The Real Awakener



The Light of lights

Words of Sri Aurobindo – 30

24th November, 2022

Volume 21 **Issue 1**

Price : Rs. 65/-

Contents

The Secret of the Veda (CWSA 15) 4

1. The Philological Method of The Veda 4
2. Agni and the Truth (The First Hymn of The Vedas) 15
3. Varuna-Mitra and The Truth (The Second Hymn) 24
   - *(a) Indra and Vayu 24*
   - *(b) Varuna and Mitra 26*
4. The Ashwins – Indra – the Vishwadevas (The Third Hymn) 31
   - *(b) The Ashwins 32*
   - *(c) Indra: 36*
   - *(d) Vishwadevas 37*
   - *(e) Saraswati: 39*
5. Saraswati and Her Consorts 40
   - *(b) Ila, Mahi (Bharati) and Saraswati: 43*
   - *(c) The Number Seven in the Vedic System 46*

** The titles marked with an * are from the original. All the unmarked titles in the text are from the editor.*

** * The numbers at the end of the quotations are the page numbers of the original reference.*



Obstacles to the Perfection of the Intellect

"There are two obstacles which prevent the intellect from being a perfect and luminous mirror of the truth-consciousness; first, impurity of the discernment or discriminative faculty which leads to confusion of the Truth, secondly the many causes or influences which interfere with the growth of the Truth by limiting its full application or by breaking up the connections and harmony of the thoughts that express it and which thus bring about poverty and falsification of its contents."

– Sri Aurobindo

(CWSA 15: 76)

The Secret of the Veda (CWSA 15)

1. The Philological Method of The Veda*

"NO INTERPRETATION of the Veda can be sound which does not rest on a sound and secure philological basis; and yet this scripture with its obscure and antique tongue of which it is the sole remaining document offers unique philological difficulties. To rely entirely on the traditional and often imaginative renderings of the Indian scholars is impossible for any critical mind. Modern philology strives after a more secure and scientific basis, but has not yet found it.

In the psychological interpretation of the Veda there are, especially, two difficulties which can only be met by a satisfactory philological justification. This interpretation necessitates the acceptance of several new senses for a fair number of fixed technical terms of the Veda, – terms, for example like *ūti, avas, vayas*. These new renderings satisfy one test we may fairly demand; they fit into every context, clarify the sense and free us from the necessity of attributing quite different significances to the same term in a work of so fixed a form as the Veda. But this test is not sufficient. We must have, besides, a philological basis which will not only account for the new sense, but also explain how a single word came to be capable of so many different meanings, the sense attached to it by the psychological interpretation, those given to it by the old grammarians and those, if any, which are attached to it in later Sanskrit. But this is not easily possible unless we find a more scientific basis for our philological deductions than our present knowledge affords.

Secondly, the theory of the psychological interpretation depends very often on the use of a double meaning for important words, – the key-words of the secret teaching. The figure is one that is traditional in Sanskrit literature and sometimes employed with an excess of artifice in the later classical works; it is the *śleṣa* or rhetorical figure of double entendre. But its very artificiality predisposes us to believe that this poetical device must belong necessarily to a later and more sophisticated culture. How are we to account for its constant presence in a work of the remotest antiquity? Moreover, there is a peculiar extension of it in the Vedic use, a deliberate employment of the "multi-significance" of Sanskrit roots in order to pack as much meaning as possible into a single word, which at first sight enhances the difficulty of the problem to an extraordinary degree. For instance, the word, *aśva*, usually signifying a horse, is used as a figure of the Prana, the nervous energy, the vital breath, the half-mental, half-material dynamism which links mind and matter. Its root is capable, among other senses, of the ideas of impulsion, force, possession, enjoyment, and we find all these meanings united in this figure of the Steed of Life to indicate the essential tendencies of the Pranic energy. Such a use of language would not be possible if the tongue of the Aryan forefathers obeyed the same conventions as our modern speech or were in the same stage of development. But if we can suppose that there was some peculiarity in the old Aryan tongue as it was used by the Vedic Rishis by which words were felt to be more alive, less merely conventional symbols of ideas, more free in their transitions of meaning than in our later use of speech, then we shall find that these devices were not at all artificial or far-fetched to their employers, but were rather the first natural

means which would suggest themselves to men anxious at once to find new, brief and adequate formulae of speech for psychological conceptions not understood by the vulgar and to conceal the ideas contained in their formulae from a profane intelligence. I believe that this is the true explanation; it can be established, I think, by a study of the development of Aryan speech that language did pass through a stage peculiarly favourable to this cryptic and psychological use of words which in their popular handling have a plain, precise and physical significance.

I have already indicated that my first study of Tamil words had brought me to what seemed a clue to the very origins and structure of the ancient Sanskrit tongue; and so far did this clue lead that I lost sight entirely of my original subject of interest, the connections between Aryan and Dravidian speech, and plunged into the far more interesting research of the origins and laws of development of human language itself. It seems to me that this great inquiry and not the ordinary preoccupations of linguistic scholars should be the first and central aim of any true science of Philology.

Owing to the failure of the first hopes which attended the birth of modern Philology, its meagre results, its crystallisation into the character of a "petty conjectural science", the idea of a Science of Language is now discredited and its very possibility, on quite insufficient reasoning, entirely denied. It seems to me impossible to acquiesce in such a final negation. If there is one thing that Modern Science has triumphantly established, it is the reign of law and process of evolution in the history of all earthly things. Whatever may be the deeper nature of Speech, in its outward manifestation as human language it is an organism, a growth, a terrestrial

evolution. It contains indeed a constant psychological element and is therefore more free, flexible, consciously self-adaptive than purely physical organisms; its secret is more difficult to seize, its constituents yield themselves only to more subtle and less trenchant methods of analysis. But law and process exist in mental no less than in material phenomena in spite of their more volatile and variable appearances. Law and process must have governed the origins and developments of language. Given the necessary clue and sufficient data, they must be discoverable. It seems to me that in the Sanskrit language the clue can be found, the data lie ready for investigation.

The error of Philology which prevented it from arriving at a more satisfactory result in this direction, was its preoccupation in the physical parts of speech with the exterior morphology of language and in its psychological parts with the equally external connections of formed vocables and of grammatical inflexions in kindred languages. But the true method of Science is to go back to the origins, the embryology, the elements and more obscure processes of things. From the obvious only the obvious and superficial results. The profundities of things, their real truth, can best be discovered by penetration into the hidden things that the surface of phenomena conceals, into that past development of which the finished forms present only secret and dispersed indications or into the possibilities from which the actualities we see are only a narrow selection. A similar method applied to the earlier forms of human speech can alone give us a real Science of Language.

It is not in a short chapter of a treatise itself brief and devoted to another subject that it is at all possible to present

the results of the work that I have attempted on these lines.[1] I can only briefly indicate the one or two features which bear directly on the subject of Vedic interpretation. And I mention them here solely to avoid any supposition in the minds of my readers that in departing from the received senses of certain Vedic words I have simply taken advantage of that freedom of ingenious conjecture which is at once one of the great attractions and one of the most serious weaknesses of modern Philology.

My researches first convinced me that words, like plants, like animals, are in no sense artificial products, but growths, – living growths of sound with certain seed-sounds as their basis. Out of these seed-sounds develop a small number of primitive root-words with an immense progeny which have their successive generations and arrange themselves in tribes, clans, families, selective groups each having a common stock and a common psychological history. For the factor which presided over the development of language was the association, by the nervous mind of primitive man, of certain general significances or rather of certain general utilities and sense-values with articulate sounds. The process of this association was also in no sense artificial but natural, governed by simple and definite psychological laws.

In their beginnings language-sounds were not used to express what we should call ideas; they were rather the vocal equivalents of certain general sensations and emotion-values. It was the nerves and not the intellect which created speech.

---

[1] *I propose to deal with them in a separate work on "The Origins of Aryan Speech". [See Vedic Studies with Writings on Philology, volume 14 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO.]*

To use Vedic symbols, Agni and Vayu, not Indra, were the original artificers of human language. Mind has emerged out of vital and sensational activities; intellect in man has built itself upon a basis of sense-associations and sense-reactions. By a similar process the intellectual use of language has developed by a natural law out of the sensational and emotional. Words, which were originally vital ejections full of a vague sense-potentiality, have evolved into fixed symbols of precise intellectual significances.

In consequence, the word originally was not fixed to any precise idea. It had a general character or quality (*guṇa*), which was capable of a great number of applications and therefore of a great number of possible significances. And this *guṇa* and its results it shared with many kindred sounds. At first, therefore, word-clans, word-families started life on the communal system with a common stock of possible and realised significances and a common right to all of them; their individuality lay rather in shades of expression of the same ideas than in any exclusive right to the expression of a single idea. The early history of language was a development from this communal life of words to a system of individual property in one or more intellectual significances. The principle of partition was at first fluid, then increased in rigidity, until word-families and finally single words were able to start life on their own account. The last stage of the entirely natural growth of language comes when the life of the word is entirely subjected to the life of the idea which it represents. For in the first state of language the word is as living or even a more living force than its idea; sound determines sense. In its last state the positions have been reversed; the idea becomes all-important, the sound secondary.

Another feature of the early history of language is that it expresses at first a remarkably small stock of ideas and these are the most general notions possible and generally the most concrete, such as light, motion, touch, substance, extension, force, speed, etc. Afterwards there is a gradual increase in variety of idea and precision of idea. The progression is from the general to the particular, from the vague to the precise, from the physical to the mental, from the concrete to the abstract, from the expression of an abundant variety of sensations about similar things to the expression of precise difference between similar things, feelings and actions. This progression is worked out by processes of association in ideas which are always the same, always recurrent and, although no doubt due to the environments and actual experiences of the men who spoke the language, wear the appearance of fixed natural laws of development. And after all what is a law but a process which has been worked out by the nature of things in response to the necessities of their environment and has become the fixed habit of their action?

From this past history of language certain consequences derive which are of considerable importance in Vedic interpretation. In the first place by a knowledge of the laws under which the relations of sound and sense formed themselves in the Sanskrit tongue and by a careful and minute study of its word families it is possible to a great extent to restore the past history of individual words. It is possible to account for the meanings actually possessed by them, to show how they were worked out through the various stages of language-development, to establish the mutual relations of different significances and to explain how they came to be attached to the same word in spite of the wide difference and

sometimes even the direct contrariety of their sense-values. It is possible also to restore lost senses of words on a sure and scientific basis and to justify them by an appeal to the observed laws of association which governed the development of the old Aryan tongues, to the secret evidence of the word itself and to the corroborative evidence of its immediate kindred. Thus instead of having a purely floating and conjectural basis for our dealings with the vocables of the Vedic language, we can work with confidence upon a solid and reliable foundation.

Naturally, it does not follow that because a Vedic word may or must have had at one time a particular significance, that significance can be safely applied to the actual text of the Veda. But we do establish a sound sense and a clear possibility of its being the right sense for the Veda. The rest is a matter of comparative study of the passages in which the word occurs and of constant fitness in the context. I have continually found that a sense thus restored illumines always the context wherever it is applied and on the other hand that a sense demanded always by the context is precisely that to which we are led by the history of the word. This is a sufficient basis for a moral, if not for an absolute certainty.

Secondly, one remarkable feature of language in its inception is the enormous number of different meanings of which a single word was capable and also the enormous number of words which could be used to represent a single idea. Afterwards this tropical luxuriance came to be cut down. The intellect intervened with its growing need of precision, its growing sense of economy. The bearing capacity of words progressively diminished; and it became less and less tolerable to be burdened with a superfluous number of words for the same idea, a redundant variety of ideas for the same word. A

considerable, though not too rigid economy in these respects, modified by a demand for a temperate richness of variation, became the final law of language. But the Sanskrit tongue never quite reached the final stages of this development; it dissolved too early into the Prakrit dialects. Even in its latest and most literary form it is lavish of varieties of meanings for the same word; it overflows with a redundant wealth of synonyms. Hence its extraordinary capacity for rhetorical devices which in any other language would be difficult, forced and hopelessly artificial, and especially for the figure of double sense, of *śleṣa*.

The Vedic Sanskrit represents a still earlier stratum in the development of language. Even in its outward features it is less fixed than any classical tongue; it abounds in a variety of forms and inflexions; it is fluid and vague, yet richly subtle in its use of cases and tenses. And on its psychological side it has not yet crystallised, is not entirely hardened into the rigid forms of intellectual precision. The word for the Vedic Rishi is still a living thing, a thing of power, creative, formative. It is not yet a conventional symbol for an idea, but itself the parent and former of ideas. It carries within it the memory of its roots, is still conscient of its own history.

The Rishis' use of language was governed by this ancient psychology of the Word. When in English we use the word "wolf" or "cow", we mean by it simply the animal designated; we are not conscious of any reason why we should use that particular sound for the idea except the immemorial custom of the language; and we cannot use it for any other sense or purpose except by an artificial device of style. But for the Vedic Rishi "vrika" meant the tearer and therefore, among other applications of the sense, a wolf; "dhenu" meant the fosterer, nourisher, and therefore a cow. But the original and

general sense predominates, the derived and particular is secondary. Therefore, it was possible for the fashioner of the hymn to use these common words with a great pliability, sometimes putting forward the image of the wolf or the cow, sometimes using it to colour the more general sense, sometimes keeping it merely as a conventional figure for the psychological conception on which his mind was dwelling, sometimes losing sight of the image altogether. It is in the light of this psychology of the old language that we have to understand the peculiar figures of Vedic symbolism as handled by the Rishis, even to the most apparently common and concrete. It is so that words like "ghritam", the clarified butter, "soma", the sacred wine, and a host of others are used.

Moreover, the partitions made by the thought between different senses of the same word were much less separative than in modern speech. In English "fleet" meaning a number of ships and "fleet" meaning swift are two different words; when we use "fleet" in the first sense we do not think of the swiftness of the ship's motion, nor when we use it in the second, do we recall the image of ships gliding rapidly over the ocean. But this was precisely what was apt to occur in the Vedic use of language. "Bhaga", enjoyment, and "bhaga", share, were for the Vedic mind not different words, but one word which had developed two different uses. Therefore it was easy for the Rishis to employ it in one of the two senses with the other at the back of the mind colouring its overt connotation or even to use it equally in both senses at a time by a sort of figure of cumulative significance. "Chanas" meant food but also it meant "enjoyment, pleasure"; therefore it could be used by the Rishi to suggest to the profane mind only the food given at the sacrifice to the gods, but for the

initiated it meant the Ananda, the joy of the divine bliss entering into the physical consciousness and at the same time suggested the image of the Soma-wine, at once the food of the gods and the Vedic symbol of the Ananda.

We see everywhere this use of language dominating the Word of the Vedic hymns. It was the great device by which the ancient Mystics overcame the difficulty of their task. Agni for the ordinary worshipper may have meant simply the god of the Vedic fire, or it may have meant the principle of Heat and Light in physical Nature, or to the most ignorant it may have meant simply a superhuman personage, one of the many "givers of wealth", satisfiers of human desire. How suggest to those capable of a deeper conception the psychological functions of the God? The word itself fulfilled that service. For Agni meant the Strong, it meant the Bright, or even Force, Brilliance. So it could easily recall to the initiated, wherever it occurred, the idea of the illumined Energy which builds up the worlds and which exalts man to the Highest, the doer of the great work, the Purohit of the human sacrifice.

Or how keep it in the mind of the hearer that all these gods are personalities of the one universal Deva? The names of the gods in their very meaning recall that they are only epithets, significant names, descriptions, not personal appellations. Mitra is the Deva as the Lord of love and harmony, Bhaga as the Lord of enjoyment, Surya as the Lord of illumination, Varuna as the all-pervading Vastness and purity of the Divine supporting and perfecting the world. "The Existent is One," says the Rishi Dirghatamas, "but the sages express It variously; they say Indra, Varuna, Mitra, Agni; they call It Agni, Yama, Matarishwan." The initiate in the earlier days of the Vedic knowledge had no need of this express

statement. The names of the gods carried to him their own significance and recalled the great fundamental truth which remained with him always.

But in the later ages the very device used by the Rishis turned against the preservation of the knowledge. For language changed its character, rejected its earlier pliability, shed off old familiar senses; the word contracted and shrank into its outer and concrete significance. The ambrosial wine of the Ananda was forgotten in the physical offering; the image of the clarified butter recalled only the gross libation to mythological deities, lords of the fire and the cloud and the storm-blast, godheads void of any but a material energy and an external lustre. The letter lived on when the spirit was forgotten; the symbol, the body of the doctrine, remained, but the soul of knowledge had fled from its coverings."(48-57)

2. Agni and the Truth (The First Hymn of The Vedas)

(a) "THE RIG VEDA is one in all its parts. Whichever of its ten Mandalas we choose, we find the same substance, the same ideas, the same images, the same phrases. The Rishis are the seers of a single truth and use in its expression a common language. They differ in temperament and personality; some are inclined to a more rich, subtle and profound use of Vedic symbolism; others give voice to their spiritual experience in a barer and simpler diction, with less fertility of thought, richness of poetical image or depth and fullness of suggestion. Often the songs of one seer vary in their manner, range from the utmost simplicity to the most curious richness. Or there are risings and fallings in the same hymn; it proceeds from the most ordinary conventions of the general symbol of sacrifice to a movement of packed

and complex thought. Some of the Suktas are plain and almost modern in their language; others baffle us at first by their semblance of antique obscurity. But these differences of manner take nothing from the unity of spiritual experience, nor are they complicated by any variation of the fixed terms and the common formulae. In the deep and mystic style of Dirghatamas Auchathya as in the melodious lucidity of Medhatithi Kanwa, in the puissant and energetic hymns of Vishwamitra as in Vasishtha's even harmonies we have the same firm foundation of knowledge and the same scrupulous adherence to the sacred conventions of the Initiates.

From this peculiarity of the Vedic compositions it results that the method of interpretation which I have described can be equally well illustrated from a number of scattered Suktas selected from the ten Mandalas or from any small block of hymns by a single Rishi. If my purpose were to establish beyond all possibility of objection the interpretation which I am now offering, a much more detailed and considerable work would be necessary. A critical scrutiny covering the whole of the ten Mandalas would be indispensable. To justify for instance the idea I attach to the Vedic term Ritam, the Truth, or my explanation of the symbol of the Cow of Light, I should have to cite all passages of any importance in which the idea of the Truth or the image of the Cow are introduced and establish my thesis by an examination of their sense and context. Or if I wish to prove that Indra in the Veda is really in his psychological functions the master of luminous mind typified by Dyaus, or Heaven, with its three shining realms, Rochana, I should have to examine similarly the hymns addressed to Indra and the passages in which there is a clear mention of the Vedic system of worlds. Nor could this be

sufficient, so intertwined and interdependent are the notions of the Veda, without some scrutiny of the other Gods and of other important psychological terms connected with the idea of the Truth and of the mental illumination through which man arrives at it. I recognise the necessity of such a work of justification and hope to follow it out in other studies on the Vedic Truth, on the Gods of the Veda and on Vedic symbols. But a labour of this scope would be beyond the range of the present work, which is confined merely to an illustration of my method and to a brief statement of the results of my theory.

In order to illustrate the method I propose to take the first eleven Suktas of the first Mandala and to show how some of the central ideas of a psychological interpretation arise out of certain important passages or single hymns and how the surrounding context of the passages and the general thought of the hymns assume an entirely new appearance in the light of this profounder thinking.

The Sanhita of the Rig Veda, as we possess it, is arranged in ten books or Mandalas. A double principle is observed in the arrangement. Six of the Mandalas are given each to the hymns of a single Rishi or family of Rishis. Thus the second is devoted chiefly to the Suktas of the Rishi Gritsamada, the third and the seventh similarly to the great names of Vishwamitra and Vasishtha respectively, the fourth to Vamadeva, the sixth to Bharadwaja. The fifth is occupied by the hymns of the house of Atri. In each of these Mandalas the Suktas addressed to Agni are first collected together and followed by those of which Indra is the deity; the invocations of other gods, Brihaspati, Surya, the Ribhus, Usha etc. close the Mandala. A whole book, the ninth, is given to a single

god, Soma. The first, eighth and tenth Mandalas are collections of Suktas by various Rishis, but the hymns of each seer are ordinarily placed together in the order of their deities, Agni leading, Indra following, the other gods succeeding. Thus the first Mandala opens with ten hymns of the seer Madhuchchhandas, son of Vishwamitra, and an eleventh ascribed to Jetri, son of Madhuchchhandas. This last Sukta, however, is identical in style, manner and spirit with the ten that precede it and they can all be taken together as a single block of hymns one in intention and diction.

A certain principle of thought-development also has not been absent from the arrangement of these Vedic hymns. The opening Mandala seems to have been so designed that the general thought of the Veda in its various elements should gradually unroll itself under the cover of the established symbols by the voices of a certain number of Rishis who almost all rank high as thinkers and sacred singers and are, some of them, among the most famous names of Vedic tradition. Nor can it be by accident that the tenth or closing Mandala gives us, with an even greater miscellaneity of authors, the last developments of the thought of the Veda and some of the most modern in language of its Suktas. It is here that we find the Sacrifice of the Purusha and the great Hymn of the Creation. It is here also that modern scholars think they discover the first origins of the Vedantic philosophy, the Brahmavada.

In any case, the hymns of the son and grandson of Vishwamitra with which the Rig Veda opens strike admirably the first essential notes of the Vedic harmony. The first hymn, addressed to Agni, suggests the central conception of the

Truth which is confirmed in the second and third Suktas invoking Indra in company with other gods. In the remaining eight hymns with Indra as the sole deity, except for one which he shares with the Maruts, we find the symbols of the Soma and the Cow, the obstructor Vritra and the great role played by Indra in leading man to the Light and overthrowing the barriers to his progress. These hymns are therefore of crucial importance to the psychological interpretation of the Veda.

There are four verses in the Hymn to Agni, the fifth to the eighth, in which the psychological sense comes out with a great force and clearness, escaping from the veil of the symbol." (58-61)

(b) "We get then this rendering of the four verses: –

"May Agni, priest of the offering whose will towards action is that of the seer, who is true, most rich in varied inspiration, come, a god with the gods."

"The good that thou wilt create for the giver, that is that truth of thee, O Angiras."

"To thee day by day, O Agni, in the night and in the light we by the thought come bearing our submission, – "To thee who shinest out from the sacrifices (or, who governest the sacrifices), guardian of the Truth and its illumination, increasing in thy own home."

The defect of the translation is that we have had to employ one and the same word for *satyam* and *ṛtam* whereas, as we see in the formula *satyam ṛtaṁ bṛhat*, there was a distinction in the Vedic mind between the precise significances of the two words.

Who, then, is this god Agni to whom language of so

mystic a fervour is addressed, to whom functions so vast and profound are ascribed? Who is this guardian of the Truth, who is in his act its illumination, whose will in the act is the will of a seer possessed of a divine wisdom governing his richly varied inspiration? What is the Truth that he guards? And what is this good that he creates for the giver who comes always to him in thought day and night bearing as his sacrifice submission and self-surrender? Is it gold and horses and cattle that he brings or is it some diviner riches?

It is not the sacrificial Fire that is capable of these functions, nor can it be any material flame or principle of physical heat and light. Yet throughout the symbol of the sacrificial Fire is maintained. It is evident that we are in the presence of a mystic symbolism to which the fire, the sacrifice, the priest are only outward figures of a deeper teaching and yet figures which it was thought necessary to maintain and to hold constantly in front.

In the early Vedantic teaching of the Upanishads we come across a conception of the Truth which is often expressed by formulas taken from the hymns of the Veda, such as the expression already quoted, *satyam ṛtaṁ bṛhat*, – the truth, the right, the vast. This Truth is spoken of in the Veda as a path leading to felicity, leading to immortality. In the Upanishads also it is by the path of the Truth that the sage or seer, Rishi or Kavi, passes beyond. He passes out of the falsehood, out of the mortal state into an immortal existence. We have the right therefore to assume that the same conception is in question in both Veda and Vedanta.

This psychological conception is that of a truth which is truth of divine essence, not truth ofmortal sensation and

appearance. It is *satyam*, truth of being; it is in its action *ṛtaṁ*, right, – truth of divine being regulating right activity both of mind and body; it is *bṛhat*, the universal truth proceeding direct and undeformed out of the Infinite. The consciousness that corresponds to it is also infinite, br.hat, large as opposed to the consciousness of the sense-mind which is founded upon limitation. The one is described as *bhūmā*, the large, the other as *alpa*, the little. Another name for this supramental or truth consciousness is Mahas which also means the great, the vast. And as for the facts of sensation and appearance which are full of falsehoods (*anṛtam*, not-truth or wrong application of the *satyam* in mental and bodily activity), we have for instruments the senses, the sense-mind (*manas*) and the intellect working upon their evidence, so for the truth-consciousness there are corresponding faculties, – *dṛṣṭi*, *śruti*, *viveka*, the direct vision of the truth, the direct hearing of its word, the direct discrimination of the right. Whoever is in possession of this truth-consciousness or open to the action of these faculties, is the Rishi or Kavi, sage or seer. It is these conceptions of the truth, *satyam* and *ṛtam*, that we have to apply in this opening hymn of the Veda.

Agni in the Veda is always presented in the double aspect of force and light. He is the divine power that builds up the worlds, a power which acts always with a perfect knowledge, for it is *jātavedas*, knower of all births, *viśvāni vayunāni vidvān*, – it knows all manifestations or phenomena or it possesses all forms and activities of the divine wisdom. Moreover it is repeatedly said that the gods have established Agni as the immortal in mortals, the divine power in man, the energy of fulfilment through which they do their work in him. It is this work which is symbolised by the sacrifice.

Psychologically, then, we may take Agni to be the divine will perfectly inspired by divine Wisdom, and indeed one with it, which is the active or effective power of the Truth-consciousness. This is the obvious sense of the word *kavikratuḥ*, he whose active will or power of effectivity is that of the seer, – works, that is to say, with the knowledge which comes by the truth-consciousness and in which there is no misapplication or error. The epithets that follow confirm this interpretation. Agni is *satya*, true in his being; perfect possession of his own truth and the essential truth of things gives him the power to apply it perfectly in all act and movement of force. He has both the *satyam* and the *ṛtam*. Moreover, he is *citraśravastamaḥ*; from the Ritam there proceeds a fullness of richly luminous and varied inspirations which give the capacity for doing the perfect work. For all these are epithets of Agni as the *hotṛ*, the priest of the sacrifice, he who performs the offering. Therefore it is the power of Agni to apply the Truth in the work (*karma* or *apas*) symbolised by the sacrifice, that makes him the object of human invocation. The importance of the sacrificial fire in the outward ritual corresponds to the importance of this inward force of unified Light and Power in the inward rite by which there is communication and interchange between the mortal and the Immortal. Agni is elsewhere frequently described as the envoy, *dūta*, the medium of that communication and interchange.

We see, then, in what capacity Agni is called to the sacrifice. "Let him come, a god with the gods." The emphasis given to the idea of divinity by this repetition, *devo devebhir*, becomes intelligible when we recall the standing description of Agni as the god in human beings, the immortal in mortals,

the divine guest. We may give the full psychological sense by translating, "Let him come, a divine power with the divine powers." For in the external sense of the Veda the Gods are universal powers of physical Nature personified; in any inner sense they must be universal powers of Nature in her subjective activities, Will, Mind, etc. But in the Veda there is always a distinction between the ordinary human or mental action of these puissances, *manuṣvat*, and the divine. It is supposed that man by the right use of their mental action in the inner sacrifice to the gods can convert them into their true or divine nature, the mortal can become immortal. Thus the Ribhus, who were at first human beings or represented human faculties, became divine and immortal powers by perfection in the work, *sukṛtyayā*, *svapasyayā*. It is a continual self-offering of the human to the divine and a continual descent of the divine into the human which seems to be symbolised in the sacrifice.

The state of immortality thus attained is conceived as a state of felicity or bliss founded on a perfect Truth and Right, *satyaṃ ṛtaṁ*. We must, I think, understand in this sense the verse that follows. "The good (happiness) which thou wilt create for the giver, that is that truth of thee, O Agni." In other words, the essence of this truth, which is the nature of Agni, is the freedom from evil, the state of perfect good and happiness which the Ritam carries in itself and which is sure to be created in the mortal when he offers the sacrifice by the action of Agni as the divine priest. *Bhadram* means anything good, auspicious, happy and by itself need not carry any deep significance. But we find it in the Veda used, like r. tam, in a special sense. It is described in one of the hymns (V.82) as the opposite of the evil dream (*duḥṣvapnyam*), the false consciousness of that which is not the Ritam, and of *duritam*,

false going, which means all evil and suffering. *Bhadram* is therefore equivalent to *suvitam*, right going, which means all good and felicity belonging to the state of the Truth, the Ritam. It is Mayas, the felicity, and the gods who represent the Truth consciousness are described as *mayobhuvaḥ*, those who bring or carry in their being the felicity. Thus every part of the Veda, if properly understood, throws light upon every other part. It is only when we are misled by its veils that we find in it an incoherence." (63-67)

(c) "Thus in these four verses of the opening hymn of the Veda we get the first indications of the principal ideas of the Vedic Rishis, – the conception of a Truth-consciousness supramental and divine, the invocation of the gods as powers of the Truth to raise man out of the falsehoods of the mortal mind, the attainment in and by this Truth of an immortal state of perfect good and felicity and the inner sacrifice and offering of what one has and is by the mortal to the Immortal as the means of the divine consummation. All the rest of Vedic thought in its spiritual aspects is grouped around these central conceptions." (68-69)

3. Varuna-Mitra and The Truth (The Second Hymn)

(a) Indra and Vayu

(i) "If the idea of the Truth that we have found in the very opening hymn of the Veda really carries in itself the contents we have supposed and amounts to the conception of a supramental consciousness which is the condition of the state of immortality or beatitude and if this be the leading conception of the Vedic Rishis, we are bound to find it recurring throughout the hymns as a centre for other and

dependent psychological realisations. In the very next Sukta, the second hymn of Madhuchchhandas addressed to Indra and Vayu, we find another passage full of clear and this time quite invincible psychological suggestions in which the idea of the Ritam is insisted upon with an even greater force than in the hymn to Agni. The passage comprises the last three Riks of the Sukta.

Mitraṁ huve pūtadakṣaṁ, varuṇaṁ ca riśādasam;
dhiyaṁ ghṛtācīṁ sādhantā.
Ṛtena mitrāvaruṇāv, ṛtāvṛdhāv ṛtaspṛśā;
kratuṁ bṛhantam āśāthe.
Kavī no mitrāvaruṇā, tuvijātā urukṣayā;
dakṣaṁ dadhāte apasam." (70)

(ii) "The three riks with which we are dealing occur as the closing passage of a hymn of which the first three verses are addressed to Vayu alone and the next three to Indra and Vayu. Indra in the psychological interpretation of the hymns represents, as we shall see, Mind-Power. The word for the sense-faculties, *indriya*, is derived from his name. His special realm is Swar, a word which means sun or luminous, being akin to *sūra* and *sūrya*, the sun, and is used to indicate the third of the Vedic *vyūhṛtis* and the third of the Vedic worlds corresponding to the principle of the pure or unobscured Mind. Surya represents the illumination of the Ritam rising upon the mind; Swar is that plane of mental consciousness which directly receives the illumination. Vayu on the other hand is always associated with the Prana or Life-Energy which contributes to the system all the ensemble of those nervous activities that in man are the support of the mental energies governed by Indra. Their combination constitutes the normal mentality of man. These two gods are invited in the hymn to

come and partake together of the Soma-wine. This wine of Soma represents, as we have abundant proof in the Veda and especially in the ninth book, a collection of more than a hundred hymns addressed to the deity Soma, the intoxication of the Ananda, the divine delight of being, inflowing upon the mind from the supramental consciousness through the Ritam or Truth. If we accept these interpretations, we can easily translate the hymn into its psychological significance.

Indra and Vayu awaken in consciousness (*cetathaḥ*) to the flowings of the Soma-wine; that is to say, the mind-power and life-power working together in human mentality are to awaken to the inflowings of this Ananda, this Amrita, this delight and immortality from above. They receive them into the full plenitude of the mental and nervous energies, *cetathaḥ sutānāṁ vājinīvasū*□The Ananda thus received constitutes a new action preparing immortal consciousness in the mortal and Indra and Vayu are bidden to come and swiftly perfect these new workings by the participation of the thought *ā yātam upa niṣkṛtaṁ makṣū dhiyā*. For *dhī* is the thought-power, intellect or understanding. It is intermediate between the normal mentality represented by the combination of Indra and Vayu and the Ritam or truth consciousness." (73-74)

(b) Varuna and Mitra

(i) "It is at this point that Varuna and Mitra intervene and our passage begins. Without the psychological clue the connection between the first part of the hymn and the close is not very clear, nor the relation between the couple Varuna-Mitra and the couple Indra-Vayu. With that clue both connections become obvious; indeed they depend upon each other. For the earlier part of the hymn has for its subject the

preparation first of the vital forces represented by Vayu who is alone invoked in the three opening Riks, then of the mentality represented by the couple Indra-Vayu for the activities of the Truth-consciousness in the human being; the close has for its subject the working of the Truth on the mentality so as to perfect the intellect and to enlarge the action. Varuna and Mitra are two of the four gods who represent this working of the Truth in the human mind and temperament.

In the style of the Veda when there is a transition of this kind from one movement of thought to another developing out of it, the link of connection is often indicated by the repetition in the new movement of an important word which has already occurred in the close of the movement that precedes. This principle of suggestion by echo, as one may term it, pervades the hymns and is a mannerism common to all the Rishis. The connecting word here is *Dhī* , thought or intellect. *Dhī* differs from the more general word, *mati*, which means mentality or mental action generally and which indicates sometimes thought, sometimes feeling, sometimes the whole mental state. *Dhī* is the thoughtmind or intellect; as understanding it holds all that comes to it, defines everything and puts it into the right place[2], or often *Dhī* indicates the activity of the intellect, particular thought or thoughts. It is by the thought that Indra and Vayu have been called upon to perfect the nervous mentality, *niṣkṛtaṁ dhiyā*. But this instrument, thought, has itself to be perfected, enriched, clarified before the mind can become capable of free communication with the Truth-consciousness. Therefore Varuna and Mitra, Powers of the Truth, are invoked

[2] *The root dhī means to hold or to place.*

"accomplishing a richly luminous thought," *dhiyaṁ ghṛtācīṁ sādhantā*□

This is the first occurrence in the Veda of the word *ghṛta*, in a modified adjectival form, and it is significant that it should occur as an epithet of the Vedic word for the intellect, *dhī*. In other passages also we find it continually in connection with the words *manas, manīṣā* or in a context where some activity of thought is indicated. The root *ghṛ* conveys the idea of a strong brightness or heat such as that of fire or the summer sun. It means also to sprinkle or anoint, Greek *chriō*. It is capable of being used to signify any liquid, but especially a bright, thick liquid. It is the ambiguity of these two possible senses of which the Vedic Rishis took advantage to indicate by the word outwardly the clarified butter in the sacrifice, inwardly a rich and bright state or activity of the brain-power, *medhā*, as basis and substance of illuminated thought. By *dhiyaṁ ghṛtācīm* is meant, therefore, the intellect full of a rich and bright mental activity.

Varuna and Mitra who accomplish or perfect this state of the intellect, are distinguished by two several epithets. Mitra is *pūtadakṣa*, possessed of a purified judgment; Varuna is *riśādas*, he destroys all hurters or enemies. In the Veda there are no merely ornamental epithets. Every word is meant to tell, to add something to the sense and bear a strict relation to the thought of the sentence in which it occurs. There are two obstacles which prevent the intellect from being a perfect and luminous mirror of the truth-consciousness; first, impurity of the discernment or discriminative faculty which leads to confusion of the Truth, secondly the many causes or influences which interfere with the growth of the Truth by limiting its full application or by breaking up the connections

and harmony of the thoughts that express it and which thus bring about poverty and falsification of its contents. Just as the Gods in the Veda represent universal powers descended from the Truth-consciousness which build up the harmony of the worlds and in man his progressive perfection, so the influences that work against these objects are represented by hostile agencies, Dasyus and Vritras, who seek to break up, to limit, to withhold and deny. Varuna in the Veda is always characterised as a power of wideness and purity; when, therefore, he is present in man as a conscious force of the Truth, all that limits and hurts the nature by introducing into it fault, sin and evil is destroyed by contact with him. He is *riśādas*, destroyer of the enemy, of all that seek to injure the growth. Mitra, a power like Varuna of Light and Truth, especially represents Love, Joy and Harmony, the foundations of Mayas, the Vedic beatitude. Working with the purity of Varuna and imparting that purity to the discernment, he enables it to get rid of all discords and confusions and establish the right working of the strong and luminous intellect.

This progress enables the Truth-consciousness, the Ritam, to work in the human mentality. With the Ritam as the agency, *ṛtena*, increasing the action of the Truth in man, *ṛtāvṛdhā*, touching or reaching the Truth, enabling, that is to say, the mental consciousness to come into successful contact with and possession of the Truth-consciousness, *ṛtaspṛśā*, Mitra and Varuna are able to enjoy the use of a vast effective will-power, *kratuṁ bṛhantam āśāthe*. For it is theWill that is the chief effective agent of the inner sacrifice, but awill that is in harmony with the Truth, guided therefore by a purified discernment. The Will as it enters more and more into the

wideness of the Truth-consciousness becomes itself wide and vast, free from limitation in its view and of hampering impediments in its effectivity. It works *urāv anibādhe*, in the wideness where there is no obstacle or wall of limitation.

Thus the two requisites on which the Vedic Rishis always insist are secured, Light and Power, the Light of the Truth working in the knowledge, *dhiyaṁ ghṛtācīm*, the Power of the Truth working in the effective and enlightened Will, *kratuṁ bṛhantam*. As a result Varuna and Mitra are shown to us in the closing verse of the hymn working in the full sense of their Truth, *kavī tuvijātā urukṣayā*. *Kavi*, we have seen, means possessed of the Truth-consciousness and using its faculties of vision, inspiration, intuition, discrimination. *Tuvijāta* is "multiply born", for *tuvi*, meaning originally strength or force, is used like the French word "force" in the sense of many. But by the birth of the gods is meant always in the Veda their manifestation; thus *tuvijātā* signifies "manifested multiply", in many forms and activities. *Urukṣaya* means dwelling in the wideness, an idea which occurs frequently in the hymns; *uru* is equivalent to *bṛhat*, the Vast, and indicates the infinite freedom of the Truth-consciousness. Thus we have as the result of the increasing activities of the Ritam the manifestation in the human being of the Powers of wideness and purity, of joy and harmony, a manifestation rich in forms, seated in the wideness of the Ritam and using the faculties of the supramental consciousness.

This manifestation of the Powers of the Truth upholds or confirms the discernment while it does the work, *dakṣaṁ dadhāte apasam*. The discernment, now purified and supported, works in the sense of the Truth, as a power of the Truth and accomplishes the perfection of the activities of Indra and Vayu

by freeing the thought and the will from all defect and confusion in their working and results." (74-78)

(ii) "We see then that in the second hymn we find again the same governing ideas as in the first. All is based on the central Vedic conception of the supra-mental or Truth-consciousness towards which the progressively perfected mentality of the human being labours as towards a consummation and a goal. In the first hymn this is merely stated as the aim of the sacrifice and the characteristic work of Agni. The second hymn indicates the preliminary work of preparation, by Indra and Vayu, by Mitra and Varuna, of the ordinary mentality of man through the force of the Ananda and the increasing growth of the Truth.

We shall find that the whole of the Rig Veda is practically a constant variation on this double theme, the preparation of the human being in mind and body and the fulfilment of the godhead or immortality in him by his attainment and development of the Truth and the Beatitude." (79)

4. The Ashwins – Indra – the Vishwadevas (The Third Hymn)

(a) "THE THIRD hymn of Madhuchchhandas is again a hymn of the Soma sacrifice. It is composed, like the second before it, in movements of three stanzas, the first addressed to the Ashwins, the second to Indra, the third to the Vishwadevas, the fourth to the goddess Saraswati. In this hymn also we have in the closing movement, in the invocation to Saraswati, a passage of clear psychological significance, of a far greater clarity indeed than those that have already helped us to understand the secret thought of the Veda.

But this whole hymn is full of psychological suggestions and we find in it the close connection and even identity which the Vedic Rishis sought to establish and perfect between the three main interests of the human soul, Thought and its final victorious illuminations, Action and its last supreme all-achieving puissances, Enjoyment and its highest spiritual ecstasies. The Soma wine symbolises the replacing of our ordinary sense-enjoyment by the divine Ananda. That substitution is brought about by divinising our thought-action, and as it progresses it helps in its turn the consummation of the movement which has brought it about. The Cow, the Horse, the Soma-Wine are the figures of this triple sacrifice. The offering of *ghṛta*, the clarified butter which is the yield of the cow, the offering of the horse, *aśvamedha*, the offering of the wine of Soma are its three principal forms or elements. We have also, less prominent, the offering of the cake which is possibly symbolic of the body, of Matter." (80)

(b) The Ashwins

"We commence with an invocation of the two Ashwins, the two Riders on the Horse... they are described often by epithets of motion, "swift-footed", "fierce-moving in their paths"; that Castor and Pollux in Graeco-Latin mythology protect sailors in their voyages and save them in storm and shipwreck and that in the Rig Veda also they are represented as powers that carry over the Rishis as in a ship or save them from drowning in the ocean. *Nāsatyā* may therefore very well mean lords of the voyage, journey, or powers of the movement. *Rudravartani* is rendered by modern scholars "red-pathed", an epithet supposed to be well-suited to stars and they instance the parallel phrase, *hiraṇyavartani*, having a golden

or shining path. Certainly, *rudra* must have meant at one time, "shining, deep-coloured, red" like the roots *ruṣ* and *ruś*, *rudhira*, "blood", "red", the Latin *ruber, rutilus, rufus*, all meaning red. *Rodasī*, the dual Vedic word for heaven and earth, meant probably, like *rajas* and *rocana*, other Vedic words for the heavenly and earthly worlds, "the shining". On the other hand the sense of injury and violence is equally inherent in this family of words and is almost universal in the various roots which form it. "Fierce" or "violent" is therefore likely to be as good a sense for rudra as "red". The Ashwins are both *hiraṇyavartanī* and *rudravartanī*, because they are both powers of Light and of nervous force; in the former aspect they have a bright gold movement, in the latter they are violent in their movement. In one hymn (V.75.3) we have the combination *rudrā hiraṇyavartanī*, violent and moving in the paths of light; we can hardly with any respect for coherence of sense understand it to mean that the stars are red but their movement or their path is golden.

Here then, in these three verses, are an extraordinary series of psychological functions to apply to two stars of a heavenly constellation! It is evident that if this was the physical origin of the Ashwins, they have as in Greek mythology long lost their purely stellar nature; they have acquired like Athene, goddess of dawn, a psychological character and functions. They are riders on the horse, the Ashwa, symbolic of force and especially of life-energy and nervous force, the Prana. Their common character is that they are gods of enjoyment, seekers of honey; they are physicians, they bring back youth to the old, health to the sick, wholeness to the maimed. Another characteristic is movement, swift, violent, irresistible; their rapid and indomitable chariot is a constant object of

celebration and they are described here as swift-footed and violent in their paths. They are like birds in their swiftness, like the mind, like the wind (V.77.3 and 78.1). They bring in their chariot ripe or perfected satisfactions to man, they are creators of bliss, Mayas. These indications are perfectly clear. They show that the Ashwins are twin divine powers whose special function is to perfect the nervous or vital being in man in the sense of action and enjoyment. But they are also powers of Truth, of intelligent action, of right enjoyment. They are powers that appear with the Dawn, effective powers of action born out of the ocean of being who, because they are divine, are able to mentalise securely the felicities of the higher existence by a thought-faculty which finds or comes to know that true substance and true wealth.." (80-83)

(ii) "They carry man in their ship to the other shore beyond the thoughts and states of the human mind, that is to say, to the supramental consciousness, – *nāvā matīnāṁ pārāya* (I.46.7). Suryā, daughter of the Sun, Lord of the Truth, mounts their car as their bride.

In the present hymn the Ashwins are invoked, as swiftmoving lords of bliss who carry with them many enjoyments, to take delight in the impelling energies of the sacrifice, – *yajvarīr iṣo . . . canasyatam.* These impelling forces are born evidently of the drinking of the Soma wine, that is to say, of the inflow of the divine Ananda. For the expressive words, *giraḥ*, that are to make new formations in the consciousness are already rising, the seat of the sacrifice has been piled, the vigorous juices of the Soma wine are pressed out.[3] The Ashwins are to come as effective powers of action,

[3] *Yuvākavaḥ sutā vṛktabarhiṣaḥ.*

purudaṁsasā narā, to take delight in the Words and to accept them into the intellect where they shall be retained for the action by a thought full of luminous energy.[4] They are to come to the offering of the Soma wine, in order to effect the action of the sacrifice, *dasrā*, as fulfillers of action, by giving to the delight of the action that violent movement of theirs, *rudravartanī*, which carries them irresistibly on their path and overcomes all opposition. They come as powers of the Aryan journey, lords of the great human movement, *Nāsatyā*. We see throughout that it is energy which these Riders on the Horse are to give; they are to take delight in the sacrificial energies, to take up the word into an energetic thought, to bring to the sacrifice their own violent movement on the path. And it is effectiveness of action and swiftness in the great journey that is the object of this demand for energy. I would call the attention of the reader continually to the consistency of conception and coherence of structure, the easy clearness and precision of outline which the thought of the Rishis assumes by a psychological interpretation, so different from the tangled confusion and incoherent abruptness of the interpretations which ignore the supreme tradition of the Veda as a book of wisdom and deepest knowledge.

We have then this rendering for the first three verses:

"O Riders of the Steed, swift-footed, much-enjoying lords of bliss, take delight in the energies of the sacrifice.

"O Riders of the Steed, male souls effecting a manifold action, take joy of the words, O holders in the intellect, by a luminously energetic thought.

---

[4] *Śavīrayā dhiyā dhiṣṇyā vanataṁ giraḥ.*

"I have piled the seat of sacrifice, I have pressed out the vigorous Soma juices; fulfillers of action, powers of the movement, come to them with your fierce speed on the path."

As in the second hymn, so in the third the Rishi begins by invoking deities who act in the nervous or vital forces. But there he called Vayu who supplies the vital forces, brings his steeds of life; here he calls the Ashwins who use the vital forces, ride on the steed. As in the second hymn he proceeds from the vital or nervous action to the mental, he invokes in his second movement the might of Indra. The out-pressings of the wine of delight desire him, *sutā ime tvāyavaḥ*; they desire the luminous mind to take possession of them for its activities..." (83-85)

(c) Indra:

"...the important point here is not the Soma and its purification but the psychological function of Indra. He is addressed as Indra of the richly-various lustres, *indra citrabhāno*. The Soma-juices desire him. He comes impelled by the thought, driven forward by the illumined thinker within, *dhiyeṣito viprajūtaḥ,* to the soul-thoughts of the Rishi who has pressed out the wine of delight and seeks to manifest them in speech, in the inspired mantras; *sutāvata upa brahmāṇi vāghataḥ*. He comes with the speed and force of the illumined mind-power, in possession of his brilliant horses to those thoughts, *tūtujāna upa brahmāṇi harivaḥ*, and the Rishi prays to him to confirm or hold the delight in the Soma offering, *sute dadhiṣva naś canaḥ*. The Ashwins have brought and energised the pleasure of the vital system in the action of the Ananda. Indra is necessary to hold that pleasure firmly in the illuminated mind so that it may not fall away from the consciousness.

"Come, O Indra, with thy rich lustres, these Soma-juices desire thee; they are purified by the subtle powers and by extension in body.

"Come, O Indra, impelled by the mind, driven forward by the illumined thinker, to my soul-thoughts, I who have poured out the Soma-juice and seek to express them in speech.

"Come, O Indra, with forceful speed to my soul-thoughts, O lord of the bright horses; hold firm the delight in the Soma-juice." (86)

(d) Vishwadevas

(i) "The Rishi next passes to the Vishwadevas, all the gods or the all-gods. It has been disputed whether these Vishwadevas form a class by themselves or are simply the gods in their generality. I take it that the phrase means the universal collectivity of the divine powers; for this sense seems to me best to correspond to the actual expressions of the hymns in which they are invoked. In this hymn they are called for a general action which supports and completes the functions of the Ashwins and Indra. They are to come to the sacrifice in their collectivity and divide among themselves, each evidently for the divine and joyous working of his proper activity, the Soma which the giver of the sacrifice distributes to them; *viśve devāsa ā gata*, *dāśvāṁso dāśuṣaḥ sutam*. In the next Rik the call is repeated with greater insistence; they are to arrive swiftly, *tūṃayaḥ* , to the Soma offering or, it may mean, making their way through all the planes of consciousness, "waters", which divide the physical nature of man from their godhead and are full of obstacles to communication between earth and heaven; *apturaḥ sutam ā ganta tūṃayaḥ* . They are to

come like cattle hastening to the stalls of their rest at eveningtide, *usrā iva svasarāṇi*. Thus gladly arriving, they are gladly to accept and cleave to the sacrifice and support it, bearing it up in its journey to its goal, in its ascent to the gods or to the home of the gods, the Truth, the Vast; *medhaṁ juṣanta vahnayaḥ*.

And the epithets of the Vishwadevas, qualifying their character and the functions for which they are invited to the Soma-offering, have the same generality; they are common to all the gods and applied indifferently to any or all of them throughout the Veda.

...The fostering or increasing of man in all his substance and possessions, his continual enlargement towards the fullness and richness of the vast Truth-consciousness, the upholding of him in his great struggle and labour, this is the common preoccupation of the Vedic gods. Then, they are *apturaḥ* , they who cross the waters, or as Sayana takes it, they who give the waters. This he understands in the sense of "rain-givers" and it is perfectly true that all the Vedic gods are givers of the rain, the abundance (for *vṛṣṭi*, rain, has both senses) of heaven, sometimes described as the solar waters, *svarvatīr apaḥ*, or waters which carry in them the light of the luminous heaven, *Svar*. But the ocean and the waters in the Veda, as this phrase itself indicates, are the symbol of conscient being in its mass and in its movements. The gods pour the fullness of these waters, especially the upper waters, the waters of heaven, the streams of the Truth, *ṛtasya dhārāḥ* , across all obstacles into the human consciousness." (87-88)

(ii) "..the gods are all free from effective assailants, free from the harm of the hurtful or opposing powers and

therefore the creative formations of their conscious knowledge, their Maya, move freely, pervasively, attain their right goal, – *asridha ehimāyāso adruhaḥ* ...The all-gods increase man, they uphold him in the great work, they bring him the abundance of the waters of Swar, the streams of the Truth, they communicate the unassailably integral and pervading action of the Truth-consciousness with its wide formations of knowledge, *māyāḥ*...

...They are the powers of Truth entering into the outpourings of the Ananda in man as soon as that movement has been prepared by the vital and mental activity of the Ashwins and the pure mental activity of Indra.

"O fosterers who uphold the doer in his work,

"O all-gods, come and divide the Soma-wine that I distribute.

"O all-gods who bring over to us the Waters, come passing through to my Soma-offerings as illumined powers to your places of bliss. "O all-gods, you who are not assailed nor come to hurt, free-moving in your forms of knowledge, cleave to my sacrifice as its upbearers." (89-90)

(e) Saraswati:

"And, finally, in the last movement of the hymn we have the clear and unmistakable indication of the Truth-consciousness as the goal of the sacrifice, the object of the Soma-offering, the culmination of the work of the Ashwins, Indra and the All-gods in the vitality and in the mind. For these are the three Riks devoted to Saraswati, the divine Word, who represents the stream of inspiration that descends from the Truth-consciousness, and thus limpidly runs their sense:

"May purifying Saraswati with all the plenitude of her forms of plenty, rich in substance by the thought, desire our sacrifice.

"She, the impeller to happy truths, the awakener in consciousness to right mentalisings, Saraswati, upholds the sacrifice.

"Saraswati by the perception awakens in consciousness the great flood (the vast movement of the Ritam) and illumines entirely all the thoughts."

This clear and luminous finale throws back its light on all that has preceded it. It shows the intimate connection between the Vedic sacrifice and a certain state of mind and soul, the interdependence between the offering of the clarified butter and the Soma juice and luminous thought, richness of psychological content, right states of the mind and its awaking and impulsion to truth and light. It reveals the figure of Saraswati as the goddess of the inspiration, of 'sruti. And it establishes the connection between the Vedic rivers and psychological states of mind. The passage is one of those luminous hints which the Rishis have left scattered amidst the deliberate ambiguities of their symbolic style to guide us towards their secret." (90)

5. Saraswati and Her Consorts*

(a) "THE SYMBOLISM of the Veda betrays itself with the greatest clearness in the figure of the goddess Saraswati. In many of the other gods the balance of the internal sense and the external figure is carefully preserved. The veil sometimes becomes transparent or its corners are lifted even

for the ordinary hearer of the Word; but it is never entirely removed. One may doubt whether Agni is anything more than the personification of the sacrificial Fire or of the physical principle of Light and Heat in things, or Indra anything more than the god of the sky and the rain or of physical Light, or Vayu anything more than the divinity in the Wind and Air or at most of the physical Life-breath. In the lesser gods the naturalistic interpretation has less ground for confidence; for it is obvious that Varuna is not merely a Vedic Uranus or Neptune, but a god with great and important moral functions; Mitra and Bhaga have the same psychological aspect; the Ribhus who form things by the mind and build up immortality by works can with difficulty be crushed into the Procrustean measure of a naturalistic mythology. Still by imputing a chaotic confusion of ideas to the poets of the Vedic hymns the difficulty can be trampled upon, if not overcome. But Saraswati will submit to no such treatment. She is, plainly and clearly, the goddess of the Word, the goddess of a divine Inspiration.

… But Saraswati is not only the goddess of Inspiration, she is at one and the same time one of the seven rivers of the early Aryan world...

…Saraswati means, "she of the stream, the flowing movement", and is therefore a natural name both for a river and for the goddess of inspiration. But by what process of thought or association does the general idea of the river of inspiration come to be associated with a particular earthly stream? And in the Veda it is not a question of one river which by its surroundings, natural and legendary, might seem more fitly associated with the idea of sacred inspiration than any other.

For here it is a question not of one, but of seven rivers always associated together in the minds of the Rishis and all of them released together by the stroke of the God Indra when he smote the Python who coiled across their fountains and sealed up their outflow. It seems impossible to suppose that one river only in all this sevenfold outflowing acquired a psychological significance while the rest were associated only with the annual coming of the rains in the Punjab. The psychological significance of Saraswati carries with it a psychological significance for the whole symbol of the Vedic waters.[5]

Saraswati is not only connected with other rivers but with other goddesses who are plainly psychological symbols and especially with Bharati and Ila. In the later Puranic forms of worship Saraswati is the goddess of speech, of learning and of poetry and Bharati is one of her names, but in the Veda Bharati and Saraswati are different deities. Bharati is also called Mahi, the Large, Great or Vast. The three, Ila, Mahi or Bharati and Saraswati are associated together in a constant formula in those hymns of invocation in which the gods are called by Agni to the Sacrifice.

Iḷā sarasvatī mahī, tisro devīr mayobhuvaḥ;
barhiḥ sīdantvasridhaḥ.

"May Ila, Saraswati and Mahi, three goddesses who give birth to the bliss, take their place on the sacrificial seat, they who stumble not," or "who come not to hurt" or "do no

---

[5] *The rivers have a symbolic sense in later Indian thought; as for instance Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati and their confluence are in the Tantric imagery Yogic symbols, and they are used, though in a different way, in Yogic symbolism generally.*

hurt." The epithet means, I think, they in whom there is no false movement with its evil consequences, *duritam*, no stumbling into pitfalls of sin and error.…" (91-94)

(b) Ila, Mahi (Bharati) and Saraswati:

"…these three goddesses have closely connected functions akin to the inspirational power of Saraswati. Saraswati is the Word, the inspiration, as I suggest, that comes from the Ritam, the Truth-consciousness. Bharati and Ila must also be different forms of the same Word or knowledge. In the eighth hymn of Madhuchchhandas we have a Rik in which Bharati is mentioned under the name of Mahi.

Evā hyasya sūnṛtā, virapśī gomatī mahī;
pakvā śākhā na dāśuṣe.

"Thus Mahi for Indra full of the rays, overflowing in her abundance, in her nature a happy truth, becomes as if a ripe branch for the giver of the sacrifice."

The rays in the Veda are the rays of Surya, the Sun. Are we to suppose that the goddess is a deity of the physical Light or are we to translate "go" by cow and suppose that Mahi is full of cows for the sacrificer? The psychological character of Saraswati comes to our rescue against the last absurd supposition, but it negatives equally the naturalistic interpretation. This characterisation of Mahi, Saraswati's companion in the sacrifice, the sister of the goddess of inspiration, entirely identified with her in the later mythology, is one proof among a hundred others that light in the Veda is a symbol of knowledge, of spiritual illumination. Surya is the Lord of the supreme Sight, the vast Light, *bṛhaj jyotiḥ*, or, as it is sometimes called, the true Light, *ṛtaṁ jyotiḥ*. And the

connection between the words *ṛtam* and *bṛhat* is constant in the Veda.

It seems to me impossible to see in these expressions anything else than the indication of a state of illumined consciousness the nature of which is that it is wide or large, *bṛhat*, full of the truth of being, *satyam*, and of the truth of knowledge and action, *ṛtam*. The gods have this consciousness. Agni, for instance, is termed *ṛtacit*, he who has the truth-consciousness. Mahi is full of the rays of this Surya; she carries in her this illumination. Moreover she is *sūnṛtā*, she is the word of a blissful Truth, even as it has been said of Saraswati that she is the impeller of happy truths, *codayitrī sūnṛtānām*. Finally, she is *virapśī*, large or breaking out into abundance, a word which recalls to us that the Truth is also a Largeness, *ṛtaṁ bṛhat*. And in another hymn, (I.22.10), she is described as *varūtrī dhiṣaṇā*, a widely covering or embracing Thought-power. Mahi, then, is the luminous vastness of the Truth, she represents the Largeness, *bṛhat*, of the superconscient in us containing in itself the Truth, *ṛtam*. She is, therefore, for the sacrificer like a branch covered with ripe fruit.

Ila is also the word of the truth; her name has become identical in a later confusion with the idea of speech. As Saraswati is an awakener of the consciousness to right thinkings or right states of mind, *cetantī sumatīnām*, so also Ila comes to the sacrifice awakening the consciousness to knowledge, *cetayantṇ* She is full of energy, *suvīrā*, and brings knowledge. She also is connected with Surya, the Sun, as when Agni, the Will is invoked (V.4.4) to labour by the rays of the Sun, Lord of the true Light, being of one mind with Ila, *iḷayā sajoṣā yatamāno raśmibhiḥ sūryasya*. She is the mother of the Rays,

the herds of the Sun. Her name means she who seeks and attains and it contains the same association of ideas as the words Ritam and Rishi. Ila may therefore well be the vision of the seer which attains the truth.

As Saraswati represents the truth-audition, *śruti*, which gives the inspired word, so Ila represents *dṛṣṭi*, the truth-vision. If so, since *dṛṣṭi* and *śruti* are the two powers of the Rishi, the Kavi, the Seer of the Truth, we can understand the close connection of Ila and Saraswati. Bharati or Mahi is the largeness of the Truth-consciousness which, dawning on man's limited mind, brings with it the two sister Puissances. We can also understand how these fine and living distinctions came afterwards to be neglected as the Vedic knowledge declined and Bharati, Saraswati, Ila melted into one.

We may note also that these three goddesses are said to bring to birth for man the Bliss, Mayas. I have already insisted on the constant relation, as conceived by the Vedic seers, between the Truth and the Bliss or Ananda. It is by the dawning of the true or infinite consciousness in man that he arrives out of this evil dream of pain and suffering, this divided creation into the Bliss, the happy state variously described in Veda by the words *bhadram*, *mayas* (love and bliss), *svasti* (the good state of existence, right being) and by others less technically used such as *vāryam*, *rayiḥ*, *rāyaḥ*. For the Vedic Rishi Truth is the passage and the antechamber, the Bliss of the divine existence is the goal, or else Truth is the foundation, Bliss the supreme result.

Such, then, is the character of Saraswati as a psychological principle, her peculiar function and her relation to her most immediate connections among the gods...." (95-97)

(c) The Number Seven in the Vedic System

"…The number seven plays an exceedingly important part in the Vedic system, as in most very ancient schools of thought. We find it recurring constantly, – the seven delights, *sapta ratnāni*; the seven flames, tongues or rays of Agni, *sapta arciṣaḥ*, *sapta jvālāḥ*; the seven forms of the Thought-principle, *sapta dhītayaḥ*; the seven Rays or Cows, forms of the Cow unslayable, Aditi, mother of the gods, *sapta gāvaḥ*; the seven rivers, the seven mothers or fostering cows, *sapta mātaraḥ*, *sapta dhenavaḥ*, a term applied indifferently to the Rays and to the Rivers. All these sets of seven depend, it seems to me, upon the Vedic classification of the fundamental principles, the tattvas, of existence. The enquiry into the number of these tattvas greatly interested the speculative mind of the ancients and in Indian philosophy we find various answers ranging from the One upward and running into the twenties. In Vedic thought the basis chosen was the number of the psychological principles, because all existence was conceived by the Rishis as a movement of conscious being. However merely curious or barren these speculations and classifications may seem to the modern mind, they were no mere dry metaphysical distinctions, but closely connected with a living psychological practice of which they were to a great extent the thought-basis, and in any case we must understand them clearly if we wish to form with any accuracy an idea of this ancient and far-off system.

In the Veda, then, we find the number of the principles variously stated. The One was recognised as the basis and continent; in this One there were the two principles divine and human, mortal and immortal. The dual number is also

otherwise applied in the two principles, Heaven and Earth, Mind and Body, Soul and Nature, who are regarded as the father and mother of all beings. It is significant, however, that Heaven and Earth, when they symbolise two forms of natural energy, the mental and the physical consciousness, are no longer the father and mother, but the two mothers. The triple principle was doubly recognised, first in the threefold divine principle answering to the later Sachchidananda, the divine existence, consciousness and bliss, and secondly in the threefold mundane principle, Mind, Life, Body, upon which is built the triple world of the Veda and Puranas. But the full number ordinarily recognised is seven. This figure was arrived at by adding the three divine principles to the three mundane and interpolating a seventh or link-principle which is precisely that of the Truth-consciousness, Ritam Brihat, afterwards known as Vijnana or Mahas. The latter term means the Large and is therefore an equivalent of Brihat. There are other classifications of five, eight, nine and ten and even, as it would seem, twelve; but these do not immediately concern us.

All these principles, be it noted, are supposed to be really inseparable and omnipresent and therefore apply themselves to each separate formation of Nature. The seven Thoughts, for instance, are Mind applying itself to each of the seven planes as we would now call them and formulating Matter-mind, if we may so call it, nervous mind, puremind, truth-mind and so on to the highest summit, *paramā parāvat*. The seven rays or cows are Aditi the infinite Mother, the Cow unslayable, supreme Nature or infinite Consciousness, pristine source of the later idea of Prakriti or Shakti, – the Purusha is in this early pastoral imagery the Bull, Vrishabha, – the Mother of things taking form on the seven planes of her world-action

as energy of conscious being. So also, the seven rivers are conscious currents corresponding to the sevenfold substance of the ocean of being which appears to us formulated in the seven worlds enumerated by the Puranas. It is their full flow in the human consciousness which constitutes the entire activity of the being, his full treasure of substance, his full play of energy. In the Vedic image, his cows drink of the water of the seven rivers." (97-99)

RNI NO. RAJENG/2002/9480

Name of the Publisher:	Peoples awakening and Service organisation
Name of the Printer :	Peoples awakening and Service organisation
Name of the Owner :	Peoples awakening and Service organisation
Printed at :	Sri Aurobindo Divine Life Press Seth Rambilasrai Kothi, Khetan Mohalla Jhunjhunu - 333 001, Rajasthan
Published at :	Mira Ambica Bhawan, Khetan Mohalla, Jhunjhunu - 333 001, Rajasthan **email:** sadlecjjn@gmail.com URL : www.sadlec.org
Editor :	Anjana Dharnidharka