

## **The relation of Hindu and Celtic Culture**

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The Celtic peoples are defined for the purpose of this article as referring to those people who in the past spoke a language of the Celtic branch of the Indo-European language family and also lived according to the ancient culture considered to be that of the speakers of Celtic as based upon Celtic traditions and stories and on archeology. Archeological and linguistic evidence traces them to the Danube river valley in Europe back to around 6000 BCE, and further back to the region of the Aral Sea of Central Eurasia. In Western China in particular, there is much evidence for a culture of people who physically looked like the Celts of Europe until the Turkic Uighur people and others moved into the region about the eighth century. Mummies with European features have been found in that region going back to 1500 BCE. The occasional red hair or green eyes found in that and neighboring regions is taken as evidence that these people related to the Celts were absorbed into various people still living in the areas in question, including Xinjiang, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Tibet and Nepal. Interestingly, I know a person of Irish ancestry who converted to the Sikh religion, and in his turban, he is sometimes mistaken for a northern Indian by Indians. It is also said that Genghis Khan had red hair and gray eyes; I have even read reports of tribes of red-haired people in the steppes and deserts in or near these regions, from the eighteen hundreds.

In traditional histories of India like the Puranas and Brahmanas, it is pointed out that in addition to the kingdoms in northern India, there were kingdoms north of the Himalayas with the same culture as in India, which would be in the regions that we are considering for the Celtic peoples. Most important is the famous land of the Uttara Kurus, described as a spiritual paradise north of the Himalayas. Comparison of European Celtic culture with Hindu culture shows a large number of similarities between them. Some of these were shown in a two part article that appeared in the May and June issues of the magazine Hinduism Today. Therefore, we have cultural evidence to back up the traditions and the archaeology.

Religiously, these red-haired northern Vedic people are known to have some point taken up Buddhism. Certain traditional sources indicate that they learned Buddhism from the Buddha previous to Siddhartha Gautama, who was named Kashyapa. A Kashyapa rishi also appears as one of the oldest Vedic rishis and as associated with northern regions like Kashmir, that was originally called Kashyapa Mira or Kashyapa's lake. Tibetan literature, I have been told, indicates that they learned their Buddhism, not from India, but from "Shamballa" which is placed exactly where these people lived.

However, the European Celts clearly practiced, and a few still do, more orthodox Vedic type religions, with similar traditions of chanting, rituals, deity worship, mantra and meditation, with direct parallels to most of the ancient and modern orthodox Hindu sects found in India. As such, it is theorized by some scholars that the two branches split because the Celts maintained the older dharma, whereas the people who stayed in the regions north of the Himalayas accepted Buddhism, perhaps from Kashyapa Buddha.

One of the hallmarks of Celtic culture is the use of the sacred Ogham (pronounced Oh-wum) alphabet by the Druuids, who are Celtic Brahmins. Many scholars believe that Ogham was only used by the Irish, and not by other Celts. However, this is clearly disproved by many Ogham inscriptions appearing in different places, including France, Iberia (Spain and Portugal), the Danube valley, and the Tocharian regions. Furthermore, inscriptions of Ogham have been found in ancient sites in Japan, some of them megalithic. One Japanese scholar who studies these inscriptions and the sites they are found in believes that the inscriptions indicate that some of the Buddhist monks who brought Buddhism to Japan were Tocharians, or had maintained the use of the sacred writing system of the Tocharians.

There is also extensive evidence of many sorts that Celts crossed the Atlantic from Europe to North America millennia ago, long before the Viking excursions into North America, who perhaps followed Celtic routes. The evidence is archeological, epigraphical, linguistic, folkloric, among other forms. American Indians with more European type features were reported by early European colonists into the region.

## **Vedic Origins of the Europeans: The Danavas, Children of Danu**

Many ancient European peoples, particularly the Celts and Germans, regarded themselves as children of Danu, with Danu meaning the Mother Goddess, who was also, like Sarasvati in the Rig Veda, a river Goddess. The Celts called themselves "Tuatha De Danaan", while the Germans had a similar name. Ancient European river names like the Danube and various rivers called Don in Russia, Scotland, England and France reflect this, as do place names like Den-mark (Danava-Marga), to mention but a few. The Danube which flows to the Black Sea is their most important river and could reflect their eastern origins.

In fact, the term Danu or Danava (the plural of Danu) appears to form the substratum of Indo-European identity at the base of the Hellenic, Illyro-Venetic, Italo-Celtic, Germanic and Balto-Slavic elements. The northern Greeks were also called Danuni. Therefore, the European Aryans could probably all be called Danavas.

According to Roman sources, Tacitus in his Annals and Histories, the Germans claimed to be descendants of the Mannus, the son of Tuisto. Tuisto relates to Vedic Tvasthar, the Vedic father-creator Sky God, who is also a name for the father of Manu (RV X.17.1-2). This makes the Rig Vedic people also descendants of Manu, the son of Tvashtar.

In the Rig Veda, Tvashtar appears as the father of Indra, who fashions his thunderbolt (vajra) for him (RV X.48.3). Yet Indra is sometimes at odds with Tvashtar because is compelled to surpass him (RV III.48.3-4). Elsewhere Tvashtar's son is Vishvarupa or Vritra, whom Indra kills, cutting off his three heads (RV X.8.8-9), (TS II.4.12, II.5.1). Indra slays the dragon, Vritra, who lays at the foot of the mountain withholding the waters, and releases the seven rivers to flow into the sea. In several instances, Vritra is called Danava, the son of the Goddess Danu who is connected to the sea (RV I.32.9; II.11.10; III.30.8; V.30.4; V.32).

In the Brahmanas Vishvarupa/Vritra is the son of Danu and Danayu, the names of his mother and father (SB I.6.3.1, 8, 9). Clearly Vritra is Vishvarupa, the son of the God Tvashtar and the Goddess Danu. Danava also means a serpent or a dragon (RV V.32.1-2), which is not only a symbol of wisdom but of power and both Vedic and ancient European lore have their good and bad dragons or serpents.

In this curious story both Indra and Vritra appear ultimately as brothers because both are sons of Tvashtar. We must also note that Tvashtar fashions the thunderbolt for Indra to slay Vritra (RV I.88.5). Indra and Vritra represent the forces of expansion and contraction or the dualities inherent in each one of us. They are both inherent in Tvashtar and represent the two sides of the Creator or of creation as knowledge and ignorance. As Vritra is also the son of Tvashtar and Danu, Indra must ultimately be a son of Danu as well. Both the Vedic Aryans and the Proto-European Aryans are sons of Tvashtar, who was sometimes not the supreme God but a demiurge that they must go beyond.

The Danavas in the Puranas (VaP II.7) are the sons of the Rishi Kashyapa, who there assumes the role of Tvashtar as the main father creator. Kashyapa is a great rishi connected to the Himalayas. He is the eighth or central Aditya (Sun God) that does not leave Mount Meru (Taittiriya Aranyaka I.7.20), the fabled world mountain. Kashyapa is associated with Kashmir (Kashyapa Mira or Kashyapa's lake) and other Himalayan regions (the Vedic lands of Sharyanavat and Arjika, RV IX.113.1-2), which connects the Danavas to the northwest. The Caspian Sea may be named after him as well. The Proto-Europeans, therefore, are the sons of Tvashtar or Kashyapa and Danu, through their son Manu. They are both Manavas and Danavas, as also Aryas.

In the Rig Veda, Danu like Dasyu refers to inimical people and is generally a term of denigration (RV I.32.9; III.30.8; V.30.4; V.32.1, 4, 7; X.120.6). The Danavas or descendants of Danu are generally enemies of the Vedic people and their Gods. Therefore, just as the Deva-Asura or Arya-Dasyu split is reflected in the split between the Vedic Hindus and the Persians, one can propose that the Deva-Danava split reflects another division in the Vedic people, including that between the Proto-Indian Aryans and the Proto-European Aryans. In this process the term Danu was adopted by the Proto-Europeans and became denigrated by later Vedic people.

We should also remember that in the Puranas (VaP II.7), as in the Vedas the term Danavas refer to a broad group of peoples, many inimical, but others friendly, as well as various mythical demons. In the Rig Veda, the Danavas are called amanusha or unhuman (RV II.11.10) as opposed to human, Manusha. The Europeans had similar negative beings like the Greek Titans or Celtic Formorii who correspond more to the mythical side of the Danavas as powers of darkness, the underworld or the undersea region like the Vedic Asuras and Rakshasas. Such mythical Danavas can hardly be reduced to the Proto-European Aryans or to any single group of people.

The Celtic scholar Peter Ellis notes, "Irish epic contains many episodes of the struggle between the Children of Domnu, representing darkness and evil, and the Children of Danu, representing light and good. Moreover, the Children of Domnu are never completely overcome or eradicated from the world. Symbolically, they are the world. The conflict is between the 'waters of heaven' and the 'world.'" The same thing could be said of the Vedic wars of Devas and Danavas or the Puranic/Brahmana wars of Devas and Asuras.

### **The Good Danavas (Sudanavas)**

The Maruts in the Puranas (VaP II.6.90-135) are called the sons of Diti, a wife of Kashyapa, who is sometimes equated with Danu. Her children are called the Daityas which term we have found also connected to the Persians, as the name of the river in their original homeland (Vendidad Fargard I.3). While meant to be enemies of Indra, the Maruts came to be his companions and were great Gods in their own right, often referring to the Vedic rishis and yogis. As wind Gods they had control of Prana and other siddhis (occult powers). They are also the sons of Rudra-Shiva called Rudras, much like the Shaivite Yogis of later times. They were great sages (RV VI.49.11), men (manava) with tongues of fire and eyes of the Sun (RV I.89.7). They were free to travel all over the world and were not obstructed by mountains, rivers or seas (RV V.54.9; V.55.9).

The Rig Veda contains many instances where Danu has a positive meaning indicating abundance or even standing for divine in general. Danucitra, meaning the richness of light, occurs a few times (RV I.174.7; V.59.8). The Maruts are called Jira-danu or plural Jira-danava or quick to give or perhaps fast Danus or fast Gods (RV V.54.9). This term Jiradanu occurs elsewhere as the gift of the Maruts in the last line of most of the hymns of Agastya (RV I.165-169, 171-178, 180-186, 189, 190). Mitra and Varuna are said to be Sripa-danu or easy to give and their many gifts, danuni, are praised (RV VIII.25.5-6). The Ashvins are called lords of Danuna, Danunapati (RV VIII.8.16). Soma is also called Danuda and Danupinva, giving Danu or overflowing with Danu (RV IX.97.23), connecting Danu with water or with rivers.

The Maruts are typically called Sudanavas, good to give or good (Su) Danus (RV I.85.10; I.172.1-3; II.34.8; V.41.16; V.52.5; V.53.6; VI.66.5; VIII.20.18, 23). Similarly, the Vishvedevas or universal gods are called Sudanavas (RV VIII.83.6, 8, 9), as are the Adityas (RV VIII.67.16), the Ashvins (RV I.117.10, 24) and Vishnu (RV VIII.24.12). The term also occurs in a hymn to Sarasavati (RV VII.96.4), where Sarasvati is called the friend or companion of the Maruts (Marutsakha; RV 96.2). Most importantly, there is a Goddess called Sudanu Devi (RV V.41.18), which is probably another name for the mother of the Maruts. The Maruts in particular or the Gods in general would therefore be the sons of Sudanu or Sudanavas. This suggests that perhaps Danu, like Asura, was earlier a positive word and meant divine. There was not only a bad Danu but a good or Sudanu. In the Rig Veda the references to the Sudanavas are much more than those to Danava as an inimical term.

The Maruts are called Sumaya (RV I.88.1), having a good (Su) or divine power of Maya, which stands for magical power, or Mayina (RV V.58.2), possessed of Maya power. Danu is probably, in some respects, a synonym of Maya, a power of abundance but also of illusion. Like the root Ma, the root Da means "to divide" or "to measure". Maya is the power of the Danavas (RV II.11.10). The Danavas, particularly Ahi-Vritra, are portrayed as serpents (RV V.32.8), particularly the serpent who dwells at the foot of the mountain holding back the heavenly waters, whom Indra must slay in order to release the waters. Maya itself is the serpent power.

The Maruts as wind gods are powers of lightning, which in Vedic as in most ancient thought was considered to be a serpent or a dragon. The Maruts are the good serpents, shining bright like serpents

(RV I.171.2). The Maruts help Indra in slaying Vritra and are his main friends and companions. Indra is called Marutvan, or possessed of the Maruts. Their leader is Vishnu (RV V.87), who is called Evaya-Marut. With Rudra (Shiva) as their father and Prishni (Shakti) as their mother, they reflect all the Gods of later Hinduism. As Shiva's sons they are connected with Skanda, Ganesha and Hanuman.

Perhaps these Sudanavas or good Danus are the Maruts, who in their travels guided and led many peoples including the Celts and other European followers of Danu. As the sons of Rudra, we note various Rudra like figures such as Cernunos among the Celts, who like Rudra is the lord of the animals and is portrayed in a yoga posture, as on the Gundestrop Cauldron. If the Maruts were responsible for spreading Vedic culture, as I have proposed, they could have called their children, the children of Danu, in a positive sense. We could also argue that the Sudanavas were the Maruts, Druids and other Rishi classes, while the peoples they ruled over, particularly the unruly Kshatriyas or warrior classes could become Danavas in the negative sense when they refused to accept spiritual guidance.

We know from both Celtic and Vedic texts that the early Aryans, like other ancient people, were always fighting with each other in various local conflicts, particularly for supremacy in their particular region. This led to various divisions and migrations through the centuries, which we cannot always take in a major way, just as the warring princes of India or Ireland remained part of the same culture and continued to intermarry with one another. Therefore, whatever early conflict might have existed between the Proto-European Aryans and those in the interior of India, was just part of various clashes between the different princely families that occurred within these same groups as well. It was forgotten over time.

The European Aryans had Gods like Zeus, Thor and Jupiter that serve as the counterparts of Indra as the God of heaven, the God of the rains, the thunderbolt and the lightning. Therefore, we cannot read the divide between the Rig Vedic Aryans and the Danavas as a rejection of the God Indra by the Proto-Europeans. In addition, the Proto-European Aryans continue to use the term Deva as divine as in Latin Deus and Greek Theos, unlike the Persians who make Asura mean divine and Deva mean demon. They also know Manu, which the Persians seem to have forgotten and only mention Yima (Yama). Unlike the Persians, who developed an aniconic (anti-image) and almost monotheistic tradition, the Proto-European Aryans maintained a pluralistic tradition, using images, and worshipping many Gods and Goddesses, like the Vedic. This suggests that their division from the Rig Vedic people occurred long before that of the Persians or Iranians, and that they took a larger and older form of the Vedic religion with them.

### **Migrations Out of India or Central Asia**

We have noted Danu or Danava as a term for an inimical people or even an anti-god, like Deva and Asura, probably reflects some split in the Aryan peoples. This could be the conflict the Purus, the main Rig Vedic people located on the Sarasvati river near Delhi, and the Druhyus, who were located in the northwest by Afganistan, who fought quite early in the Rig Vedic period.

Certainly we can only equate the Proto-Europeans with the northwest of India or greater India that extends into Afghanistan and Central Asia. If they can be connected to any group among the five Vedic peoples it must be the Druhyus.

However, we do find Druhyu kingdoms continuing for some time in India and giving names to regions like Gandhara (Afghanistan) and Aratta (Panjab) connected more with Iranian or Scythian people. Yet, we do note a connection between the Scythians and the Celts, whose Druid priests connect themselves with the Scythians at an early period. The Scythians also maintained a trade from India to Europe that continued for many centuries. In this regard the Proto-Europeans could have been a derivation of Aryan India by migration, cultural diffusion, or what is more likely, a combination of both.

Though the Druhyus and Proto-Europeans may be connected, it is difficult to confirm particularly as the Europeans were a very different ethnic type (Nordic and Alpine) than most of the Indians and Iranians, who were of the Mediterranean branch of the Caucasian race. T

However, it is possible that European ethnic types were living in ancient Afghanistan or Central Asia, even Kashmir, where we do find some of these types even today. The evidence of the Tokharians suggests this. The Tokharians (Tusharas) were a people speaking an Indo-European language closer to the European (a *kentum*-based language), and also demonstrate Nordic or Alpine, blond and red-haired ethnic traits. They lived in the Tarim Basin of western China that dominated the region to the Muslim invasion up to the eighth century AD, by which time they had become Buddhists. They may be related to the European featured mummies found in that area dating back to 1500 BCE<sup>7</sup>. They were also present in Western China around Langchou in the early centuries BCE. The Tokharian language is possibly related to the Celtic and Italic branches, just as their physical features resemble northern Europeans. The Tarim Basin region was later regarded as the land of the Uttara Kurus and as a land of the gods. So such groups were not always censured as barbarians at the borders but were sometimes honored as highly advanced and spiritual.

The evidence does not show an Aryan invasion/migration into India in ancient times, certainly not after the Harappan era (c. 3000 BCE) and probably not before. No genetic or skeletal or other hard evidence has been found to prove this. Similarly, we do not find evidence of migration of interior Indic peoples West, the dark-skinned people that were prominent on the subcontinent to the northwest. But if the same ethnic types as the Europeans were present in Western China, Afghanistan or in northwest Iran, like the Fergana Valley (Sogdia), such a migration west would be possible, particularly given their familiarity with horses. In this case the commonality of Indo-European languages would not rest upon a common ethnicity with the interior Indo-Aryans but on a common ethnicity with peripheral Aryans on the northwest of India.

It is also possible that the European people derived their Aryan culture from the influence of Vedic peoples, probably mainly Druhyus but also Scythians (who might themselves be Druhyus), who migrated to Central Asia and brought their culture to larger groups of Europeans already living in Europe and Central Asia. The Europeans could have picked up an Aryan influence indirectly from the contact with various rishis, princes or merchants, without any significant genetic or familial linkage with Indic peoples. Or some combination may have existed. Such peoples with more Vedic cultures like the Celts could derive mainly from migration, while those others like the Germans might derive mainly from cultural diffusion. In any case, various means of Aryanization existed that can explain the spread of Vedic culture from the Himalayas to Europe, of which actual migration of people from the interior of India need not be the only or even primary factor.

We do note the names of rivers like the Don, Dneiper, Dneister, Donets and Danube to the north of the Black are largely cognate with Danu. This could reflect such a movement of peoples from West or Central Asia, including migrants originally from regions of greater India and Iran. At the end of the Ice Age, as Europe became warmer, it became a suitable land for agriculture. This would have made it a desirable place of migration for people from the east and the south which were drying up.