondences in expression” (Ježić 2011: 107) but the myth has preserved ancient formulas identifying Hari Kṛṣṇa, Varuṇa and *Volosъ/Velesъ* (not Veles and Vala) as is perfectly displayed below:

- 1) Hari Kṛṣṇa Go-pāla (variant *Go-vinda*) *Bhaga-vat*
- 2) *Hari Kṛṣṇa Varuṇa-Asura Go-pā Deva*
- 3) Zoloti Čr̥nъ *Volosъ/Velesъ Skotijъ Bogъ*

Semantically and etymologically all the three formulas are absolutely identical (“Golden Black Cattle-protecting God”), except for the Slavic term *skotijъ* which is fully synonymous with *Go-pā/Go-pāla*, viz. “cattle-protecting” though not of the same etymology. Note that Kṛṣṇa’s title *Bhaga-vat* comprises in itself the term *Bhaga* identical with Slavic *Bogъ*.

There is only mount Govardhana which resembles Vala, since Vala is identified with mountain in the Rig-Veda VI 39.2: ... *pary adrim usra ṛtadhītibhir ṛtayug yujānaḥ rujad aruṅgaṃ vi valasya sānuṃ* (...*rushing against the rock/mountain [= adri], with the righteous-minded ones, whose yoke is justice, He [sc. Indra] succeeded to break the never-broken ridge of Vala*). Moreover, Vala is even in the Rig-Veda X 68.7 specified as *parvata* “mountain“, the term otherwise erroneously identified by Ivanov, Topotov and Katičić as the etymological source of the Slavic *Perunъ*. These scholars were not able to discern properly the present participle *pervant* of the IE root \**per-* vs. IE noun \**Perkʷunos* or \**Pergʷunos* from which actually derived Slavic form (in Slavic the labio-velar appears decomposed and the velar part subject to elision).

Therefore, the only possible identity between mountain *Go-vardhana* (viz. “cow-increase“) is with Vala (who is likewise called *go-vapus* “shaped like a cow“, a term synonymous with), but not with Kṛṣṇa or Slavic *Velesъ*, since neither of them has ever been imagined as an unanimated object like mountain. Mount Govardhana an unanimated object appears a tool in hands of the god in order to fulfill his task.

Kṛṣṇa used mount Govardhana as a shelter for the cows, though the struggle was not between the mountain and Indra, but between lord Hari Kṛṣṇa impersonating Hari Kṛṣṇa Varuṇa (identical with Slavic *Velesъ*) who thus regained his lost supremacy over Indra. The presented parallels between Hari Kṛṣṇa Varuṇa and Slavic *Velesъ* additionally confirms the identity of the two gods.

There can be no single doubt in their identity. The only problem is to find and decipher a common etymology of the twosome. It is dealt with in the next section devoted solely to.

#### A QUEST FOR THE COMMON ETYMOLOGY

The Baltic viz. Latvian *Vēlns* and Lithuanian *Vėlnias* cognates of the Slavic *Velesъ*, closely match in forms the Vedic name *Varuṇa*. Since Slavic and Baltic forms are considered cognates, and both Baltic forms comprises *n*-suffix, they have nothing to do with *Vala*. The Latvian *Vēlns* and *Velna Acs* obviously derived from the earlier forms \**Velunas* and \**Veluna Akis* due to the reduction of unaccented short vowels, especially *u* and *i*. This phonetic law is well attested in many IE languages, e.g. French/English *table* < Latin *tabula*; French/English *able* < Latin *habilis*, etc.; it occurs frequently in Slavic languages too, e.g. Old Slavic *бѣдѣти* “to watch, stay awake, keep vigil” > modern *bdeti*, Old Slavic *мѣнѣти* “to

think” > modern *mneti*. It is found operating even in non-IE languages, e.g. in Japanese the short unaccented vowels *u* and *i* are by the rule elided in speech (Devidé 1970: 62; 1976: 8).

The Lithuanian *Vėlnias* on the other hand corresponds exactly to the Vedic form *varuṇya* “pertaining to Varuṇa” (cf. *sārvasmād varuṇyāt* “all that comes from Varuṇa” Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa V 2.5.16). Both Vedic and Lithuanian forms were made on the model of other Vedic divine names featuring the same suffix *-ya*, e.g. *Sūr-ya*, *Parjaṇ-ya*, *Nāsat-ya*, *Pūṣar-ya* < *\*Pūṣaṇ-ya*, etc.

The older form *Vēlinas* might have well derived from the original *\*Vēlunas*, since the vowel *i* historically often stem from *u*, e.g. Old Latin *lubido* > Classical Latin *libido* “desire”; Ancient Greek *muthos* > Classical *mythos* > modern Greek pronunciation *mithos* as in English “myth” etc.

Thus, both Latvian and Lithuanian forms originally must have matched the Vedic *Varuṇa*. The problem arises with the Slavic forms of the god’s name which seemingly do not match the other three. Even there are attested two different variants of the name viz. *VolosŦ* and *VelesŦ* not only in Old Russian, but also in South Slavic, namely there are two toponyms in Croatia comprising the form *Volos* instead of usual *Veles*, one is *Voloski kuk* viz. “The Hip of Volos” a rock so named at the source of the river Potok in Istria, and within the same area a place called *Volosko* viz. “The Place of Volos” (Katičić ibid. 306).

R. Jakobson assumed the prototype of the Slavic god’s name to be *\*Vel-sŦ* but this is highly improbable, since both variants *VolosŦ* and *VelesŦ* were authentically three-syllabic forms. Jakobson treated *VelesŦ* as an archaic Slavic compound: “The same pair of constituents which serve as two autonomous words in *Varuṇa Asura* has merged into one compound in the corresponding Slavic name *VelesŦ*. As for the Russian doublet *VolosŦ* its most probable prototype had been *\*Vel-sŦ...*” (Jakobson ibid. 43). However, his analysis was fairly inadequate.

As a compound it must have been formed and spelled originally in accord with the Old Slavic phonetic rules, viz. the short vowels *u* were to be reduced in the prior member of the compound, which would give the 1<sup>st</sup> variant from PIE *\*uoluno-* > *\*Volūnū* > *\*Volŋnŋ*, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> one from PIE *\*ueluno-* > *\*Velūnū* > *\*Velŋnŋ* to which was attached the final member analogous to Indic *asu(ra)*, viz. from PIE *\*H<sub>2</sub>ensu* > Proto-Slavic *\*ęsŋ* (= *ensu*) > Old Slavic *\*ęsŋ* and from either PIE *\*H<sub>2</sub>nsu(ro)* or *H<sub>2</sub>onsu(ro)* > Proto-Slavic *\*qsŋ* (= *onsu*) > Old Slavic *\*qsŋ*. In merging both members into a compound *\*Volŋnŋ + qsŋ* and *\*Velŋnŋ + ęsŋ* it would give inevitably due to obvious haplology (viz. repetition of syllables with nasals, hence the omission of one of two similar syllables in fluent speech) the forms *\*Volqsŋ* and *\*Velęsŋ*. The presumed Old Slavic forms with nasalized vowels naturally have undergone changes (viz. de-nasalization) in modern vernaculars similar to Old Russian *Volosŋ* and *Velesŋ* with the additional elision of the final stem-vowel *-ŋ* (e.g. Old Slavic *bogŋ* “god” > *bog* in modern vernaculars), whence the modern forms *Veles* and *Volos*.

The evidence presented is absolutely sufficient to establish an underlying identity between Vedic *Varuṇa Asura*, Lithuanian *Vėlnias*, Latvian *Vēlŋs*, and Slavic *Volosŋ/Velesŋ*, not only in mythological concept but equally by their common etymology. Thus, the Indic and Balto-Slavic forms indisputably represent the ancient common Proto-Indo-European *\*ueluno-* mythologem.

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NOVI UVIDI O STAROSLOVENSKOM BOGU VOLOSU/VELESU IZ  
VEDSKE PERSPEKTIVE

MILORAD IVANKOVIĆ



Pri pokušaju rekonstruisanja pretpostavljene središnje teme u okviru drevne slovenske mitologije, t.j. kosmičke bitke između boga gromovnika Peruna i njegova suprotnika skotjega boga Velesa, filolozi Ivanov i Toporov (1973) oslanjajući se na primere iz baltičkog folkloru i vedske mitologije, poistovetili su staroslovenskoga boga Velesa sa vedskim demonom Valom. Na istom tragu, njihov sledbenik Katičić (2008) došao je do gotovo istovetnih rezultata samo s tom razlikom što je poistovetio staroslovenskoga boga Velesa sa drugim vedskim demonom Vṛtrom. Nažalost, dokazi sabrani iz izvornih vedskih i sanskrtskih tekstova, te izloženi u ovoj raspravi, pobijaju i opovrgavaju gore pomenuta tumačenja i poistovećivanja, i otkrivaju sasvim drugo lice staroslovenskoga boga Velesa.

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