The Real Awakener

The Light of Lights

Words of Sri Aurobindo – 34

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The First Rik (Mantra) of the Rig Veda

अग्निमीळे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवमृत्विजम्। होतारं रत्नधातम् ॥ १॥

"Agni I adore who stands before the Lord, the god who seeth Truth, the warrior, strong disposer of delight."

So the Rigveda begins with a song to Agni, with the adoration of the pure, mighty and brilliant God. "Agni, he who excels and is mighty," cries the Seer, "him I adore." Why Agni before all the other gods? Because it is he that stands before Yajna, the Master of things; because he is the god whose burning eyes can gaze straight at Truth, at the satyam, the vijnanam, that which is the Seer's aim and desire and the thing on which all Veda is based; because he is the warrior who wars down and removes all the crooked attractions of ignorance and desire, *juhuranam enas*, which stand in the way of the Yogin, because as the vehicle of Tapas, the pure divine energy which flows from the higher concealed hemisphere of existence, he more than any develops and disposes Ananda, the divine delight." (511)

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Selections from the Hymns to the Mystic Fire (CWSA 16)

1. Forward Written by Sri Aurobindo for the First Edition (1946) of the Hymns to the Mystic Fire

(a)

"In ancient times the Veda was revered as a sacred book of wisdom, a great mass of inspired poetry, the work of Rishis, seers and sages, who received in their illumined minds rather than mentally constructed a great universal, eternal and impersonal Truth which they embodied in Mantras, revealed verses of power, not of an ordinary but of a divine inspiration and source. The name given to these sages was Kavi, which afterwards came to mean any poet, but at the time had the sense of a seer of truth, – the Veda itself describes them as *kavayaḥ satyaśrutaḥ*, "seers who are hearers of the Truth" and the Veda itself was called *śruti*, a word which came to mean "revealed Scripture". The seers of the Upanishad had the same idea about the Veda and frequently appealed to its authority for the truths they themselves announced and these too afterwards came to be regarded as Sruti, revealed Scripture, and were included in the sacred Canon.

This tradition persevered in the Brahmanas and continued to maintain itself in spite of the efforts of the ritualistic commentators, Yajnikas, to explain everything as myth and rite and the division made by the Pandits distinguishing the section of works, Karmakanda, and the section of Knowledge, Jnanakanda, identifying the former with the hymns and the latter with the Upanishads. This drowning of the parts of Knowledge by the parts of ceremonial works was strongly criticised in one of the Upanishads and in the Gita, but both look on the Veda as a Book of Knowledge. Even, the Sruti including both Veda and Upanishad was regarded as the supreme authority for spiritual knowledge and infallible.

Is this all legend and moonshine, or a groundless and even nonsensical tradition? Or is it the fact that there is only a scanty element of higher ideas in some later hymns which started this theory? Did the writers of the Upanishads foist upon the Riks a meaning which was not there but read into it by their imagination or a fanciful interpretation? Modern European scholarship insists on having it so. And it has persuaded the mind of modern India. In favour of this view is the fact that the Rishis of the Veda were not only seers but singers and priests of sacrifice, that their chants were written to be sung at public sacrifices and refer constantly to the customary ritual and seem to call for the outward objects of these ceremonies, wealth, prosperity, victory over enemies. Sayana, the great commentator, gives us a ritualistic and where necessary a tentatively mythical or historical sense to the Riks, very rarely does he put forward any higher meaning though sometimes he lets a higher sense come through or puts it as an alternative as if in despair of finding out some ritualistic or mythical interpretation. But still he does not reject the spiritual authority of the Veda or deny that there is a higher truth contained in the Riks. This last development was left to our own times and popularised by occidental scholars.

The European scholars took up the ritualistic tradition, but for the rest they dropped Sayana overboard and went on to make their own etymological explanation of the words, or build up their own conjectural meanings of the Vedic verses and give a new presentation often arbitrary and imaginative. What they sought for in the Veda was the early history of India, its society, institutions, customs, a civilisation-picture of the times. They invented the theory based on the difference of languages of an Aryan invasion from the north, an invasion of a Dravidian India of which the Indians themselves had no memory or tradition and of which there is no record in their epic or classical literature. The Vedic religion was in this account only a worship of Nature-Gods full of solar myths and consecrated by sacrifices and a sacrificial liturgy primitive

enough in its ideas and contents, and it is these barbaric prayers that are the much vaunted, haloed and apotheosized Veda.

There can be no doubt that in the beginning there was a worship of the Powers of the physical world, the Sun, Moon, Heaven and Earth, Wind, Rain and Storm etc., the Sacred Rivers and a number of Gods who presided over the workings of Nature. That was the general aspect of the ancient worship in Greece, Rome, India and among other ancient peoples. But in all these countries these gods began to assume a higher, a psychological function; Pallas Athene who may have been originally a Dawn-Goddess springing in flames from the head of Zeus, the Sky-God, Dyaus of the Veda, has in classical Greece a higher function and was identified by the Romans with their Minerva, the Goddess of learning and wisdom; similarly, Saraswati, a river Goddess, becomes in India the goddess of wisdom, learning and the arts and crafts: all the Greek deities have undergone a change in this direction – Apollo, the Sun-God, has become a god of poetry and prophecy, Hephaestus the Fire-God a divine smith, god of labour. In India the process was arrested half-way, and the Vedic Gods developed their psychological functions but retained more fixedly their external character and for higher purposes gave place to a new pantheon. They had to give precedence to Puranic deities who developed out of the early company but assumed larger cosmic functions, Vishnu, Rudra, Brahma – developing from the Vedic Brihaspati, or Brahmanaspati, – Shiva, Lakshmi, Durga. Thus in India the change in the gods was less complete, the earlier deities became the inferior divinities of the Puranic pantheon and this was largely due to the survival of the Rig Veda in which their psychological and their external functions co-existed and are both given a powerful emphasis; there was no such early literary record to maintain the original features of the Gods of Greece and Rome.

This change was evidently due to a cultural development in these early peoples who became progressively more mentalised

and less engrossed in the physical life as they advanced in civilisation and needed to read into their religion and their deities finer and subtler aspects which would support their more highly mentalised concepts and interests and find for them a true spiritual being or some celestial figure as their support and sanction. But the largest part in determining and deepening this inward turn must be attributed to the Mystics who had an enormous influence on these early civilisations; there was indeed almost everywhere an age of the Mysteries in which men of a deeper knowledge and self-knowledge established their practices, significant rites, symbols, secret lore within or on the border of the more primitive exterior religions. This took different forms in different countries; in Greece there were the Orphic and Eleusinian Mysteries, in Egypt and Chaldea the priests and their occult lore and magic, in Persia the Magi, in India the Rishis. The preoccupation of the Mystics was with self-knowledge and a profounder world-knowledge; they found out that in man there was a deeper self and inner being behind the surface of the outward physical man, which it was his highest business to discover and know. "Know thyself" was their great precept, just as in India to know the Self, the Atman became the great spiritual need, the highest thing for the human being. They found also a Truth, a Reality behind the outward aspects of the universe and to discover, follow, realise this Truth was their great aspiration. They discovered secrets and powers of Nature which were not those of the physical world but which could bring occult mastery over the physical world and physical things and to systematise this occult knowledge and power was also one of their strong preoccupations. But all this could only be safely done by a difficult and careful training, discipline, purification of the nature; it could not be done by the ordinary man. If men entered into these things without a severe test and training it would be dangerous to themselves and others; this knowledge, these powers could be misused, misinterpreted, turned from truth to falsehood, from good to evil. A strict secrecy was

therefore maintained, the knowledge handed down behind a veil from master to disciple. A veil of symbols was created behind which these mysteries could shelter, formulas of speech also which could be understood by the initiated but were either not known by others or were taken by them in an outward sense which carefully covered their true meaning and secret. This was the substance of Mysticism everywhere." (3-6)

(b) The Rishis of India and the Tradition of a Secret Meaning and a Mystic Wisdom Couched in the Riks of the Veda

"It has been the tradition in India from the earliest times that the Rishis, the poet-seers of the Veda, were men of this type, men with a great spiritual and occult knowledge not shared by ordinary human beings, men who handed down this knowledge and their powers by a secret initiation to their descendants and chosen disciples. It is a gratuitous assumption to suppose that this tradition was wholly unfounded, a superstition that arose suddenly or slowly formed in a void, with nothing whatever to support it; some foundation there must have been however small or however swelled by legend and the accretions of centuries. But if it is true, then inevitably the poet-seers must have expressed something of their secret knowledge, their mystic lore in their writings and such an element must be present, however well-concealed by an occult language or behind a technique of symbols, and if it is there it must be to some extent discoverable. It is true that an antique language, obsolete words, – Yaska counts more than four hundred of which he did not know the meaning, – and often a difficult and out-of-date diction helped to obscure their meaning; the loss of the sense of their symbols, the glossary of which they kept to themselves, made them unintelligible to later generations; even in the time of the Upanishads the spiritual seekers of the age had to resort to initiation and meditation to penetrate into their secret knowledge, while

the scholars afterwards were at sea and had to resort to conjecture and to concentrate on a mental interpretation or to explain by myths, by the legends of the Brahmanas themselves often symbolic and obscure. But still to make this discovery will be the sole way of getting at the true sense and the true value of the Veda. We must take seriously the hint of Yaska, accept the Rishi's description of the Veda's contents as "seer-wisdoms, secret words", and look for whatever clue we can find to this ancient wisdom. Otherwise the Veda must remain for ever a sealed book; grammarians, etymologists, scholastic conjectures will not open to us the sealed chamber.

For it is a fact that the tradition of a secret meaning and a mystic wisdom couched in the Riks of the ancient Veda was as old as the Veda itself. The Vedic Rishis believed that their Mantras were inspired from higher hidden planes of consciousness and contained this secret knowledge. The words of the Veda could only be known in their true meaning by one who was himself a seer or mystic; from others the verses withheld their hidden knowledge. In one of Vamadeva's hymns in the fourth Mandala (IV.3.16) the Rishi describes himself as one illumined expressing through his thought and speech words of guidance, "secret words" – *niṇyā vacāṁsi* – "seer-wisdoms that utter their inner meaning to the seer"– *kāvyāni kavaye nivacanā*. The Rishi Dirghatamas speaks of the Riks, the Mantras of the Veda, as existing "in a supreme ether, imperishable and immutable in which all the gods are seated", and he adds "one who knows not That what shall he do with the Rik?" (I.164.39) He further alludes to four planes from which the speech issues, three of them hidden in the secrecy while the fourth is human, and from there comes the ordinary word; but the word and thought of the Veda belongs to the higher planes (I.164.45). Elsewhere in the Riks the Vedic Word is described (X.71) as that which is supreme and the topmost height of speech, the best and the most faultless. It is something that is hidden in secrecy and from there comes out and is manifested. It has entered into the truth-seers, the

Rishis, and it is found by following the track of their speech. But all cannot enter into its secret meaning. Those who do not know the inner sense are as men who seeing see not, hearing hear not, only to one here and there the Word desiring him like a beautifully robed wife to a husband lays open her body. Others unable to drink steadily of the milk of the Word, the Vedic cow, move with it as with one that gives no milk, to him the Word is a tree without flowers or fruits. This is quite clear and precise; it results from it beyond doubt that even then while the Rig Veda was being written the Riks were regarded as having a secret sense which was not open to all. There was an occult and spiritual knowledge in the sacred hymns and by this knowledge alone, it is said, one can know the truth and rise to a higher existence. This belief was not a later tradition but held, probably, by all and evidently by some of the greatest Rishis such as Dirghatamas and Vamadeva.

The tradition, then, was there and it was prolonged after the Vedic times. Yaska speaks of several schools of interpretation of the Veda. There was a sacrificial or ritualistic interpretation, the historical or rather mythological explanation, an explanation by the grammarians and etymologists, by the logicians, a spiritual interpretation. Yaska himself declares that there is a triple knowledge and therefore a triple meaning of the Vedic hymns, a sacrificial or ritualistic knowledge, a knowledge of the gods and finally a spiritual knowledge; but the last is the true sense and when one gets it the others drop or are cut away. It is this spiritual sense that saves and the rest is outward and subordinate. He says further that "the Rishis saw the truth, the true law of things, directly by an inner vision"; afterwards the knowledge and the inner sense of the Veda were almost lost and the Rishis who still knew had to save it by handing it down through initiation to disciples and at a last stage outward and mental means had to be used for finding the sense such as Nirukta and other Vedangas. But even then, he says, "the true sense of the Veda can be recovered directly by meditation and tapasya", those who can

use these means need no outward aids for this knowledge. This also is sufficiently clear and positive."(6-9)

(c) The Tradition of a Mystic Element in the Veda as a Source of Indian Civilisation and Culture

"The tradition of a mystic element in the Veda as a source of Indian civilisation, its religion, its philosophy, its culture is more in consonance with historical fact than the European scouting of this idea. The nineteenth-century European scholarship writing in a period of materialistic rationalism regarded the history of the race as a development out of primitive barbarism or semi-barbarism, a crude social life and religion and a mass of superstitions, by the growth of outward civilised institutions, manners and habits through the development of intellect and reason, art, philosophy and science and a clearer and sounder, more matter-of-fact intelligence. The ancient idea about the Veda could not fit into this picture; it was regarded as rather a part of ancient superstitious ideas and a primitive error. But we can now form a more accurate idea of the development of the race. The ancient more primitive civilisations held in themselves the elements of the later growth but their early wise men were not scientists and philosophers or men of high intellectual reason but mystics and even mystery-men, occultists, religious seekers; they were seekers after a veiled truth behind things and not of an outward knowledge. The scientists and philosophers came afterwards; they were preceded by the mystics and often like Pythagoras and Plato were to some extent mystics themselves or drew many of their ideas from the mystics. In India philosophy grew out of the seeking of the mystics and retained and developed their spiritual aims and kept something of their methods in later Indian spiritual discipline and Yoga. The Vedic tradition, the fact of a mystical element in the Veda fits in perfectly with this historical truth and takes its place in the history of Indian culture. The tradition of the Veda as the bed-rock of Indian civilisation – not merely a barbaric

sacrificial liturgy – is more than a tradition, it is an actual fact of history.

But even if an element of high spiritual knowledge, or passages full of high ideas were found in the hymns, it might be supposed that those are perhaps only a small factor, while the rest is a sacrificial liturgy, formulas of prayer and praise to the Gods meant to induce them to shower on the sacrificers material blessings such as plenty of cows, horses, fighting men, sons, food, wealth of all kinds, protection, victory in battle, or to bring down rain from heaven, recover the sun from clouds or from the grip of Night, the free flowing of the seven rivers, recovery of cattle from the Dasyus (or the Dravidians) and the other boons which on the surface seem to be the object of this ritual worship. The Rishis would then be men with some spiritual or mystic knowledge but otherwise dominated by all the popular ideas proper to their times. These two elements they would then mix up intimately in their hymns and this would account at least in part for the obscurity and the rather strange and sometimes grotesque jumble which the traditional interpretation offers us. But if on the other hand a considerable body of high thinking clearly appears, if there is a large mass of verses or whole hymns which admit only of a mystic character and significance, and if finally, the ritualistic and external details are found to take frequently the appearance of symbols such as were always used by the mystics, and if there are many clear indications, even some explicit statements in the hymns themselves of such a meaning, then all changes." (9-10)

(d) The Rig Veda – A Great Scripture with a Hidden Mystic Meaning Behind

"We are in the presence of a great scripture of the mystics with a double significance, one exoteric, the other esoteric; the symbols themselves have a meaning which makes them a part of the esoteric significance, an element in the secret teaching and knowledge. The whole of the Rig Veda, a small

number of hymns perhaps excepted, becomes in its inner sense such a Scripture. At the same time the exoteric sense need not be merely a mask; the Riks may have been regarded by their authors as words of power, powerful not only for internal but for external things. A purely spiritual scripture would concern itself with only spiritual significances, but the ancient mystics were also what we would call occultists, men who believed that by inner means outer as well as inner results could be produced, that thought and words could be so used as to bring about realisations of every kind, – in the phrase common in the Veda itself, – both the human and the divine.

But where is this body of esoteric meaning in the Veda? It is only discoverable if we give a constant and straightforward meaning to the words and formulas employed by the Rishis, especially to the key-words which bear as keystones the whole structure of their doctrine. One such word is the great word, Ritam, Truth; Truth was the central object of the seeking of the mystics, a spiritual or inner Truth, a truth of ourselves, a truth of things, a truth of the world and of the gods, a truth behind all we are and all that things are. In the ritualistic interpretation this master word of the Vedic knowledge has been interpreted in all kinds of senses according to the convenience or fancy of the interpreter, "truth", "sacrifice", "water", "one who has gone", even "food", not to speak of a number of other meanings; if we do that, there can be no certitude in our dealings with the Veda. But let us consistently give it the same master sense and a strange but clear result emerges. If we apply the same treatment to other standing terms of the Veda, if we give them their ordinary, natural and straightforward meaning and give it constantly and consistently, not monkeying about with their sense or turning them into purely ritualistic expressions, if we allow to certain important words, such as *śravas*, *kratu*, the psychological meaning of which they are capable and which they undoubtedly bear in certain passages as when the Veda describes Agni as *kratur hṛdi*, then this result becomes all the

more clear, extended, pervasive. If in addition we follow the indications which abound, sometimes the explicit statement of the Rishis about the inner sense of their symbols, interpret in the same sense the significant legends and figures on which they constantly return, the conquest over Vritra and the battle with the Vritras, his powers, the recovery of the Sun, the Waters, the Cows, from the Panis or other Dasyus, the whole Rig Veda reveals itself as a body of doctrine and practice, esoteric, occult, spiritual, such as might have been given by the mystics in any ancient country but which actually survives for us only in the Veda. It is there deliberately hidden by a veil, but the veil is not so thick as we first imagine; we have only to use our eyes and the veil vanishes; the body of the Word, the Truth stands out before us.

Many of the lines, many whole hymns even of the Veda bear on their face a mystic meaning; they are evidently an occult form of speech, have an inner meaning. When the seer speaks of Agni as "the luminous guardian of the Truth shining out in his own home", or of Mitra and Varuna or other gods as "in touch with the Truth and making the Truth grow" or as "born in the Truth", these are words of a mystic poet, who is thinking of that inner Truth behind things of which the early sages were the seekers. He is not thinking of the Nature-Power presiding over the outer element of fire or of the fire of the ceremonial sacrifice. Or he speaks of Saraswati as one who impels the words of Truth and awakes to right thinkings or as one opulent with the thought: Saraswati awakes to consciousness or makes us conscious of the "Great Ocean and illumines all our thoughts." It is surely not the River Goddess whom he is thus hymning but the Power, the River if you will, of inspiration, the word of the Truth, bringing its light into our thoughts, building up in us that Truth, an inner knowledge. The Gods constantly stand out in their psychological functions; the sacrifice is the outer symbol of an inner work, an inner interchange between the gods and men, – man giving what he has, the gods giving in return the

horses of power, the herds of light, the heroes of Strength to be his retinue, winning for him victory in his battle with the hosts of Darkness, Vritras, Dasyus, Panis. When the Rishi says, "Let us become conscious whether by the War-Horse or by the Word of a Strength beyond men", his words have either a mystic significance or they have no coherent meaning at all. In the portions translated in this book we have many mystic verses and whole hymns which, however mystic, tear the veil off the outer sacrificial images covering the real sense of the Veda. "Thought", says the Rishi, "has nourished for us human things in the Immortals, in the Great Heavens; it is the milch-cow which milks of itself the wealth of many forms" – the many kinds of wealth, cows, horses and the rest for which the sacrificer prays; evidently this is no material wealth, it is something which Thought, the Thought embodied in the Mantra, can give and it is the result of the same Thought that nourishes our human things in the Immortals, in the Great Heavens. A process of divinisation, and of a bringing down of great and luminous riches, treasures won from the Gods by the inner work of sacrifice, is hinted at in terms necessarily covert but still for one who knows how to read these secret words, *niṇyā vacāṁsi*, sufficiently expressive, *kavaye nivacanā*. Again, Night and Dawn the eternal sisters are like "joyful weaving women weaving the weft of our perfected works into the form of a sacrifice." Again, words with a mystic form and meaning, but there could hardly be a more positive statement of the psychological character of the Sacrifice, the real meaning of the Cow, of the riches sought for, the plenitudes of the Great Treasure." (10-13)

(e) The Fixed Double Meaning of the words in the Veda

"Under pressure of the necessity to mask their meaning with symbols and symbolic words – for secrecy must be observed – the Rishis resorted to fixed double meanings, a device easily manageable in the Sanskrit language where one word often bears several different meanings, but not easy to render in an

English translation and very often impossible. Thus the word for cow, *go*, meant also light or a ray of light; this appears in the names of some of the Rishis, Gotama, most radiant, Gavishthira, steadfast in the Light. The cows of the Veda were the Herds of the Sun, familiar in Greek myth and mystery, the rays of the Sun of Truth and Light and Knowledge; this meaning which comes out in some passages can be consistently applied everywhere yielding a coherent sense. The word *ghṛta* means ghee or clarified butter and this was one of the chief elements of the sacrificial rite; but *ghṛta* could also mean light, from the root *ghṛ* to shine, and it is used in this sense in many passages. Thus the horses of Indra, the Lord of Heaven, are described as dripping with light, *ghṛta-snu*,[1] – it certainly does not mean that ghee dripped from them as they ran, although that seems to be the sense of the same epithet as applied to the grain of which Indra's horses are invited to partake when they come to the sacrifice. Evidently this sense of light doubles with that of clarified butter in the symbolism of the sacrifice. The thought or the word expressing the thought is compared to pure clarified butter, expressions like *dhiyaṁ ghṛtācīm*, the luminous thought or understanding occur. There is a curious passage in one of the hymns translated in this book calling on Fire as priest of the sacrifice to flood the offering with a mind pouring ghrita, *ghṛtapruṣā manasā* and so manifest the Seats ("places", or "planes"), the three heavens each of them and manifest the Gods.[2] But what is a ghee-pouring mind, and how by pouring ghee can a priest manifest the Gods and the triple heavens? But admit the mystical and esoteric meaning and the sense becomes clear. What the Rishi means is a "mind

[1] Sayana, though in several passages he takes *ghṛta* in the sense of light, renders it here by "water"; he seems to think that the divine horses were very tired and perspiring profusely! A Naturalistic interpreter might as well argue that as Indra is a God of the sky, the primitive poet might well believe that rain was the perspiration of Indra's horses.

[2] This is Sayana's rendering of the passage and rises directly from the words.

pouring the light", a labour of the clarity of an enlightened or illumined mind; it is not a human priest or a sacrificial fire, but the inner Flame, the mystic seer-will, *kavi-kratu*, and that can certainly manifest by this process the Gods and the worlds and all planes of the being. The Rishis, it must be remembered, were seers as well as sages, they were men of vision who saw things in their meditation in images, often symbolic images which might precede or accompany an experience and put it in a concrete form, might predict or give an occult body to it: so it would be quite possible for him to see at once the inner experience and in image its symbolic happening, the flow of clarifying light and the priest god pouring the clarified butter on the inner self-offering which brought the experience. This might seem strange to a Western mind, but to an Indian mind accustomed to the Indian tradition or capable of meditation and occult vision it would be perfectly intelligible. The mystics were and normally are symbolists, they can even see all physical things and happenings as symbols of inner truths and realities, even their outer selves, the outer happenings of their life and all around them. That would make their identification or else an association of the thing and its symbol easy, its habit possible.

Other standing words and symbols of the Veda invite a similar interpretation of their sense. As the Vedic "cow" is the symbol of light, so the Vedic "horse" is a symbol of power, spiritual strength, force of tapasya. When the Rishi asks Agni for a "horse-form cow-in-front gift" he is not asking really for a number of horses forming a body of the gift with some cows walking in front, he is asking for a great body of spiritual power led by the light or, as we may translate it, "with the Ray-Cow walking in its front".[3] As one hymn describes the recovery from the Panis of the mass of the rays (the cows, – the shining herds, *gavyam*), so another hymn asks Agni for amass or abundance or power of the horse – *aśvyam*. So too

[3] Compare the expression which describes the Aryan, the noble people as led by the light – *jyotir-agrāḥ*.

the Rishi asks sometimes for the heroes or fighting men as his retinue, sometimes in more abstract language and without symbol for a complete hero-force – *suvīryam*; sometimes he combines the symbol and the thing. So too the Rishis ask for a son or sons or offspring – *apatyam* – as an element of the wealth for which they pray to the Gods, but here too an esoteric sense can be seen, for in certain passages the son born to us is clearly an image of some inner birth: Agni himself is our son, the child of our works, the child who as the Universal Fire is the father of his fathers, and it is by setting the steps on things that have fair offspring that we create or discover a path to the higher world of Truth. Again, "water" in the Veda is used as a symbol. It speaks of the inconscient ocean, *salilam apraketam*, in which the Godhead is involved and out of which he is born by his greatness; it speaks also of the great ocean – *maho arṇas*, the upper waters which, as one hymn says, Saraswati makes conscious for us or of which she makes us conscious by the ray of intuition – *pra cetayati ketunā*. The seven rivers seem to be the rivers of Northern India but the Veda speaks of the seven Mighty Ones of Heaven who flow down from Heaven; they are waters that know, knowers of the Truth – *ṛtajña* – and when they are released they discover for us the road to the great Heavens. So too Parashara speaks of Knowledge and universal Life, "in the house of the waters". Indra releases the rain by slaying Vritra, but this rain too is the rain of Heaven and sets the rivers flowing. Thus the legend of the release of the waters which takes so large a place in the Veda puts on the aspect of a symbolic myth. Along with it comes the other symbolic legend of the discovery and rescue, from the dark cave in the mountain, of the Sun, the cows or herds of the Sun, or the Sun-world – svar – by the Gods and the Angiras Rishis. The symbol of the Sun is constantly associated with the higher Light and the Truth: it is in the Truth concealed by an inferior Truth that are unyoked the horses of the Sun, it is the Sun in its highest light that is called upon in the great Gayatri Mantra to impel our thoughts. So

too the enemies in the Veda are spoken of as robbers, dasyus, who steal the cows, or Vritras and are taken literally as human enemies in the ordinary interpretation, but Vritra is a demon who covers and holds back the Light and the waters and the Vritras are his forces fulfilling that function. The Dasyus, robbers or destroyers, are the powers of darkness, adversaries of the seekers of Light and the Truth. Always there are indications that lead us from the outward and exoteric to an inner and esoteric sense.

In connection with the symbol of the Sun a notable and most significant verse in a hymn of the fifth Mandala may here be mentioned; for it shows not only the profound mystic symbolism of the Vedic poets, but also how the writers of the Upanishads understood the Rig Veda and justifies their belief in the inspired knowledge of their forerunners. "There is a Truth covered by a Truth," runs the Vedic passage, "where they unyoke the horses of the Sun; the ten hundreds stood together, there was That One;[4] I saw the greatest (best, most glorious) of the embodied gods."[5] Then mark how the seer of the Upanishad translates this thought or this mystic experience into his own later style, keeping the central symbol of the Sun but without any secrecy in the sense. Thus runs the passage in the Upanishad, "The face of the Truth is covered with a golden lid. O Pushan, that remove for the vision of the law of the Truth.[6] O Pushan (fosterer), sole seer, O Yama, O Sun, O Child of the Father of beings, marshal and gather together thy rays; I see the Light which is that fairest (most auspicious) form of thee; he who is this Purusha, He am I." The golden lid is meant to be the same as the inferior covering truth, *ṛtam*, spoken of in the Vedic verse; the "best of the bodies of the Gods" is equivalent to the "fairest form of the Sun", it is the supreme Light which is other and greater than all outer light; the great formula of the Upanishad, "He am I", corresponds

[4] Or, That (the supreme Truth) was one;
[5] Or it means, "I saw the greatest (best) of the bodies of the gods."
[6] Or, for the law of the Truth, for vision.

to That One, *tad ekam*, of the Rig Vedic verse; the "standing together of the ten hundreds" (the rays of the Sun, says Sayana, and that is evidently the meaning) is reproduced in the prayer to the Sun "to marshal and mass his rays" so that the supreme form may be seen. The Sun in both the passages, as constantly in the Veda and frequently in the Upanishad, is the Godhead of the supreme Truth and Knowledge and his rays are the light emanating from that supreme Truth and Knowledge. It is clear from this instance – and there are others – that the seer of the Upanishad had a truer sense of the meaning of the ancient Veda than the mediaeval ritualistic commentator with his gigantic learning, much truer than the modern and very different mind of the European scholars.

There are certain psychological terms which have to be taken consistently in their true sense if we are to find the inner or esoteric meaning. Apart from the Truth, Ritam, we have to take always in the sense of "thought" the word *dhī* which constantly recurs in the hymns. This is the natural meaning of *dhī* which corresponds to the later word Buddhi; it means thought, understanding, intelligence and in the plural "thoughts", *dhiyaḥ*. It is given in the ordinary interpretation all kinds of meanings; "water", "work", "sacrifice", "food" etc. as well as thought. But in our search we have to take it consistently in its ordinary and natural significance and see what is the result. The word *ketu* means very ordinarily "ray" but it also bears the meaning of intellect, judgment or an intellectual perception. If we compare the passages in the Veda in which it occurs we can come to the conclusion that it meant a ray of perception or intuition, as for instance, it is by the ray of intuition, *ketunā*, that Saraswati makes us conscious of the great waters; that too probably is the meaning of the rays which come from the Supreme foundation above and are directed downwards; these are the intuitions of knowledge as the rays of the Sun of Truth and Light. The word *kratu* means ordinarily work or sacrifice but it also means intelligence, power or resolution and especially the power of the intelligence

that determines the work, the will. It is in this latter sense that we can interpret it in the esoteric rendering of the Veda. Agni is a seer-will, *kavi-kratu*, he is the "will in the heart", *kratu hṛdi*. Finally the word *śravas* which is constantly in use in the Veda means fame, it is also taken by the commentators in the sense of food, but these significances cannot be fitted in everywhere and very ordinarily lack all point and apposite force. But *śravas* comes from the root *śru* to hear and is used in the sense of ear itself or of hymn or prayer – a sense which Sayana accepts – and from this we can infer that it means the "thing heard" or its result, knowledge that comes to us through hearing. The Rishis speak of themselves as hearers of the Truth, *satyaśrutaḥ*, and the knowledge received by this hearing as Sruti. It is in this sense of inspiration or inspired knowledge that we can take it in the esoteric meaning of the Veda and we find that it fits in with a perfect appositeness; thus when the Rishi speaks of *śravāṁsi* as being brought through upward and brought through downward, this cannot be applied to food or fame but is perfectly apposite and significant if he is speaking of inspirations which rise up to the Truth above or bring down the Truth to us. This is the method we can apply everywhere, but we cannot pursue the subject any further here. In the brief limits of this foreword these slight indications must suffice; they are meant only to give the reader an initial insight into the esoteric method of interpretation of the Veda." (13-19)

(f) The Secret Meaning – The Esoteric Sense of the Veda

"But what then is the secret meaning, the esoteric sense, which emerges by this way of understanding the Veda? It is what we would expect from the nature of the seeking of the mystics everywhere. It is also, as we should expect from the actual course of the development of Indian culture, an early form of the spiritual truth which found its culmination in the Upanishads; the secret knowledge of the Veda is the seed which is evolved later on into the Vedanta. The thought

around which all is centred is the seeking after Truth, Light, Immortality. There is a Truth deeper and higher than the truth of outward existence, a Light greater and higher than the light of human understanding which comes by revelation and inspiration, an immortality towards which the soul has to rise. We have to find our way to that, to get into touch with this Truth and Immortality, *sapanta ṛtam amṛtam*,[7] to be born into the Truth, to grow in it, to ascend in spirit into the world of Truth and to live in it. To do so is to unite ourselves with the Godhead and to pass from mortality into immortality. This is the first and the central teaching of the Vedic mystics. The Platonists, developing their doctrine from the early mystics, held that we live in relation to two worlds, – a world of higher truth which might be called the spiritual world and that in which we live, the world of the embodied soul which is derived from the higher but also degraded from it into an inferior truth and inferior consciousness. The Vedic mystics held this doctrine in a more concrete and pragmatic form, for they had the experience of these two worlds. There is the inferior truth here of this world mixed as it is with much falsehood and error, *anṛtasya bhūreḥ*,[8] and there is a world or home of Truth, *sadanam ṛtasya*,[9] the Truth, the Right, the Vast, *satyam ṛtaṁ bṛhat*,[10] where all is Truth-conscious, *ṛtacit*.[11] There are many worlds between up to the triple heavens and their lights but this is the world of the highest Light – the world of the Sun of Truth, *svar*, or the Great Heaven. We have to find the path to this Great Heaven, the path of Truth, *ṛtasya panthāḥ*,[12] or as it is sometimes called the way of the gods. This is the second mystic doctrine. The third is that our life is a battle between the powers of Light

[7] I.68.2.
[8] VII.60.5.
[9] I.164.47; also IV.21.3.
[10] Atharva XII.1.1.
[11] IV.3.4.
[12] III.12.7; also VII.65.3.

and Truth, the Gods who are the Immortals and the powers of Darkness. These are spoken of under various names as Vritra and Vritras, Vala and the Panis, the Dasyus and their kings. We have to call in the aid of the Gods to destroy the opposition of these powers of Darkness who conceal the Light from us or rob us of it, who obstruct the flowing of the streams of Truth, *ṛtasya dhārāḥ*,[13] the streams of Heaven and obstruct in every way the soul's ascent. We have to invoke the Gods by the inner sacrifice, and by the Word call them into us, – that is the specific power of the Mantra, – to offer to them the gifts of the sacrifice and by that giving secure their gifts, so that by this process we may build the way of our ascent to the goal. The elements of the outer sacrifice in the Veda are used as symbols of the inner sacrifice and self-offering; we give what we are and what we have in order that the riches of the divine Truth and Light may descend into our life and become the elements of our inner birth into the Truth, – a right thinking, a right understanding, a right action must develop in us which is the thinking, impulsion and action of that higher Truth, *ṛtasya preṣā*, *ṛtasya dhīti*,[14] and by this we must build up ourselves in that Truth. Our sacrifice is a journey, a pilgrimage and a battle, – a travel towards the Gods and we also make that journey with Agni, the inner Flame, as our path-finder and leader. Our human things are raised up by the mystic Fire into the immortal being, into the Great Heaven, and the things divine come down into us. As the doctrine of the Rig Veda is the seed of the teaching of the Vedanta, so is its inner practice and discipline a seed of the later practice and discipline of Yoga. Finally, as the summit of the teaching of the Vedic mystics comes the secret of the one Reality, *ekaṁ sat*,[15] or *tad ekam*,[16] which became the central word of the Upanishads. The Gods, the powers of Light and Truth are powers and

[13] V.12.2; also VII.43.4.
[14] I.68.3.
[15] 1.164.46.
[16] X.129.2.

names of the One, each God is himself all the Gods or carries them in him: there is the one Truth, *tat satyam*,[17] and one bliss to which we must rise. But in the Veda this looks out still mostly from behind the veil. There is much else but this is the kernel of the doctrine." (19-21)

(g) The Earlier Work of Sri Aurobindo on the Veda and the Present Translations

"The interpretation I have put forward was set out at length in a series of articles with the title "The Secret of the Veda" in the monthly philosophical magazine, *Arya*, some thirty years ago; written in serial form while still developing the theory and not quite complete in its scope or composed on a preconceived and well-ordered plan it was not published in book-form and is therefore not yet available to the reading public.[18] It was accompanied by a number of renderings of the hymns of the Rig Veda which were rather interpretations than translations and to these there was an introduction explanatory of the "Doctrine of the Mystics". Subsequently there was planned a complete translation of all the hymns to Agni in the ten Mandalas which kept close to the text; the renderings of those hymns in the second and sixth Mandalas are now published in this book for the first time as well as a few from the first Mandala.[19] But to establish on a scholastic basis the conclusions of the hypothesis it would have been necessary to prepare an edition of the Rig Veda or of a large part of it with a word by word construing in Sanskrit and English, notes explanatory of important points

[17] III.39.5; also IV.54.4 and VIII.45.27.

[18] *The writings on and translations of the Veda that Sri Aurobindo published in the Arya are now published in* The *Secret of the Veda with Selected Hymns, volume 15 of* THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO.–Ed.

[19] *The 1946 edition of Hymns to the Mystic Fire, containing the translations referred to here, is reproduced in Part One of the present volume.–Ed.*

in the text and justifying the interpretation both of separate words and of whole verses and also elaborate appendices to fix firmly the rendering of key-words like *ṛtam*, *śravas*, *kratu*, *ketu*, etc. essential to the esoteric interpretation. This also was planned, but meanwhile greater preoccupations of a permanent nature intervened and no time was left to proceed with such a considerable undertaking. For the benefit of the reader of these translations who might otherwise be at a loss, this foreword has been written and some passages from the unpublished "Doctrine of the Mystics" have been included.[20] The text of the Veda has been given for use by those who can read the original Sanskrit. These translations however are not intended to be a scholastic work meant to justify a hypothesis; the object of this publication is only to present them in a permanent form for disciples and those who are inclined to see more in the Vedas than a superficial liturgy and would be interested in knowing what might be the esoteric sense of this ancient Scripture.

This is a literary and not a strictly literal translation. But a fidelity to the meaning, the sense of the words and the structure of the thought, has been preserved: in fact the method has been to start with a bare and scrupulously exact rendering of the actual language and adhere to that as the basis of the interpretation; for it is only so that we can find out the actual thoughts of these ancient mystics. But any rendering of such great poetry as the hymns of the Rig Veda, magnificent in their colouring and images, noble and beautiful in rhythm, perfect in their diction, must, if it is not to be merely dead scholastic work, bring at least a faint echo of their poetic force, – more cannot be done in a prose translation and in so different a language. The turn of phrase and the syntax of English and Vedic Sanskrit are poles asunder; to achieve

[20] "*The Doctrine of the Mystics" is now published in its entirety in The Secret of the Veda with Selected Hymns, pages 370-84. The excerpt from it included in the first edition of Hymns to the Mystic Fire is reproduced after this foreword.–Ed.*

some sense of style and natural writing one has constantly to turn the concentrated speech of the Veda into a looser, more diluted English form. Another stumbling-block for the translator is the ubiquitous *double entendre* marking in one word the symbol and the thing symbolised, Ray and Cow, clear light of the mind and clarified butter, horses and spiritual power; one has to invent phrases like the "herds of the light" or "the shining herds" or to use devices such as writing the word horse with a capital H to indicate that it is a symbolic horse that is meant and not the common physical animal; but very often the symbol has to be dropped, or else the symbol has to be kept and the inner meaning left to be understood;[21] I have not always used the same phrase though always keeping the same sense, but varied the translation according to the needs of the passage. Often I have been unable to find an adequate English word which will convey the full connotation or colour of the original text; I have used two words instead of one or a phrase or resorted to some other device to give the exact and complete meaning. Besides, there is often a use of antique words or turns of language of which the sense is not really known and can only be conjectured or else different renderings are equally possible. In many passages I have had to leave a provisional rendering; it was intended to keep the final decision on the point until the time when a more considerable body of the hymns had been translated and were ready for publication; but this time has not yet come." (21-23)

2. Sri Aurobindo's Translation and the Linguistic Analysis of The First Mantra of The Rig Veda

अग्निमीळे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवमृत्विजम्। होतारं रत्नधातम् ॥ १॥

"Agni I adore who stands before Yajna, the god that seeth right, the offerer of the oblation, chief disposer of delight." (452)

[21] The Rishis sometimes seem to combine two different meanings in the same word; I have occasionally tried to render this double sense.

Linguistic Analysis

"अग्निम्. The word Agnis is composed of the root अग्, the suffix नि and the case-ending स्. The root अग् occurs in two other words of this hymn, अंग and अंगिरः. Its most common meaning is love, force or excellence. The original root अ of which it is a primary derivative meant existence. The addition of ग् adds the sense of force or power. To exist in force or power is अग् in its initial sense and all other meanings are derivative or deductive from the initial sense. The sound न् is added to roots with an adjectival force as in रत्न from रत्, यज्ञ from यज्. It may have adherent to it either अ, इ or उ, and may be pure or preceded by the enclitics अ, इ, उ, or their prolonged forms आ, ई, ऊ. Thus करण, शयान, बलिन्, राजन्, वरुण, इष्णु, विष्णु etc. अग्नि means one who exists in force or power. Cf the Greek ????, exceedingly, ????ó?, good, originally meaning strong, powerful, brave. From the same sense of power, force, excellence come various senses of ???, the Latin *ago*, lead, drive, act, etc. On the other hand the insertion of the nasal sound between अ and ग् gives the sense of love, sweetness, softness, beauty, as the particular kind of force or excellence implied in the root.

ईळे. The root ईल्, dialectically ईळ्, also takes by a slight modification of sound the form ईड्. It is a primary derivative of the original root इ, implying motion towards. The addition of ल् gives the sense of approaching with love and gives rise to the signification, *adore, worship*. It has a strong sense of *bhakti*, emotional worship.

पुरो हितम्. Two separate words, adverb and participle, "set before". The participle is generally treated as belonging to धा, but it is originally the past verbal adjective of हि. The sound ह् conveys contact, motion or emission with force. Thus the root ह is to throw, strike, kill and in its derivatives to leap, dance etc. The root हु is similarly to attack, fight, throw from one, drag away etc. The root हि means to pierce, penetrate, adhere, be set in and actively to strike away, wear away, impair with other meanings. From the sense of adherence, we g of

fondness, clinging, love, friendliness, the classic significance of the adjective हित.

यज्ञस्य. This word is of the utmost importance in the Veda. Its subsequent meaning of sacrifice has overclouded the sense of the Scriptures ever since the later half of the Dwapara Yuga; but originally and in the age of Madhuchchhanda it had no shade of this meaning. It is the root यज् with the suffix न adjectival, as explained under अग्नि. यज् is a primary derivative from the initial root य which had a sense of control, restraint, persistence, preservation. This we find in its derivatives यम् to order, control, regulate; यत् to use force upon, strive, practise; यक्ष् the habituative, to keep carefully from which यक्ष the guardians of wealth, the *ganas*, hosts of Kuvera; यच्छ् to importune, entreat, supplicate; यच् to control, to regulate, distribute, give.यज् means to regulate, rule, order, govern. यज्ञ is He who does these things, the Lord, Governor, Master, Provider, Giver, and in the Veda it is applied to the Supreme Being, Parameshwara, who governs the universe as the Master of Nature, the Disposer of its Laws, the Almighty Providence, the Master of the Dharma. It has a similar sense to the word यमः applied to the single god of Dharma, Yama. There is an echo of this use in the Vishnu Purana when it is said that Vishnu is born in the Satya Yuga as Yajna, in the Treta as the Chakravarti Raja, in the Dwapara as Vyasa. In the Satya Yuga mankind is governed by its own pure, perfect and inborn nature spontaneously fulfilling the *dharma* under the direct inspiration of God within as Yajna, the Lord of the Dharma. In the Treta the Dharma is maintained by the sceptre and the sword guarding the unwritten law. In the Dwapara the Dharma is supported by codes, Shastras, a regulated and written system.

देवम् . From the root दिव् conveying the idea of active, rapid or brilliant energy. It means to shine, to play, (cf दीव् to gamble), to be bright, clear, strong, swift or luminous. The Devas are strictly speaking the sattwic and rajasic powers of the sukshma worlds, Swar and Bhuvar, who govern or assist the operations

of intelligence and energy in man; but it came to be applied to all beings of the other worlds without distinction, even to the tamasic forces, beings and powers who hurt and oppose these very operations. It is in this latter sense that the Persians used it after the teachings of Jarad-drashta (Zaruthrusta, Jaratkaru) had accustomed them to apply other terms to the beneficent and helpful powers.

ऋत्विजम्. The word ऋत्विक् like the word पुरोहितम् only latterly came to mean a sacrificial priest. It is composed of two words ऋत् and विज्. In Old Sanscrit ऋ and रि were used interchangeably like ळ and ड . The root ऋ conveyed the idea of fixity, constancy,ऋ त् or रित् is the old verbal noun forming the roots ऋत् and रित् and conveys the ideas [of] fixity, persistence, constancy, truth, steadfastness, wisdom, धैर्य, सत्यं. From the same root is formed ऋषिः, the root ऋष् being a habituative form of ऋ and meaning to be constant, wise, true, steadfast, calm and still. It was the old word answering to the धीर of the Upanishads. Similarly ऋतम् means truth, law etc, ऋतु is the fixed period or season, the habitual menstruation etc. The word विज् is a derivative of the initial root वि to open, manifest, from which are formed विद् to see, the root विल् conveying the idea of publicity, light, etc common in Tamil and Latin, and विज् meaning also to see. The ऋत्विज् is the drashta, seer or rishi, the one who has vision of spiritual truth." (466-68)

3. The Seven Principles of Vedic Psychology

"Man, according to Vedic psychology, consists of seven principles, in which the Atman cases itself, – annam, gross matter; prana, vital energy; manas, intelligent mind; vijnanam, ideal mind; ananda, pure or essential bliss; chit, pure or essential awareness; sat, pure or essential being. In the present stage of our evolution ordinary humanity has developed annam, prana and manas for habitual use; and well-developed men are able to use with power the vijnanam acting not in its own habitation, स्वे दमे, nor in its own rupa, vijnanam, but in the mind and as reasoning faculty, buddhi;

extraordinary men are able to aid the action of manas and buddhi proper by the vijnanam acting in the intelligent mind indeed and so out of its proper sphere, but in its own form as ideal consciousness – the combination of manasic and vijnani action making what is called genius, pratibhanam, a reflection or luminous response in the mind to higher ideation; the Yogin goes beyond to the vijnanam itself or, if he is one of the greatest Rishis, like Yajnavalkya, to the ananda. None in ordinary times go beyond the ananda in the waking state, for the chit and sat are only attainable in sushupti, because only the first five sheaths or panchakosha are yet sufficiently developed to be visible except to the men of the Satya Yuga and even by them the two others are not perfectly seen. From the vijnanam to the annam is the aparardha or lower part of existence where Vidya is dominated by Avidya; from the ananda to the sat is the parardha or higher half in which Avidya is dominated by Vidya and there is no ignorance, pain or limitation." (469-70)

4. The Intelligent Mind and the Ten Successive Principles Constituting It

"In man as he is at present developed, the intelligent mind is the most important psychological faculty and it is with a view to the development of the intelligent mind to its highest purity and capacity that the hymns of the Veda are written. In this mind there are successively the following principles: sukshma annam, the refinement of the gross annam out of which the physical part of the manahkosha or sukshma deha is made; sukshma prana, the vital energy in the mind which acts in the nadis or nervous system of the sukshma deha and which is the agent of desire; chitta or receptive consciousness, which receives all impressions from without and within by tamasic reaction, but, being tamasic, does not make them evident to the sattwic consciousness or intelligent awareness which we call knowledge, so that we remember with the chitta everything noticed or unnoticed, but that knowledge is

useless for our life owing to its lying enveloped in tamas; hrit or the rajasic reaction to impressions which we call feeling or emotion, or, when it is habitual, character; manas or active definite sensational consciousness rendering impressions of all kinds into percept or concept by a sattwic reaction called intelligence or thought which men share with the animals; buddhi or rational, imaginative and intellectually mnemonic faculty, observing, retaining, comparing, reasoning, comprehending, combining and creating, the amalgam of which functions we call intellect; manasa ananda or the pure bliss of existence manifesting through the impure mind, body and prana impurely, ie mixed with pain of various kinds, but in itself pure, because disinterested, ahaituka; manasa tapas or the pure will-power acting towards knowledge, feeling and deed, impurely through the impure mind, body and prana, ie mixed with weakness, dull inertia and ignorance or error; but in itself pure because ahaituka, disinterested, without any ulterior purpose or preference that can interfere with truth of thought, act and emotion; ahaituka sat or pure realisation of existence, operating through the impure organs as ahankara and bheda, egoism and limitation, but in itself pure and aware of unity in difference, because disinterested, not attached to any particular form or name in manifestation; and, finally, Atman or Self seated in mind. This Atman is Sat and Asat, positive and negative, Sad Brahma and Sunyam Brahma; both positive and negative are contained in the Sa or Vasudeva and Tat or Parabrahman, and Sa and Tat are both the same." (470-71)

5. The Three Divisions of the Buddhi – The Sixth Constituent of the Intelligent Mind

"The Buddhi again is divided into understanding (medha), which merely uses the knowledge given by sensation and like manas, chitta, hrit and prana is adhina, anisha, subject to sensation; reason or buddhi proper, (smriti or dhi, also called prajna), which is superior to sensation and contradicts

it in the derived light of a higher knowledge; and direct jnanam, satyam or sattwam which is itself that light of higher knowledge. All these faculties have their own devatas, one or many, each with his ganas or subordinate ministers. The jiva or spirit using these faculties is called the hansa, he who flies or evolves upward; when he leaves the lower and rises to the sacchidananda in the mind, using Sat, chit and ananda only, and reposing in the Sad Atma or in Vasudeva, then he is called the Paramhansa, one who has gone or evolved to the highest in that stage of evolution. This is the fundamental knowledge underlying the Veda, the loss of which, aided by the corruption of nirukta, has led to the present confusion and degradation of its meaning." (471)

6. The Vedic Devatas and Daityas or Dasyus and Their Respective Roles in the Evolution of Human Consciousness

"Chandra is the devata of the smriti or prajna; Surya of the satyam; Indra of the understanding and manas; Vayu of the sukshma prana; Mitra, Varuna, Aryama and Bhaga are the four masters of the emotional mind or character; Brihaspati of the sahaituka chit or tapas of knowledge; Brahma of the sahaituka sat; Agni of the sahaituka tapas etc. This is only an indication. The various characteristics and energies of the gods are best developed by an examination of the Veda itself. The gods strive to function perfectly for the Lord or Yajna, the Isha, Master of the adhara or sevenfold medium of manifestation; the Titans or Daityas, equally divine, try to upset this perfect functioning. Their office is to disturb that which is established in order to push man below or give him an opportunity of rising higher by breaking that which was good and harmonious in itself but imperfect, and in any case to render him dissatisfied with anything short of perfection and drive him continually to the Infinite, either by the uttama gati to Vasudeva or, if he will not have that, by the adhama gati to Prakriti. The Vedic Aryans sought to overcome the

Daityas or Dasyus by the aid of the gods; afterwards the gods had themselves to be overcome in order that man might reach his goal." (471-72)

7. Agni and the Physics of the Veda

"Agni in the sphere of material energies is the master of tejas, the third and central material principle in the five known to Vedic science. Tejas itself is of seven kinds, chhaya or negative luminosity which is the principle of the annakosha; twilight or dosha, the basis of the pranakosha being tejas modified by chhaya; tejas proper or simple clarity and effulgence, dry light, which is the basis of the manahkosha; jyoti or solar light, brilliance which is the basis of the vijnanakosha; agni or fiery light,which is the basis of the chitkosha; vidyut or electrical illumination, which is the basis of the anandakosha; and prakasha which is the basis of the satkosha. Each of the seven has its own appropriate energy; for the energy is the essential reality and the light only a characteristic accompaniment of the energy. Of all these Agni is the greatest in this world, greater even than Vidyut – although the God of the vaidyuta energy is Vishnu himself who is the Lord of the ananda, the vaidyuto manavah, electrical Man, of the Upanishads. In the vijnana, Surya as well as Vishnu is greater than Agni, but here he and Vishnu both work under the dominant energy of Agni and for the satisfaction of Indra, – Vishnu in the Upanishads being younger than Indra, – Upendra. Translated into the language of physics, this means that Agni, commanding as he does heat and cold, is the fundamental active energy behind all phenomena of light and heat; the Sun is merely a reservoir of light and heat, the peculiar luminous blaze of the sun being only one form of tejas and what we call sunlight is composed of the static energy of prakasha or essential light which is the basis of the satkosha, the electrical energy or vaidyutam, and the tejas of agni modified by the nature of Surya and determining all other forms of light. The prakasha and vaidyutam can only become active when they enter into Agni

and work under the conditions of his being and Agni himself is the supplier of Surya; he creates jyoti, he creates tejas, he creates, negatively, chhaya. Right or wrong, this is the physics of the Veda. Translated into the language of psychology, it means that in the intelligent mind, which now predominates, neither jnanam nor ananda can be fully developed, though essentially superior to mind; not even Soma, the rational buddhi, can really govern; but it is Indra full of Soma, the understanding based on the senses and strengthened by the buddhi, who is supreme and for whose satisfaction Soma, Surya, Agni and even the supreme Vishnu work. The reason on which man prides himself, is merely a link in the evolution from the manas to the vijnanam and must serve either the senses or the ideal cognition; if it tries to work for itself it only leads to universal agnosticism, philosophic doubt and the arrest of all knowledge. It must not be thought that the Veda uses these names merely as personifications of psychological and physical forces; it regards these gods as realities standing behind the psychological and physical operations, since no energy can conduct itself, but all need some conscious centre or centres from or through which they proceed." (472-73)

8. The Present Working of Vishnu

"A doubt will naturally arise, how Vishnu, the supreme Lord, can be the Upendra of the Vedas. The answer is that, whatever energy is of supreme importance at a particular stage of the evolution, is taken up by Vishnu-Virat as his especial care. We have seen that the Ananda is now highest in the developed evolution. Vishnu is therefore now preeminently the Lord of the Ananda and when he comes down into the material world he stands in the Sun as the supreme electrical force involved in Agni and evolving out of him, which is the physical counterpart of Ananda and without which no action in the world can proceed. He is not inferior, he only subordinates himself, pretending to serve, while really by service he commands. But Upendratwa is not the highest

plane of Vishnu's manifestation, the param dhama; rather it is a special function here in the lowest dhama. Upendratwa is not Vishnutwa, but only one of its workings." (473-74)

9. The Supreme Importance of Agni

"Agni, therefore, is master of tejas, especially fiery tejas, and the agent of the sahaituka tapas in the mind. In the language of modern psychology, this sahaituka tapas is Will in action, – not desire, but Will embracing desire and exceeding it. It is not even choice, wish or intention. Will, in the Vedic idea, is essentially knowledge taking the form of force. Agni, therefore, is purely mental force, necessary to all concentration. Once we perceive this Vedic conception, we realise the immense importance of Agni and are in a position to understand the hymn we are studying." (474)

10. The Supreme Importance of the Word Yajna in The Veda

"The word यज्ञ is of supreme importance in the Veda. In the ceremonial interpretation यज्ञ is always understood as sacrifice and no other conception admitted. The Veda cannot be understood as the source of all Indian spirituality and divine knowledge, if this materialistic interpretation is accepted. In reality यज्ञ is the name of the Supreme Lord Vishnu himself; it also means धर्म or योग, and by a later preference of meaning it came to signify sacrifice, because sacrifice in the later Dwapara Yuga became the one dharma and yoga which dominated and more and more tended to replace all others. It is necessary to recover the proper meaning of this important word by Nirukta, and, in order to [do] so, to lay down briefly the principle of Nirukta." (475)

11. The Principle of Nirukta and The Pure Sanscrit of the Satayuga

"The Sanscrit language is the devabhasha or original language spoken by men in Uttara Meru at the beginning

of the Manwantara; but in its purity it is not the Sanscrit of the Dwapara or the Kali, it is the language of the Satyayuga based on the true and perfect relation of vak and artha. Every one of its vowels and consonants has a particular and inalienable force which exists by the nature of things and not by development or human choice; these are the fundamental sounds which lie at the basis of the Tantric bijamantras and constitute the efficacy of the mantra itself. Every vowel and every consonant in the original language had certain primary meanings which arose out of this essential shakti or force and were the basis of other derivative meanings. By combination with the vowels, the consonants, and, without any combination, the vowels themselves formed a number of primary roots, out of which secondary roots were developed by the addition of other consonants. All words were formed from these roots, simple words by the addition again of pure or mixed vowel and consonant terminations with or without modification of the root and more complex words by the principle of composition. This language increasingly corrupted in sense and sound becomes the later Sanscrit of the Treta, Dwapara and Kali Yuga, being sometimes partly purified and again corrupted and again partly purified so that it never loses all apparent relation to its original form and structure. Every other language, however remote, is a corruption formed by detrition and perversion of the original language into a Prakrit or the Prakrit of a Prakrit and so on to increasing stages of impurity. The superior purity of the Indian language is the reason of its being called the Sanscrit and not given any local name, its basis being universal and eternal; and it is always a rediscovery of the Sanscrit tongue as the primary language that prepares first for a true understanding of human language and, secondly, for a fresh purification of Sanscrit itself." (475-76)

12. The Four Yugas

"The Vishnu Purana tells us that Vishnu in the Satya Yuga

incarnates as Yajna, in the Treta as the conqueror and king, in the Dwapara as Vyasa, the compiler, codifier and lawgiver. It is not meant that He incarnates as sacrifice. The Satya Yuga is the age of human perfection when a harmonious order is established, the perfect or chatuspad dharma, whose maintenance depends on the full and universal possession of Yoga or direct relation to God and that again on the continual presence of incarnate Vishnu as the Adored, the Master and centre of dharma and yoga. The chatuspad dharma is the perfect harmony of the four dharmas, Brahmanyam, Kshatram, Vaishyam and Shaudram; for this reason separate castes do not exist in the Satya Yuga. In the Treta the Brahmanyam begins to fail, but remains as a subordinate force to help the Kshatram which then governs humanity. Mankind is maintained no longer by viryam or tapas easily sustained by inherent Brahmajnanam, but by viryam or tapas sustaining the Brahmajnanam with some difficulty and preventing its collapse. Vishnu incarnates as the Kshatriya, the incarnate centre of viryam and tapas. In the Dwapara, the Brahmanyam farther fails and turns into mere knowledge or intellectuality, the Kshatram becomes a subordinate force supporting the Vaishyam which has its turn of supremacy. The main qualities of the Vaishya are kaushalam, order and method, and therefore the Dwapara is the age of codification, ritual, Shastra, external appliances to maintain the failing internal spirituality; danam, and therefore hospitality, liberality, the sacrifice and the dakshina begin to swallow up other dharmas – it is the yugayajniya, – the age of sacrifice; bhoga, and therefore the Veda is used for procuring enjoyment in this world and the next, bhogaishwaryagatim prati. Vishnu incarnates as the lawgiver, rituaist and Shastrakara to preserve the knowledge and practice of the dharma by the aid of the intellect and abhyasa, customary practice based on intellectual knowledge. In the Kali all breaks down except love and service, the dharma of the Shudra by which humanity is maintained and from time to time purified; for the jnanam breaks down and is replaced

by worldly, practical reason, the viryam breaks down and is replaced by lazy mechanical appliances for getting things done lifelessly with the least trouble, dana, yajna and shastra break down and are replaced by calculated liberality, empty ritual and tamasic social form sand etiquette. Love is brought in by the Avatar as to break down these dead forms in order that the world may be rejuvenated and a new order and a new Satya Yuga emerge, when the Lord will again incarnate as Yajna, the supreme Vishnu in the full manifestation of the chatuspad dharma, knowledge, power, enjoyment and love.

It has been said that Vishnu in our present stage of evolution is preeminently the Lord of the Ananda, but he is also the Sanmay Brahman and the Tapomay. It is as the Sanmay that He is Yajna – the Sat containing in it the Chit or Tapas and the Ananda. It must be remembered that while in the Aparardha we envisage Brahman through thought, feeling, action etc, in the Parardha we envisage Him through essential realisation superior to thought, feeling and action. In the Ananda we realise essential delight; in the Chit, essential energy, intelligence and will; in the Sat, essential truth or be-ness. The Sat is therefore called the Mahasatyam and Mahakaranam, the highest truth in the manifestation, out of which everything proceeds. It is by this Mahasatyam – distinguished from the ordinary satyam or karanam called objectively mahat and subjectively vijnanam, the fourth of the seven bhumis, – that Vishnu as Yajna supports the dharma and yoga in the Satya Yuga. He is the Sad Brahma in manifestation." (478-79)

13. Agni

"Agni, it has been pointed out, is the god of the tapas or energy at work disinterestedly on the intellectual plane, one of the higher gods working on the lower level in the service of the lower deity Indra. He proceeds straight from the chit, which, when active, is known as mahatapas or chichchhakti, the energy of the essential intelligence in the Sad Brahman, Yajna or Vishnu. The Shakti begins creation by kshobha or ecstatic

vibration in the calm Sad Atma and this ecstatic vibration or विज्, वेग : goes out as speed, force, heat, तपः or अग्नि, the basis of life and existence. This tapas born of the Chichchhakti (Shakti, Devi, Kali, Prakriti) is full of the ecstatic movement of the Sat or Mahasatyam manifesting itself. For this reason Agni is called ऋत्विज्, vibrating, ecstatic with the सत्यम्. For the same reason he is called जातवेदा, he from whom the higher knowledge is born, because he holds in himself the Veda or Satyam and manifests it; tapas is the basis of all concentration of chit, awareness (the sanyama of Patanjali) and it is by sanyama or concentration of awareness either on the object of awareness (rajayoga) or on itself (jnanayoga and adhyatmayoga) that satyam and Veda become directly self manifest and luminous to the Yogin. Without this sanyama no Yoga is possible, no effective action of any kind is possible. When Brahma turned his mind to creation, it was the cry of "tapas, tapas" that was heard on the waters of the karan samudra (Mahakaranam or Sad Brahma). The immense importance of Agni as the Ritwij to the Yogin, therefore, becomes manifest; and it is also clear why he is पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य for it is the tapas which stands before the Satyam, which we reach before we can get the Sat. It is the Chichchhakti which takes us to the Sat, – the Devi, Shakti or Kali who brings us to Brahman, to Vasudeva, and Agni, her especial agent for tapas in the mind, is therefore a special intermediary between us and Yajna, who, as has been seen, is Vishnu, Vasudeva or Brahman, in the Sacchidananda or Parardha on the intellectual plane, which is all man in the average has yet reached. This is the reason why Agni was so great a god to the Rishis. To mere sacrificers and ritualists he was great only as the god of fire indispensable in all their ritual, but to the Yogin he has a much greater importance, as great as that of Surya, the lord of illumination, and Soma, the lord of Amrita. He was one of the most indispensable helpers in the processes which the Veda illumines and assists." (481-82)

14. Hota

"Hota is another word of great importance in the Veda. In all existing interpretations of the Veda hota is interpreted as the priest who offers the libation, हवि as the libation and हु in the sense of pouring the offering. So fixed is this notion born of the predomination through several millenniums of the ceremonial meanings attached to all the important words of the Veda, that any other rendering would be deemed impossible. But in the original Veda होता did not mean a sacrificial priest, nor हविः an offering. Agni may by a metaphorical figure be called a purohit of the sacrifice, though the figure will not have any very great Sanscritic exactness, but he can in no sense be the one who pours the libation. He devours the libation, he does not offer or pour it. Hota, therefore, must have some other signification which, without outraging fact and common sense, can be applied to Agni.

The हु, like the roots हा and हि, is based on the consonant ह, the essential gunas of which are aggression, violent action, impetuosity, loud breathing, and so challenge, summons etc. The verb हु originally like ह, हा and ही meant to strike or throw down, attack, slay, the vowel उ adding a sense of pervasiveness which easily brought the idea of battle. We find, therefore, that this root meant to attack, fight, as in आहवः battle; to call, shout, summons, as in हे (originally हवे) etc; to throw, overthrow, destroy; to throw, pour, offer. From the last sense it came to have its more modern meaning. The transference from the sense of battle to the sense of sacrifice is paralleled by the Greek word μ???, battle, which is certainly the same as the Sanscrit मखः, sacrifice. It must be remembered that the Yoga was to the old Aryans a battle between the Devas and Daityas, the gods being the warriors who fought the Daityas for man and were made strong and victorious by the क्रियाs or effective practices of Yoga, the Daityas being the Dasyus or enemies of Yajna and Yoga. This will become clearer and clearer as we proceed. This view of life as well as Yoga, which is only the sublimation of life, as a struggle between the Devas

& Daityas is one of the most fundamental ideas of Veda, Purana, Tantra and every practical system in Hinduism. Agni is par excellence the warrior whom the Daityas most dread, because he is full of the ahaituka tapas, against which, if properly used and supported by the Yajamana, the Yogin, no evil force can prevail. The Ahaituka Tapas destroys them all. It is the mighty effective and fighting force which once called in prepares perfect siddhi and an almost omnipotent control over our nature and our surroundings. Even when ashuddha, impure, tapas fights the enemy tamas; when shuddha, when the very action of Agni, it brings viryam, it brings jnanam, it brings Ananda, it brings mukti. Hotaram means therefore the warrior, the destroyer of the Daityas, Agni jatavedas; havis and hava mean battle or strength in violent action; hu to fight." (482-83)

15. Ratna (रत्न)

"The word रत्न in ancient Sanscrit, from the root रत्न, had two sets of senses, delight, ananda, pleasure, play, sexual intercourse, a thing of delight, mistress, etc, and splendour, light, lustre, brilliance, a brilliant, a jewel, – the modern sense. At first sight it would seem that lustre, brilliance is more appropriate to Agni, and it would apply well to the warrior who destroys the darkness of the mind, but the central idea of the hymn is not Agni as the master of light, – that is Surya, – but as the master of force, tapas, which is the source out of which comes delight. The three terms of the parardha are sat, chit and ananda. In sat, chit abides and emerges from sat. As soon as it emerges, it generates the energy of chichchhakti which plays throughout the universe; this play, रत्न, is ananda in chit and it emerges from chit. All tapas therefore generates ananda, and the pure sahaituka tapas generates pure sahaituka ananda which being universal, self-existent and by its nature incapable of any admixture of sorrow, is the most sure, wide, and intense. Therefore Agni is most joy-giving, a great disposer of delight. The word धा means to set, create,

give, arrange; here it is the old Aryan substantive expressing the agent and often used adjectivally.

॥ २ ॥ अग्निः पूर्वेभिर्ऋषिभिरीड्यो नूतनैरुत।

There is nothing in these words that needs special explanation, since all the words and their senses are modern. The Rishi indicates Agni, master of the ahaituka tapas, as adorable in all ages by all seers ancient or modern, because to all seekers and at all times, ahaituka tapas is the condition and agent of suddhi, mukti, bhukti and siddhi, the four fold aim of Yoga. The word Rishi means a knower of truth, one who attains, from ऋ to go straight, attain the goal, reach the object, know, think. Originally it had something of the sense of साधक, the ष giving a habitual force; one who continually goes straight (by knowledge or inspired thought) to the truth. The force of उत is here, "much more", "as a matter of course". The idea is that not only is Agni the great object of desire and worship to the high sadhaks of these days, but in all times he has occupied the same place in the sadhan, even when man was in a different stage of evolution and walked in other paths of Yoga. Whatever Yoga is adopted, sahaituka tapas is of the first importance to full siddhi." (484-85)

16. Vedanta – The Great Fundamental Body of Truth

"In order to look into the words of the inspired writing and comprehend, so far as mere intellectual exposition can help us to comprehend, their profound meaning, we must begin with the Vedanta, the great fundamental body of truth which all Veda assumes; for it is by the passing into oblivion of this fundamental knowledge that we have lost the key to the meaning of the Vedas, and it is only by a return to the knowledge that we can recover it. There are two states of being in consciousness, the divine Brahmi sthiti of blissful unity, from which we descend, and the divided state of the Jivatman into which we have descended. Parabrahman reveals himself first as Yajna, the Supreme Soul and Master of Things, Atman

and Iswara; He is utterly one as Atman, He is both One and Many as Iswara, but always without losing His unity, always one without a second, ekam evadwitiyam, because the Many, both in their individuality and totality, are nothing but the One. Nothing is but God; we too are God, each one of us is He, and that which we dwell in is God. The fundamental sayings, So Aham; Tattwamasi, Swetaketo; sarvam khalu idam Brahma, are the sum of all Veda and Vedanta. All is merely the manifestation of Him for the sake of various delight; for Ananda the worlds are, from Ananda they proceeded, by Ananda they abide, to Ananda they return. Anandaddhyeva khalvimani bhutani jayante, anandena jatani jivanti, anandam prayantyabhisanvishantiti. In this manifestation He as the Universal God pervades, governs, surpasses all. He is the master of the play, – यजति, He controls, rules and arranges it. This is Yajna. He again as the manifold individual God, ourselves, attaches Himself to every created thing (sarvabhuteshu) and limits not Himself but His manifestation in each adhara, arranging and perpetually developing in each a particular nature or law of life, a swabhava, a dharma. So 'rthan yathatathyato vyadadhacchaśwatibhyah samabhyah. When we identify ourselves with the play of this various Nature reflected upon our consciousness and lose sight of our godhead, then we resort too utterly to the principle of Avidya, God's power of not knowing Himself, we become its servants, we are subject to Apara Maya, we stumble about buffeted by grief and error and all sorts of vikaras and viparita vrittis, we know ourselves as the Jivatman and other than the Paramatman, we make division where there is no division; we turn play into bitter earnest and love and joy into hatred and weeping and gnashing of teeth. Nevertheless, this forgetfulness is allowed in order that our secret souls in the Parardha and Brahman in them may enjoy the viparita ananda, the contrary or perverse delight, of the dualities. When we forget the play of Nature on our consciousness, shut our consciousness to it, refuse to reflect it, then we resort too utterly to the principle of

Vidya, God's power of knowing His essential unity, we become subject to the Maya of Knowledge, we seem to baffle and bring to nought for ourselves the joy of the Lila, and disappear into some principle of Oneness, Prakriti, Asad Brahman, Sad Brahman, Nirvana or Sacchidananda. It is, or seems, an unnecessary movement; for the world remains just as before so long as God chooses that it shall remain and we cannot end it by our precipitation, and for ourselves we always were Brahman, we always will be Brahman and we are not any the more Brahman by our flight into the Absolute. Nevertheless, this withdrawal too is allowed in order that certain select spirits may help the joy of the manifest world from behind the veil by their immanent blessedness. For we have no need of laya and no need of lila, no need of freedom and no need of bondage, but all things are for delight and not from necessity. But when we remember always and continually our oneness with the Supreme, our eternal and indefeasible Godhead, and at the same time allow Nature to reflect its movements on our souls as on a magical canvas according to His eternal purpose, then we have inalienable joy, then we bring heaven upon earth, then we fulfil the highest purpose of existence. We are then free even when we seem to be bound, and even if we are born again, we are janmasiddha and janmashuddha, nityamukta, and wear the temporary limitations of Nature as children allow themselves to be bound in a game with bonds which the Yajna, Master of the Revels looses Himself when we have given Him and ourselves the intended and perfect satisfaction.

It is in the spirit of this knowledge that the hymns of the Rigveda have been written." (511-13)

17. The Steps or Ladders in the Manifestation of The Unknowable

"The Isha Upanishad is the Upanishad of the Rigveda and it is there that its spiritual foundations are revealed. To make of Avidya a bridge to immortality and of Vidya the means of

keeping our grasp on immortality, is the common aim of the Rigvedic Rishis. This is the keynote, this is the one great tone swelling through its thousand undertones. And as our fingers fall on string after string of this mighty and many-stringed harp of God, they return always one cry, the cry of joyous battle, of war between Deva and Daitya, between mortality and immortality, between man's temporary imperfection and his eternal perfectibility.

In this holy war the Gods are our chief helpers. There are seven planes of cosmic consciousness on which the soul of man plays with the love and wisdom and power of God. When first the unknowable Parabrahman turns towards knowableness in this partial manifestation, – for utterly That allows itself not to be known, – the Absolute first becomes – to the possibility of knowledge, not to its actuality – the Eternal Being or Paratpara Purusha, paro 'vyaktad avyaktah sanatanah, who beyond the uttermost darkness of the Asat, Sunyam Brahma or eternal nothingness which is the ultimate negation of this manifest existence shines ever with the light unknown of which seven rays are sufficient to illuminate all these universal systems. He is that perceivable but unknowable glory seated for ever beyond the darkness that swallows up the worlds, tamasah parastat. Out of Him the Asad Brahma appears, the general negation, through which this mighty manifestation in the seven universes passes back into the unknowableness of Parabrahman; and out of the Asad, the Sat, the general affirmation which we know as pure Atman, Self of itself, not yet of things, where nothing is yet differentiated and even Chit and Ananda are involved in mere featureless existence. Asad va idam agra asit, tatah sad ajayata. Atman is featureless, unconnected, inactive, alakshanam avyavaharyam akriyam. It must be featureless in order to contain all possible feature; it must be unconnected with the play of the worlds in order that Chit may play upon Sat with perfect freedom and put forth into the worlds without limitation whatever name, form or being the Lord commands Her to put forth; it must be

inactive in order that there may be illimitable possibilities for Her action. For Atman is the foundation and continent of our worlds and if Atman had any definite feature or any bondage of connection or any law of activity, the world play which it supports and contains would be limited by that feature, by that connection or by that activity and God in His manifestation would be bound and not free. Therefore it is that as the featureless, free, inactive Sad Atman the Eternal first manifests Himself on this side of the darkness of Asat. Next, in Atman, He appears to His self knowledge as the Nirgun Brahma, the Being without quality of the Parabrahman, manifesting an impersonal self-existence, an impersonal self-awareness and an impersonal self-delight, Sat, Chit, Ananda. This too is Tat or That, but being unlike Parabrahman Tat in manifestation can be described, defined, cognised, not as anything else but as Atman and as Sacchidanandam. Tat in manifestation can be aware or unaware of the worlds and It can be both aware and unaware, but its cognition is without relation. It has no connection with the worlds in which it cognises and perceives activity merely as the play of a dream on the surface of its imperturbable quiet. On the calm of the Nirgunam God next imposes Himself (adhyaropayati) as the Personality of the Eternal, the Paratpara Purusha manifest in relation to the world. Here first we get relation, quality, activity. At first, the Personality merely contains and informs the activity which plays in it not as unrealised dream, but as realised though not binding actuality and truth, as an infinite active blissfulness of the Chit in the Sacchidananda in place of an infinite passive blissfulness." (513-15)

18. The Impersonal and the Personal, the Nirguna and the Saguna and the True Wisdom

"The indifference of the Impersonal to the play of the Personal does not make the play an unreality or an immense cosmic falsehood with which Brahman amuses Himself or distresses Himself for a season, any more than the featurelessness of the

Sad Atman makes feature a lie and an impossibility. On the contrary just as that featurelessness is the necessary condition for features to manifest truly, infinitely, divinely – for Truth, infinity and Deity are one, – so the detachment of the Impersonal is simply the condition for the security of the soul when it plunges into the myriad-billowed ocean of manifest existence. The Impersonal is detachment from guna and it is as detached from guna that God possesses and enjoys guna, otherwise He would be bound by and could not rightly enjoy it. It is because the tranquillity and indifference of the Nirguna is concealed within us that our souls can with impunity play at being bound, at being ignorant and at being sorrowful without being really bound by our bonds or darkened by our ignorance or destroyed by our sorrow. For being omnipotent God within us can always go back to the tranquillity within Him and look upon these things as a dream that falls away from Him the moment He cares to wake. It was a dream, but not a dream, just as when we are aware of sights and sounds without attending to them or remember the past and it is to us dreamlike, swapnamaya. The world has a reality, but the Impersonal does not interest Itself in that reality, not attending to it; it does not properly recognise it except as a thing that is and yet is not, the Maya of Shankara. This also is not a lie but truth, not a foolish, blissful dream, but a perfect reality. Because it was avyakta in the Nirguna, it is not therefore false when it becomes vyakta any more than an apple hidden is an apple non-existent. The world is not utter reality because it is thing in manifestation, not thing in itself. Yet it is real because it is a manifestation of God in Himself and God who is satyam conceives nothing that is not satyam, nothing that is not Himself. He is not a seer of falsehoods. Anritam is merely a vikara or perversion of satyam. All ignorance is really partial or misplaced knowledge, all bondage a concealment of freedom, all evil good in the making, all sorrow a veiled delight. This the Saguna Brahman perceives and knows and as Vasudeva, or tranquil Personality, He utterly enjoys without

any distinction of pleasure and grief, good and evil, the infinite play of the world within Himself. The Saguna is Sacchidananda envisaging cosmic activity. On the tranquillity [of] Vasudeva God by a new adhyaropa manifests Himself to Himself as the Sarvam Brahman in all things; He becomes the Lilamaya, the eternal Child frolicking in the Universe, the Playmate, Lover, Master, Teacher and Friend of all His creations; He is Hari, He is Srikrishna, He is the Personal God whom we love and adore and whom we pursue and seize through the Ages. Then, descending a step farther, avataran, He is known to Himself not only as the universal Lord of the Lila, but as the individual, Narayana concealed in Nara, playing through him, different from him, one with him. Many Adwaitins of the Kaliyuga insist that God is a myth and only the Sad Atman is a reality, just as many Buddhists deny the Sad Atman as well and say that only the Asad is a reality, but if we know only the Sad Atman or only the Asad, if we follow after only the Nirguna or only the Saguna, if we only embrace Vasudeva-Krishna-Narayan, then we know not the Eternal except in an aspect and we fall under the censure of the Upanishad, dabhram evapi twam vettha Brahmano rupam. We must shut our eyes upon nothing, renounce nothing as absolutely false or illusive if we would know the All and be perfectly liberated. Only when we gaze we must gaze aright and see God in all things, not things as aught but God. Our fathers did not commit the error of sectarianism or a partial philosophy. They were mighty as Gods or Titans, not like the men of the Kali Yuga who shout and quarrel over their imperfect philosophies and little bounded religions; their souls were spacious enough to take in all truth for their portion." (515-17)

19. Materialists and Evolution and The Arrangement of The Created World

"Brahman at first becomes involved in gross matter, – he becomes or seems to become Annam, the conscious principle of Bhu. In pure Annam consciousness is involved, implicit,

latent; from annam it has to develop or manifest the other six principles and this development or manifestation is the evolution of the modern Jadavadins. It develops them here, under the law of the universal harmony, in annam and the Jadavadins perceiving this principle of evolution, imagine not unnaturally that it is annam which is evolving and suppose the other six, even Mind, to be mere changes and movements of annam. At first prana or vitality which is latent in the metal, manifests in the tree; then mind which is latent in the tree manifests in the animal, first as chitta or mere receptive consciousness, then as manas or sensational consciousness without any self-conscious centre of individuality, then as the discriminatory faculty or buddhi with its companion Ahankara, egoism, the self-conscious principle. In the animals reason is awake, but elementary and has to be largely replaced by vijnanam, intuitive faculty manifesting not in intellect but in sensational & vital consciousness. Then in man discriminative reason takes the lead, for discriminative reason is the shadow of the vijnanam, the link between the animal and the god and it is not till a fit body is formed for the works of reason that the spiritual evolution begins and the development of the higher states of consciousness is possible. Man is that fit body, sukritam eva, well indeed and beautifully made as a habitation for the gods. His business is to raise the animal in him and develop beyond manomaya being, transcending & subordinating even its crown and glory which he considers his peculiar privilege, the discriminative and imaginative reason. For he has to develop vijnanam or ideal thought on which all Veda is based, he has to develop Ananda, Chit and Sat, the higher hemisphere of cosmic consciousness. In the present stage of his evolution he can only develop consciously as far as Ananda with Sat & Chit implicit in Ananda; to Chit & Sat proper he cannot arrive in his waking state, but only in the deep trance of Sushupta Samadhi, concentration of consciousness in a state of illuminated Sleep. He began his task as the supreme animal, Pashu, Vanara, Nrisingha, developing all

these potentialities purely in the annamaya kosha or physical sheath of his being in Annam & Prana; he went on as the mixed animal, first the Pishacha or scientific, curious animal, then the Pramatha or aesthetic, curious animal; and from these levels climbed to the condition of the Rakshasa or animal god who satisfies egoism through his sensational and emotional impulses; he is now the Asura, Titan or demi-god satisfying in the heart & buddhi his emotional and intellectual egoism. He has eventually to become the whole god; he must learn to satisfy himself without egoism through ideal knowledge and blissful spirituality. But always being in the annamaya world, in Bhu, resting always on the Anna Atma, he is compelled to base himself on the body even when rising above the body. The individual may leave the body, but the race has to keep it; it has not to leave the animal in humanity behind in its progress but to raise the animal until it is divine. It is his first business therefore to be conscious not only in the physical sheaths of the Annakosha and Pranakosha, – this he normally is, – but in the mental sheath or manahkosha, and there in his normal condition he is only partially active. Once awake in the mental body, he has to extend his waking consciousness, – whoever can so far develop, – into the Vijnana and Anandakoshas.

What are these bodies and these Atmas? The Vedantins of old recognised that divine consciousness on whatever level always creates for itself through Prakriti or Chit, its active creative knowledge, a world to live in & a body for its habitation in the world, and in that world and in that body manifests as a part of the Atman reflecting their conditions. If therefore there are seven distinct states of consciousness, there must equally be seven conditions of the Atman, seven distinct worlds with their denizens and seven kinds of bodies. These seven states are Annam, Prana, Manas, Vijnanam, Ananda, Chit and Sat; these seven worlds are Bhuloka, Bhuvarloka, Swarloka, Maharloka, Janaloka, Tapoloka and Satyaloka; these seven conditions of the Atman are the Visva Atma, Prana Atma, Buddha Atma, Mahan Atma, Mahajana Atma,

Chaitanya Atma and Satya Atma; these seven bodies are the Annakosha, Pranakosha, Manahkosha, Vijnanakosha, Anandakosha, Chitkosha and Satkosha. In each world the denizens, although living predominatingly in the body proper to their own element of conscious existence, also live latently or consciously in the other six, and all have therefore seven bodies, each in communication with its proper plane or world & containing its proper principle of consciousness. Man, living here in the Bhu, has, he too, his seven bodies. He has for instance the Manahkosha containing his pure mental consciousness and, although mind can & does play in the other sheaths, it can only be by becoming awake & living in his mental body as well as his physical that he can realise the utmost potentialities of pure mental activity. It is because he has these other bodies, that he can, if he will, communicate with the other worlds and have relations with the Gods.

This then is the arrangement of the created universe, and the world we live in is its base, not only earth but all these sidereal systems, Bhuloka, the material universe, our present inheritance. Being the lowest of the Aparardha worlds, it is according to a common action of God's love and wisdom, at once the least and the most privileged, the least privileged because here alone grief and pain are utterly felt, here alone is the whole pain and struggle of evolution, – the most privileged because here alone is the evolution eventually complete in all the potentiality of its parts and heaven perfectly realised in a sevenfold blissfulness. Above us are the six other worlds, homes of the gods who change not ever, except by entering human bodies. First, there is Bhuvar, the Pranamaya world, where Prana is at its height, vitality is stupendous, grief and pain are felt but enjoyed, sensuous enjoyment is perfect and prolonged. Then there is Swar, lower & higher, Swarga and Chandraloka, where Indra and the greater gods reside, manas is at its height, sensation, emotion, aesthetic pleasure and intellectual joy are of a mighty intensity, grief and pain are not felt except as another kind of pleasure and rapture, mental

enjoyment is perfect and prolonged. Above there is Mahas or Suryaloka where vijnanam is at its height, intuitive ideal perception, inspiration & revelation are the normal processes of knowledge and the joys of ideal and direct knowledge unmixed with falsehood and error are perfect and prolonged. It is this state of consciousness which is so often called in the Veda, satyam, ritam, brihat and technically termed Bhuma, Mahas or Mahat, the abundant, full or mighty. These are the worlds of the lower hemisphere and of these states of consciousness we can have some conception, we can imagine and even realise or almost realise the condition of the beings who reside in these worlds, to the very highest. But what of the three supreme states of consciousness? what of the three worlds of the higher hemisphere? It is more difficult to conceive of them or to realise what man himself will be or is when he develops them – is, for even now by Yoga he can develop the Ananda. Still, because, debarred though we are from the actual tread of these infinite heavens, we can experience them indirectly and as conditioned by our existence on these lower levels, therefore some idea of them, not altogether inadequate, may be formed by those of us who have a touch of the ideal faculty." (517-21)

20. The Divine Manifestation Through a Purified and Liberated Mentality

"The divine force pervading this mortal kingdom with its bright limbs goes all about the sevenfold conscious being manifested in the heaven of pure mind, it fills our whole purified & liberated mentality with itself. Then these activities in us of mentalised infinite being, mentalised infinite force, mentalised infinite beatitude, mentalised ideality, mind pure in itself, mentalised life-energy, mentalised material being work perfectly & without harm to us or deficiency in themselves; they do not devour & break up the life & body by their unharmonised intensities, neither are they dominated by the lower energies (adabdhah); they are not revealed in their

sheer nakedness of self-being, for all of them are rendered in the mental values proper to this existence of mind in material life, neither are they covered & concealed by the obscurations of the lower & false values given by our present tainted & muddied perceptions. The truth of them shines through the thin mental veil they wear. Here, in this lower kingdom, the seven in their eternal youth & vigour, children of one universal mother Prakriti, are as seven women with a common child; all of them, that is to say, enjoy the possession of this divine force, Agni, which they formerly kept concealed in their workings, but now hold manifested as if a child born to them in the world of human life. The imagery of Veda only seems to us confused & unintelligibly mystic so long as we have not the clue; once the clue is in our hands there is an admirable force, clearness & sublimity in every word & image of the sacred writings. The idea is that of the existence of the mental being man in this world made absolutely full in all its parts & harmonious by the completest power, range & complexity possible to our beings; this is the great result of the waking & working of divine Tapas in the human soul." (618-19)

21. The Action of the Divine Tapas in a Mental Being

"Viswamitra pursues his free but consistent strain of ancient symbolic imagery. As the divine Tapas grows, as it pervades the harmonised consciousness of the purified nature, it begins to gather its masses of force into definite forms, into all the forms of life & thought and action and these spread themselves in the mind which becomes a womb of rich faculty, a flowing river of sweetness & delight; with this richness and delight the seven streams of our being, force, bliss, ideality, mind, life, body are all fattened & nourished; they stand here अत्र in this lower kingdom, receiving these life-giving nectars. Mental being & bodily being become harmonised in us, each answering to the calls of each other, not at discord, their mutual vibrations equalised, not harmful by one unevenly dominating, the other suffering; they are now मही, wide &

vast, partaking of the infinity of the higher realms. They are the two mothers of Agni, like the rivers, because in them & out of them the force manifests." (620)

22. The Riddle of the Vedic Interpretation

"The interpretation of the Rigveda is perhaps the most difficult and disputed question with which the scholarship of today has to deal. This difficulty and dispute are not the creation of present-day criticism; it has existed in different forms since very early times. To what is this incertitude due? Partly, no doubt, it arises from the archaic character of a language in which many of the words were obsolete when ancient Indian scholars tried to systematise the traditional learning about the Veda, and especially the great number of different meanings of which the old Sanskrit words are capable. But there is another and more vital difficulty and problem. The Vedic hymns are full of figures and symbols, – of that there can be no least doubt, – and the question is what do these symbols represent, what is their religious or other significance? Are they simply mythological figures with no depth of meaning behind them? Are they the poetic images of an old Nature-worship, mythological, astronomical, naturalistic, symbols of the action of physical phenomena represented as the action of the gods? Or have they another and more mystic significance? If this question could be solved with an indubitable certitude, the difficulty of language would be no great obstacle; certain hymns and verses might remain obscure, but the general sense, drift, purport of the ancient hymns could be made clear. But the singular feature of the Veda is that none of these solutions, at least as they have been hitherto applied, gives a firm and satisfactory outcome. The hymns remain confused, bizarre, incoherent, and the scholars are obliged to take refuge in the gratuitous assumption that this incoherence is a native character of the text and does not arise from their own ignorance of its central meaning. But so long as we can get no farther than this point, the doubt, the

debate must continue." (676-77)

23. Sri Aurobindo's Approach to the Riddle

"A few years ago I wrote a series of articles in which I suggested an explanation of the ambiguous character of the Veda. My suggestion hinged on this central idea that these hymns were written in a stage of religious culture which answered to a similar period in Greece and other ancient countries, – I do not suggest that they were contemporary or identical in cult and idea, – a stage in which there was a double face to the current religion, an outer for the people, *profanum vulgus*, an inner for the initiates, the early period of the Mysteries. The Vedic Rishis were mystics who reserved their inner knowledge for the initiates; they shielded it from the vulgar by the use of an alphabet of symbols which could not readily be understood without the initiation, but were perfectly clear and systematic when the signs were once known. These symbols centred around the idea and forms of the sacrifice; for the sacrifice was the universal and central institution of the prevailing cult. The hymns were written round this institution and were understood by the vulgar as ritual chants in praise of the Nature-gods, Indra, Agni, Surya Savitri, Varuna, Mitra and Bhaga, the Aswins, Ribhus, Maruts, Rudra, Vishnu, Saraswati, with the object of provoking by the sacrifice the gifts of the gods, – cows, horses, gold and other forms of wealth of a pastoral people, victory over enemies, safety in travel, sons, servants, prosperity, every kind of material good fortune. But behind this mask of primitive and materialistic naturalism, lay another and esoteric cult which would reveal itself if we once penetrated the meaning of the Vedic symbols. That once caught and rightly read, the whole Rigveda would become clear, consequent, a finely woven, yet straightforward tissue.

According to my theory the outer sacrifice represented in these esoteric terms an inner sacrifice of self-giving and communion with the gods. These gods are powers outwardly

of physical, inwardly of psychical nature. Thus Agni outwardly is the physical principle of fire, but inwardly the god of the psychic godward flame, force, will, Tapas; Surya outwardly the solar light, inwardly the god of the illuminating revelatory knowledge; Soma outwardly the moon and the Soma-wine or nectarous moon plant, inwardly the god of the spiritual ecstasy, Ananda. The principal psychical conception of this inner Vedic cult was the idea of the Satyam Ritam Brihat, the Truth, the Law, the Vast. Earth, Air and Heaven symbolised the physical, vital and mental being, but this Truth was situated in the greater heaven, base of a triple Infinity actually and explicitly mentioned in the Vedic riks, and it meant therefore a state of spiritual and supramental illumination. To get beyond earth and sky to Swar, the Sun-world, seat of this illumination, home of the gods, foundation and seat of the Truth, was the achievement of the early Fathers, *pûrve pitarah*, and of the seven Angiras Rishis who founded the Vedic religion. The solar gods, children of Infinity, Adityah, were born in the Truth and the Truth was their home, but they descended into the lower planes and had in each plane their appropriate functions, their mental, vital and physical cosmic motions. They were the guardians and increasers of the Truth in man and by the Truth, *ritasya pathâ*, led him to felicity and immortality. They had to be called into the human being and increased in their functioning, formed in him, brought in or born, *devavîti*, extended, *devatâti*, united in their universality, *vaisvadevya*.

The sacrifice was represented at once as a giving and worship, a battle and a journey. It was the centre of a battle between the Gods aided by Aryan men on one side and the Titans or destroyers on the opposite faction, Dasyus, Vritras, Panis, Rakshasas, later called Daityas and Asuras, between the powers of the Truth or Light and the powers of falsehood, division, darkness. It was a journey, because the sacrifice travelled from earth to the gods in their heaven, but also because it made ready the path by which man himself

travelled to the home of the Truth. This journey opposed by the Dasyus, thieves, robbers, tearers, besiegers (vritras), was itself a battle. The giving was an inner giving. All the offerings of the outer sacrifice, the cow and its yield, the horse, the Soma were symbols of the dedication of inner powers and experiences to the Lords of Truth. The divine gifts, result of the outer sacrifice, were also symbols of inner divine gifts, the cows of the divine light symbolised by the herds of the Sun, the horse of strength and power, the son of the inner godhead or divine man created by the sacrifice, and so through the whole list. This symbolic duplication was facilitated by the double meaning of the Vedic words. *Go*, for instance, means both cow and ray; the cows of the dawn and the sun, Homer's *boes Eelioio*, are the rays of the Sungod, Lord of Revelation, even as in Greek mythology Apollo the Sungod is also the Master of poetry and of prophecy. *Ghrita* means clarified butter, but also the bright thing; *soma* means the wine of the moon plant, but also delight, honey, sweetness, *madhu*. This is the conception, all other features are subsidiary to this central idea. The suggestion seems to me a perfectly simple one, neither out of the way and recondite, nor unnatural to the mentality of the early human peoples." (677-79)

24. Certain a priori Objections to Sri Aurobindo's Approach and Their Resolution

"There are certain *a priori* objections which can be brought against this theory. One may be urged against it from the side of Western scholarship. It may be objected that there is no need for all this mystification, that there is no sign of it in the Veda unless we choose to read it into the primitive mythology, that it is not justified by the history of religion or of the Vedic religion, that it was a refinement impossible to an ancient and barbaric mind. None of these objections can really stand. The Mysteries in Egypt and Greece and elsewhere were of a very ancient standing and they proceeded precisely on this symbolic principle, by which outward myth and ceremony and

cult objects stood for secrets of an inward life or knowledge. It cannot therefore be argued that this mentality was non-existent, impossible in antique times or any more impossible or improbable in India, the country of the Upanishads, than in Egypt and Greece. The history of ancient religion does show a transmutation of physical Nature-gods into representatives of psychical powers or rather an addition of psychical to physical functions; but the latter in some instances gave place to the less external significance. I have given the example of Helios replaced in later times by Apollo. Just so in the Vedic religion Surya undoubtedly becomes a god of inner light, the famous Gayatri verse and its esoteric interpretation are there to prove it as well as the constant appeal of the Upanishads to Vedic riks or Vedic symbols taken in a psychological and spiritual sense, eg, the four closing verses of the Isha Upanishad. Hermes, Athena represent in classical mythology psychical functions, but were originally Nature gods, Athena probably a dawn goddess. I contend that Usha in the Veda shows us this transmutation in its commencement. Dionysus the wine-god was intimately connected with the Mysteries; I assign a similar role to Soma, the wine-god of the Vedas.

But the question is whether there is anything to show that there was actually such a doubling of functions in the Veda. Now in the first place, how was the transition effected from the alleged purely materialistic Nature-worship of the Vedas to the extraordinary psychological and spiritual knowledge of the Upanishads unsurpassed in their subtlety and sublimity in ancient times? There are three possible explanations. First, this sudden spirituality may have been brought in from outside; it is hardily suggested by some scholars that it was taken from an alleged highly spiritual non-Aryan southern culture; but this is an assumption, a baseless hypothesis for which no proof has been advanced; it rests as a surmise in the air without foundation. Secondly, it may have developed from within by some such transmutation as I have suggested, but subsequent to the composition of all but the latest Vedic

hymns. Still even then it was effected on the basis of the Vedic hymns; the Upanishads claim to be a development from the Vedic knowledge, Vedanta repeatedly appeals to Vedic texts, regards Veda as a book of knowledge. The men who gave the Vedantic knowledge are everywhere represented as teachers of the Veda. Why then should we rigidly assume that this development took place subsequent to the composition of the bulk of the Vedic mantras? For the third possibility is that the whole ground had already been prepared consciently by the Vedic mystics. I do not say that the inner Vedic knowledge was identical with the Brahmavada. Its terms were different, its substance was greatly developed, much lost or rejected, much added, old ideas shed, new interpretations made, the symbolic element reduced to a minimum and replaced by clear and open philosophic phrases and conceptions. Certainly, the Vedic mantras had already become obscure and ill-understood at the time of the Brahmanas. And still the groundwork may have been there from the beginning. It is, of course, in the end a question of fact; but my present contention is only that there is no *a priori* impossibility, but rather a considerable probability or at least strong possibility in favour of my suggestion. I will put my argument in this way. The later hymns undoubtedly contain a beginning of the Brahmavada; how did it begin, had it no root origins in the earlier mantras? It is certain that some of the gods, Varuna, Saraswati, had a psychological as well as a physical function. I go farther and say that this double function can everywhere be traced in the Veda with regard to other gods, as for instance, Agni and even the Maruts. Why not then pursue the inquiry on these lines and see how far it will go? There is at least a *prima facie* ground for consideration, and to begin with, I demand no more. An examination of the actual text of the hymns can alone show how far the inquiry will be justified or produce results of a high importance.

Another *a priori* objection comes from the side of orthodox tradition. What it amounts to is an objection to go behind the

authority of Sayana, who belongs to an age at least two or three thousand years later than the Veda, and of Yaska, the ancient lexicographer. Besides, the Veda is currently regarded as *karmakânda*, a book of ritual works, the Vedanta only as *jnânakânda*, a book of knowledge. In an extreme orthodox standpoint it is objected that reason, the critical faculty, the historical argument have nothing to do with the question; the Vedas are beyond such tests, in form and substance eternal, in interpretation only to be explained by traditional authority. That attitude is one with which I am not concerned; I am seeking for the truth of this matter and I cannot be stopped by a denial of my right to seek for any truth contrary to tradition. But if in a more moderate form the argument be that when there is an unbroken and consistent ancient tradition, there is no justification in going behind it, then the obvious reply is that there is no such thing. Sayana moves amidst a constant uncertainty, gives various possibilities, fluctuates in his interpretations. Not only so, but though usually faithful to the ritualistic and external sense he distinguishes and quotes occasionally various ancient schools of interpretation, one of which is spiritual and philosophic and finds the sense of the Upanishads in the Veda. Even he feels himself obliged sometimes, though very rarely, to follow its suggestions. And if we go back to the earliest times we see that the Brahmanas give a mystically ritualistic interpretation of the Veda, the Upanishads treat the Riks as a book not of ritual, but of spiritual knowledge. There is therefore nothing fantastically new or revolutionary in an attempt to fix the psychological and spiritual purport of the Rig Veda.

A last objection remains that the interpretation of the Veda has been a field for the exercise of the most extraordinary ingenuity, each attempt arriving at widely different results, and mine is only one ingenuity the more. If it were so, then I stand in good company. The interpretations of Sayana are packed with the most strained and far-fetched ingenuities, which not unoften light-heartedly do violence to grammar,

syntax, order, connection, on the idea that the Rishis were in no way restrained by these things. Yaska is full of etymological and other ingenuities, some of them of a most astonishing kind. The scholarship of Europe has built up by a system of ingenious guesses and deductions a new version and evolved the history, true or imaginative, of an Aryan invasion and a struggle between Aryan and Dravidian which was never before suspected in the long history of Vedic interpretation. The same charge has been brought against Swami Dayananda's commentary. Nevertheless, the universality of the method does not make it valid, nor have I any need to take refuge in this excuse, which is not a justification. If my or any interpretation is got by a straining of the text, a licentious or fantastic rendering or a foreign importation, then it can have no real value. The present volume, which I hope to make the first of a series, is intended to show my method actually at work and dispel this objection by showing the grounds and justification." (679-83)

25. The Three Necessary Processes for a Valid Interpretation of The Veda

"I hold that three processes are necessary for a valid interpretation of the Veda. First, there must be a straightforward rendering word by word of the text which shall stick to a plain and simple sense at once suggested by the actual words no matter what the result may be. Then, this result has to be taken and it has to be seen what is its actual purport and significance. That meaning must be consistent, coherent with itself; it must show each hymn as a whole in itself proceeding from idea to idea, linked together in sequence, as any literary creation of the human mind must be linked, which has not been written by lunatics or is not merely a string of disconnected cries. It is impossible to suppose that these Rishis, competent metrists, possessed of a style of great power and nobility, composed without the sequence of ideas which is the mark of all adequate literary creation. And if we suppose them to

be divinely inspired, mouth pieces of Brahman or the Eternal, there is no ground for supposing that the divine wisdom is more incoherent in its Word than the human mind; it should rather be more luminous and satisfying in its totality. Finally, if a symbolic interpretation is put on any part of the text, it must arise directly and clearly from suggestions and language of the Veda itself and must not be brought in from outside." (683)

26. The Incorporation of the above Three Processes by Sri Aurobindo in His Approach to the Veda

"A few words may be useful on each of these points. The first rule I follow is to try to get at the simplest and straightforward sense to which the Rik is open, not to strain, twist and involve. The Vedic style is terse, but natural, it has its strong brevities and some ellipses, but all the same it is essentially simple and goes straight to its object. Where it seems obscure, it is because we do not know the meaning of the words or miss the clue to the idea. Even if at one or two places, it seems to be tortured, that is no reason why we should put the whole Veda on the rack or even in these places torture it still worse in the effort to get at a sense. Where the meaning of a word has to be fixed, this difficulty comes either because we have no clue to the true meaning or because it is capable in the language of several meanings. In the latter case I follow certain fixed canons. First, if the word is one of the standing terms of the Veda intimately bound up with its religious system, then I must first find one single meaning which attaches to it wherever it occurs; I am not at liberty to vary its sense from the beginning according to my pleasure or fancy or sense of immediate fitness. If I interpret a book of obscure Christian theology, I am not at liberty to interpret freely the constantly recurring word grace sometimes as the influx of the divine favour, sometimes as one of the three Graces, sometimes as charm of beauty, sometimes as grace marks in an examination, sometimes as the name of a girl. If in one it evidently bears this or that sense and can have

no other, if it has no reference to the ordinary meaning, then indeed it is different; but I must not put in one of these other meanings where the normal sense fits the context. In other cases I may have greater freedom, but this freedom must not degenerate into licence. Thus the word *ritam* may signify, we are told, truth, sacrifice, water, motion and a number of other things. Sayana interprets freely and without obvious rule or reason according to any of them and sometimes gives us two alternatives; not only does he interpret it variously in different hymns, but in three different senses [in] the same hymn or even in the same line. I hold this to be quite illegitimate. *Ritam* is a standing term of the Veda and I must take it consistently. If I find truth to be its sense in that standing significance, I must so interpret it always, unless in any given passage it evidently means water or sacrifice or the man who has gone and cannot mean truth. To translate so striking a phrase as *ritasya panthâh* in one passage as "the path of truth", in another "the path of sacrifice", in another "the path of water", in another "the path of the one who has gone" is a sheer licence, and if we follow such a method, there can be no sense for the Veda except the sense of our own individual caprice. Then again we have the word Deva, which undoubtedly means in ninety-nine places out of a hundred, one of the shining ones, a god. Even though this is not so vital a term as *ritam*, still I must not take it in the sense of a priest or intelligent man or any other significance, where the word god gives a good and sufficient meaning unless it can be shown that it is undoubtedly capable of another sense in the mouth of the Rishis. On the other hand a word like *ari* means sometimes a fighter, one's own champion, sometimes a hostile fighter, assailant, enemy, sometimes it is an adjective and seems almost equivalent to *arya* or even *ârya*. But mark that these are all well-connected senses. Dayananda insists on a greater freedom of interpretation to suit the context. *Saindhava* he says means a horse or rocksalt; where it is a question of eating we must interpret as salt, where it is a question of riding, as horse. That is quite obvious; but

the whole question in the Veda is what is the bearing of the context, what are its connections? If we interpret according to our individual sense of what the context ought to mean, we are building on the quicksands. The only safe rule is to fix the sense usually current in the Veda and admit variations only where they are evident from the context. Where the ordinary sense makes a good meaning, I ought to accept it; it does not at all matter that that is not the meaning I should like it to have or the one suitable to my theory of the Veda. But how to fix the meaning? We can evidently do it only on the totality or balance of the evidence of all the passages in which the word occurs and, after that, on its suitability to the general sense of the Veda. If I show that *ritam* in all passages can mean truth, in a great number of passages but not by any means all sacrifice, in only a few water, and in hardly any, motion, and this sense, truth, fits in with the general sense of the Veda, then I consider I have made out an unanswerable case for taking it in that significance. In the cases of many words this can be done; in others we have to strike a balance. There remain the words of which frankly we do not know the meaning. Here we have to use the clue of etymology and then to test the meaning or possible meanings we arrive at by application to the passages in which the word occurs, taking into consideration where necessary not only the isolated riks, but the context around, and even the general sense of Veda. In a few cases the word is so rare and obscure that only a quite conjectural meaning can be attached to it.

When we have got the rendering of the text, we have to [see] to what it amounts. Here what we have to do is to see the connection of the ideas in the verse itself, next its connection with the ideas in the verses that precede and follow and with the general sense of the hymn; next parallel passages and ideas and hymns and finally the place of the whole in the scheme of ideas of the Veda. Thus in IV.7 we have the line अग्ने कदा त आनुषग् भुवद् देवस्य चेतनं, and I render it, "O Flame, when may there be in uninterrupted sequence the awakening (to knowledge

or consciousness) of thee the god (the shining or luminous One)?" But the question I have to put is this, "Does this mean the constant burning of the physical fire on the altar and the ordered sequence of the physical sacrifice, or does it mean the awakening to constant developing knowledge or ordered conscious action of knowledge of the divine Flame in man?" I note that in the next rik (3) Agni is described as the possessor of truth (or of sacrifice?), the entirely wise, ऋतावानं विचेतसं, in 4 as the vision or knowledge perception shining for each creature, केतुं भृगवाणं विशे विशे, in 5 as the Priest who knows, होतारं चिकित्वांसं, in 6 as the bright one in the secrecy who has perfect knowledge, चित्रं गुहा हिंत सुवेदं, in 7 as coming possessed of the truth for the sacrifice when the gods rejoice in the seat of the Truth, [in 8] as the messenger विद्वान् संचिकित्वान् विदुष्टरः. All this is ample warrant for taking Agni not merely as a physical flame on the altar, [but] as a flame of divine knowledge guiding the sacrifice and mediating between man and the gods. The balance is also, though not indisputably, in favour of taking it as a reference to the inner sacrifice under the cover of the outer symbols; for why should there be so much stress on divine knowledge if the question were only of a physical sacrifice for physical fruits? I note that he is the priest, sage, messenger, eater, swift traveller and warrior. How are these ideas, both successive and interwoven in the Veda, connected together? Is it the physical sacred flame that is all these things or the inner sacred flame? There is sufficient to warrant me in provisionally taking it for the inner flame; but to be sure I cannot rely on this one rik. I have to note the evolution of the same ideas in other hymns, to study all the hymns dedicated to Agni or in which he is mentioned, to see whether there are passages in which he is indubitably the inner flame and what light they shed on his whole physiognomy. Only then shall I be in a position to judge certainly the significance of the Vedic Fire.

This example will show the method I follow in regard to the third question, the interpretation of the Vedic symbols. That there are a mass of figures and symbols in the hymns, there

can be no doubt. The instances in this 7th hymn of the Fourth Mandala are sufficient by themselves to show how large a part they play. In the absence of any contemporary evidence of the sense which the Rishis attached to them, we have to seek for their meaning in the Veda itself. Obviously, where we do not know we cannot do without a hypothesis, and my hypothesis is that of the outer ritual form as a significant symbol of an inner spiritual meaning. But this or any hypothesis can have no real value if it is brought in from outside, if it is not suggested by the words and indications of the Veda itself. The Brahmanas are too full of ingenuities; they read too much and too much at random into the text. The Upanishads give a better light and we may get hints from later work and even from Sayana and Yaska, but it would be dangerous at once to read back literally the ideas of a later mentality into this exceedingly ancient Scripture. We must start from and rely on the Veda to interpret the Veda. We have to see, first, whether there are any plain and evident psychological and spiritual conceptions, what they are, what clue they give us, secondly, whether there are any indications of psychological meanings for physical symbols and how the outer physical is related to the inner psychological side. Why for instance is the Flame Agni called the seer and knower? why are the rivers called the waters that have knowledge? why are they said to ascend or get into the mind? and a host of other similar questions. The answer again must be found by a minute comparative study of the Vedic hymns themselves. In this volume I proceed by development. I take each hymn, get at its first meaning; I see whether there are any psychological indications and what is their force and what their interweaving and relation to the other surrounding ideas. I proceed thus from hymn to hymn linking them together by their identical or similar ideas, figures, expressions. In this way it may be possible to arrive at a clear and connected interpretation of the Veda.

This method supposes that the hymns of the Rigveda are one whole composed by different Rishis, but on the basis of a

substantially identical and always similar knowledge and one system of figures and symbols. This, I think, is evident on the very surface of the Veda. The only apparent exceptions are certain hymns, mostly in the tenth Mandala, which seem to belong to a later development, some almost purely ritualistic, others more complex and developed in symbol than the body of the Riks, others clearly enouncing philosophical ideas with a modicum of symbol, the first voices which announce the coming of the Upanishads. Some hymns are highly archaic, others of a more clear and relatively modern type. But for the most part throughout we find the same substance, the same images, ideas, standing terms, the same phrases and expressions. Otherwise the problem would be insoluble; as it is, the Veda itself gives a key to the Veda." (684-88)