

# THE SYMBOLISM IN RIGVEDA

K.R. Paramahansa



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**Dedicated to the  
Being of SRI SATYA SAI  
TAT embodied**

## About the Author

K.R. Paramahansa was a retired civil servant in India borne on the Indian Administrative Service. He has created the website Sri Sathya Sai Veda Pratishtan at [www.vedamu.org](http://www.vedamu.org) , a repository of all the Vedic literature available in India in Devanagari and Grantha scripts. Besides, the website hosts 415 hours of Vedic chanting of ten Veda sakhas in different modes in a representative way. He is Adjunct Faculty of the Hindu University of America in Florida. He is now a resident of the Ashram of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai at Prasanthi Nilayam-515134, India in pursuit of spiritual upliftment.

## About the Book

Sri Aurobindo puts the question: 'Is there at all, or is there still the secret of the Veda?'

We have in the Rig-veda Samhita, a body of sacrificial hymns couched in a very ancient language. The hymns present a number of almost insoluble difficulties. 'Yet these obscure and barbarous compositions have had the most splendid good fortune in all literary history. They have been the reputed source not only of some of the world's richest and profoundest religions, but of some of its subtlest metaphysical philosophies', in the words of Sri Aurobindo.

The Rig-veda is itself the one considerable document that remains to us from the early period of the human thought when the spiritual and psychological knowledge of the human race was concealed in a veil of concrete and material figures and symbols. The reasons why it so happened may now be difficult to determine.

One of the leading principles of the Vedic mystics is sacredness, secrecy of self-knowledge and the true knowledge of the gods. For the mystics, this wisdom is unfit, rather dangerous, to the ordinary human mind. It is liable to perversion, misuse and loss of virtue if revealed to vulgar and unpurified spirits.

The ritual system recognized by Sayanacarya stands in its externalities. The naturalistic sense discovered by the European scholars, in its general conceptions, may call for acceptance. But behind them is the true and still hidden secret of the Veda, the secret words spoken for the purified in soul and the awakened in knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo's book 'The Secret of the Veda' establishes that the Vedic literature is only the precursor to the Vedantic literature the objective of which is to lead the seeker on the path of Truth to Self-realization.

This book 'Symbolism in Rigveda' is only an abridged version of 'The Secret of the Veda', *Sri Aurobindo Revisited*, intended for the benefit of beginners among students of Vedic literature.

## Preface

The Indian psyche is saturated with the idea that the Veda is *Sabdabrahman*, the Word-form of the Brahman and is, therefore, as vast and infinite as the Brahman. '*Anantaa vai Vedaah*', that is, 'Infinite indeed is the Veda!' is the age old saying.

The Veda, according to the most ancient tradition, is knowledge infinite and eternal. The word Veda means, derivatively, knowledge as a direct experience. If the Veda is the word, it is not the written word but spoken, or rather a word heard, *sruti*, as it is called. It means that the language of the Veda stems from a super-human or impersonal source. Sri Aurobindo has said, 'the language of the Veda itself is *sruti*, a rhythm not composed by the intellect but heard, a Divine Word that came vibrating out of the Infinite to the inner audience of the man who had previously made himself fit for the impersonal knowledge.'

**It follows that the Veda as a Divine Gospel is unbounded, unlimited, and infinite. Issuing from the ineffable sources it penetrates and permeates the divinely inspired souls.**

This conviction is supported by the etymological derivation of the word 'Veda' whose root is '*vid*'. The famous grammarian Panini indicates three senses to this root according to three different conjugations. '*Vid*', in one conjugation, means 'to be or to exist', *vid sattaayaam*. In the second conjugation, it means to know or to be conscious or aware of, *vid jnaane*. In the third conjugation, it means to gain, to attain, *vidlr laabhe*.

The word Veda, derived from *vid* meaning to be or exist, would mean Being or Existence, that is, the *Sat*. The word, derived from *vid* meaning to know or be conscious or aware of, would signify the *Cit* or Supreme Knowledge. The word derived from *vid* meaning to gain or to attain, would signify the highest gain or attainment, that is, the Bliss or *Ananda*. Thus the word Veda combines in itself all the three senses of the three roots, and connotes *Sacchidaananda* of the Vedanta.

Vedic literature mainly consists of *Mantra Samhita*, *Brahmanas*, *Aaranyakas* and *Upanisads*. In understanding the *Mantra Samhita*, the study of *Brahmanas*, *Aaranyakas* and *Upanisads* is considered to be essential, and the study of the

*Brahma-sutras* and *Bhagavad-Gita* is also considered to be necessary. Vedic literature also includes six additional works, which are supposed to be aids in understanding the Veda. They are *Siksha*, *Kalpa*, *Vyakarana*, *Nirukta*, *Chhanda* and *Jyotisa*. Each one of them is called Vedaanga.

According to the *Matsyapuraana*, the *Yajur-Veda* was the only Veda in the beginning. The same view is repeated in the *Vayupuraana* and *Vishnupuraana*. It is Vedavyasa who is stated to have arranged the Veda sakhas, number unknown, into four Veda Samhitas based on the requirements of the processes of symbolic sacrifice. He is stated to have transmitted the *Rig-Veda* to Paila, the *Yajur-Veda* to Vaishampaayana, the *Sama-Veda* to Jaimini, and the *Atharva-Veda* to Sumantu. In due course, they transmitted them to their pupils, and thereafter there developed the tradition of transmission by oral tradition from teacher to pupil. In this fashion, there came about a development of various recensions or sakhas of the Veda.

In the *Bhagavata* and in several other Puraanas, there is a detailed description of the various *sakhas* of the Veda; we have a similar description in *Saantiparva* (chapter 342) of the *Mahabharata*. We also have organized information on the *sakhas* of the Veda in *Charanavyuha*, in three different works, attributed to Shaunaka, Kaatyaayana and Vyasa respectively.

The total number of Veda sakhas at the time of Patanjali, about two millenniums and a half ago, was stated to be 1,131. But at present only 10 sakhas remain alive accounting for one of Rigveda, four of Yajurveda, three of Samaveda and two of Atharvaveda.

Among the Veda sakhas, the Saakala sakha of Rigveda occupies a prominent place. The Rigveda Samhita consists of 10 books or *Mandalas* and 1,017 hymns or *suktas*. The total number of verses in the sakha is 10,580. The number of words is 1,53,826, and the number of letters is 4,32,000.

Several great Rishis have sought, over a period of time, to interpret different Veda sakhas that are extant. The great Seer Sayanacharya is one that interpreted different Veda sakhas. But his interpretation of the Veda sakhas is mainly related to their ritualistic aspect. Sri Aurobindo is another great Seer that sought



to fathom out the symbolism in the Veda and, on that premise, to lay the approach to proper interpretation of the Veda sakhas.

In the words of Sri Aurobindo, he 'had a vision of the Vedic goddesses, and the touchstone of his own inner vision helped in revealing to him their symbolic nature'. Therefore, the secret meaning of the Veda revealed to Sri Aurobindo has the solid backbone of experiential authority. Consequently, the method he has evolved to interpret and annotate the Vedic text appears to be the most authoritative, flawless, and holistic in its scope.

In another context, he said, 'Sri Krishna has shown me the true meaning of the Veda, not only so, but he has shown me a new Science of Philology showing the process and origins of human speech so that a new Nirukta can be formed and the new interpretation of the Veda based upon it. He has also shown me the meaning of all in the Upanisads that is not understood either by Indians or Europeans.'

His book 'The Secret of the Veda' is a detailed and amazing revelation of the symbolism in the Rigveda Samhita, which establishes that the Vedic literature is only the precursor to the Vedantic literature the objective of which is to lead the seeker on the path of Truth to Self-realization.

This book 'Symbolism in Rigveda' is only an abridged version of 'The Secret of the Veda', *Sri Aurobindo Revisited*, intended for the benefit of beginners among students of Vedic literature. In this book, the word Veda refers to the Rigveda Samhita of Saakala sakha unless it is specifically stated to relate to any other Veda sakha.



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## 01 Introduction

Sri Aurobindo puts the question: 'Is there at all, or is there still the secret of the Veda?'

We have in the Rig-veda a body of sacrificial hymns couched in a very ancient language. The hymns present a number of almost insoluble difficulties. It is full of ancient forms and words, which do not appear in later speech. They have rather to be fixed in some sense, though doubtful, by intelligent conjecture.

The language of the hymns is such that it admits of significance other than in the literary tongue. A multitude of its vocables, though they are the most common and are vital to the sense, are capable of surprisingly unconnected significances. These significances may give quite different complexions to whole passages, whole hymns and even to the whole thought of the Veda.

In the course of millenniums, there have been, at least, three considerable attempts, differing entirely from one another in their methods and results, to fix the sense of these ancient litanies.

One of them is prehistoric in time, and exists, only by fragments, in the Brahmanas and the Upanisads. But we possess, in its entirety, the traditional interpretation by Sayanacharya, and also by modern European scholarship, after putting in immense labour, by way of comparison and conjecture. Both of them have one characteristic in common, according to Sri Aurobindo. It is the extraordinary incoherence and the poverty of sense, which their results stamp upon the ancient hymns.

The separate lines of the text can be given, whether naturally or by force of conjecture, a good sense or a sense that hangs together. The diction that results can be made to run into intelligible sentences, though they contain an amazing mark of gaudy figure and verbiage.

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But when we come to read the hymns as a whole, we seem to be in the presence of men who were incapable of coherent or natural expression or of connected thought. Except in the brief and simple hymns, the language tends to be either obscure or artificial. The thoughts are either unconnected, or have to be forced and beaten by the interpreter into a whole. The one interpreting them is obliged to substitute for interpretation a process almost of fabrication.

‘Yet these obscure and barbarous compositions have had the most splendid good fortune in all literary history. They have been the reputed source not only of some of the world’s richest and profoundest religions, but of some of its subtlest metaphysical philosophies’, in the words of Sri Aurobindo.

In the fixed tradition of the millenniums, the hymns have been revered as the origin and standard of all that can be held as authoritative and true in the Indian philosophical and theological literature. They bear the name ‘Veda’ meaning knowledge, again meaning the highest spiritual truth of which the human mind is capable.

If we go by the interpretation of Sayana or the modern European scholarship, this sublime and sacred reputation looks a fiction. The hymns appear to be nothing more than the naïve superstitious fancies of materialistic men concerned with external gains and enjoyments. The Upanisads, which are the true foundation of the later religion and philosophies, have then to be conceived as a revolt of philosophical and speculative minds against the ritualistic materialism of the Veda.

One point is to be borne in view. The profound and ultimate thoughts, the systems of subtle and elaborate psychology as constituting the substance of the Upanisads cannot arise out of a void. The human mind, in its progress, marches from knowledge to knowledge. Or it renews and enlarges previous knowledge that has been either obscured or overlaid; or it seizes on old clues and is led into new discoveries. The very thought of the Upanisads supposes great origins anterior to itself. Much, indeed, of the forms and symbols of thought, which we find in the Upanisads, much of the substance of the Brahmanas presupposes a period in India in which thought took the form or the veil of secret teachings as those of the Greek mysteries.

It is often said that the material worship of external Nature-Powers in the Veda is different from the psychological and the spiritual ideas we find attached to the functions of the gods in the Upanisads and Puranas. Further, the material worship of the Veda cannot compare to the developed religion of the Greeks in the corresponding past. But it is worth bearing in view that, as man on earth begins from the external and proceeds to the internal, the earliest fully intelligent form of human religion is necessarily a worship of outward Nature-Powers invested with the consciousness and personality that he finds in his own being.

Agni in the Veda is avowedly Fire; Surya, the Sun; Parjanya, the Rain-cloud; Usha, the Dawn; and so goes on. But in the worship of the Greeks, about the same time of the Veda, there appears to be a significant change. The material attributes of the gods are effaced, or have become subordinate to psychological conceptions. The god of Fire has been converted into a lame god of Labour; Apollo; the Sun represents the prophetic Inspiration; Athene is considered the wise, strong and pure goddess of Knowledge. There are other deities, too, such as the gods of War, Love, Beauty, whose material functions have disappeared, if at all they ever existed.

It is true that this change has become inevitable with the progress of human civilization. We see the same changes effected in the Puranas partly by the substitution of other divine names and figures, may be partly by the same obscure process that we observe in the evolution of Greek mythology.

For instance, the river Saraswati has become the Muse and the goddess of Learning. Vishnu and Rudra of the Veda are now the Supreme Godhead, members of a divine Triad considered expressive, separately, of the conservative and the destructive process in the cosmos.

In the Isa Upanisad, there is an appeal to Surya as the god of revelatory knowledge by whose action we can arrive at the highest truth. This is, in fact, his function in the sacred Vedic hymn of the Gayatri, which has been repeated for thousands of years by most Indians, irrespective of caste, in their daily worship. This formula is a verse from the Rig-veda, from a hymn of the Rishi Viswamitra.

In the same Upanisad, Agni is invoked for purely moral functions as the purifier from sin, the leader of the soul by the good path to the divine Bliss. He

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seems to be identified with the power of the will, and responsible for human actions.

In other Upanisads, the gods are clearly the symbols of sense-functions in man. Soma, the plant, which yielded the mystic wine for the Vedic sacrifice has become not only the god of the Moon, but manifests himself as mind in the human being.

These evolutions suppose some period posterior to the early material worship attributed to the Veda and prior to the developed Puranic mythology in which the gods became invested with deeper psychological functions. This period may well have been the Age of the Mysteries, according to Sri Aurobindo.

The Rig-veda is itself the one considerable document that remains to us from the early period of the human thought when the spiritual and psychological knowledge of the human race was concealed in a veil of concrete and material figures and symbols. The reasons why it so happened may now be difficult to determine.

One of the leading principles of the Vedic mystics is sacredness, secrecy of self-knowledge and the true knowledge of the gods. For the mystics, this wisdom is unfit, rather dangerous, to the ordinary human mind. It is liable to perversion, misuse and loss of virtue if revealed to vulgar and unpurified spirits. For this reason, they might have favoured the existence of an outer worship, effective but imperfect, for the profane and the worldly. On the other hand, they favoured an inner discipline for the initiates, and clothed their language in words and images, which had a spiritual sense. The Vedic hymns appear to have been conceived and constructed on this principle.

Their formulae and ceremonies are, overtly, the details of an outward ritual devised for the pantheistic Nature-worship, which was then the common religion. On the other hand, they are covertly the sacred words, the effective symbols of spiritual experience and knowledge, and psychological discipline of self-culture, which were then the highest achievement of the human race.

The ritual system recognized by Sayana stands in its externalities. The naturalistic sense discovered by the European scholars, in its general conceptions, may call for acceptance. But behind them is the true and still

hidden secret of the Veda, the secret words spoken for the purified in soul and the awakened in knowledge.

If this hypothesis is considered valid, it has three advantages. It will elucidate simply and effectively the part of the Upanisads that yet remain unintelligible, as well as much of the origins of the Puranas. Secondly, it will explain and justify rationally the whole ancient Indian tradition, for, in truth, the Vedanta, Purana, Tantra, the Philosophical schools and the great Indian religions do go back to their source to the Vedic origins. Therein lay their original seed or even primitive forms of the fundamental conceptions of the later Indian thought. Thirdly, the incoherencies of the Vedic texts will at once be explained, and disappear. They exist only in appearance, as the real thread of the sense is to be found in an inner meaning. When once the thread is found, the hymns appear logical and organic wholes. The expression of the hymns becomes just and precise. We find them over-pregnant of, rather than with the poverty of, sense. The Veda justly takes rank among the most important of the world's early scriptures



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## 02

### A Retrospect of Vedic Theory

Veda is the creation of an age anterior to our intellectual philosophies. Sri Aurobindo says that 'in that original epoch, thought proceeded by other methods than those of our logical reasoning, and speech accepted modes of expression, which, in our modern habits, would be inadmissible. The wisest then depended on inner experience and the suggestions of intuitive mind for all knowledge that ranged beyond mankind's ordinary perceptions and daily activities. Their aim was illumination, not logical conviction; their ideal the inspired seer, not the accurate reasoner. Indian tradition has faithfully preserved this account of the origin of the Veda'.

Against this background, it is easy to comprehend that the Rishi is not the individual composer of the hymn, but the seer (*drashta*) of an eternal truth and an impersonal knowledge. The language of the Veda itself is *sruti*, a rhythm not composed by the intellect but heard. It is a divine Word that came vibrating out of the Infinite to the inner audience of the seer who had previously made himself fit for the impersonal knowledge. The words *drsti* and *sruti*, meaning sight and hearing, are Vedic expressions themselves. These words signify, in the esoteric terminology of the hymns, revelatory knowledge and the contents of inspiration.

In the Vedic idea of the revelation, there is no suggestion of the miraculous or the supernatural. The Rishi, who employed these faculties, had acquired them by a progressive self-culture. Knowledge is a journey and a destination; the revelation comes only at the end as the prize of final consummation. This image of the journey, the march of the soul on the path of Truth is continually present in the Veda. As the soul advances, it also ascends and attains to the greater heights and vistas of power and inspiration. It wins spiritual possessions as a fitting reward of its heroic efforts.

Historically, the Rig-veda may be considered as a record of great advance made by humanity by special means at a certain period of its collective progress. In its esoteric and its exoteric significance, it is the Book of Works, of the inner and the outer sacrifice. It is the spirit's hymn of battle and victory, as it discovers and climbs to planes of thought and experience inaccessible to the ordinary man.

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It is the hymn of man's praise of the divine Light, Power and Grace at work in the mortal.

It is not an attempt to set down the results of intellectual or imaginative speculation. Nor does it consist of the dogmas of a primitive religion. Because of the sameness of experience and out of the impersonality of the knowledge received by different Rishis, there arose a fixed body of conceptions constantly repeated, and a fixed symbolic language, which, at that stage of development, was the inevitable form of these conceptions.

At any rate, we have the same notions repeated from hymn to hymn with the same constant terms and figures, and frequently in the same phrases, with a total indifference to any search for originality of thought, or novelty and freshness of language. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, 'No pursuit of aesthetic grace, richness or beauty induces these mystic poets to vary the consecrated form which has become for them a sort of divine algebra transmitting the eternal formulae of the Knowledge to the continuous succession of the initiates'.

The hymns possess a finished metrical form, a constant subtlety and skill in their technique. There are variations of style and poetical personality. They are not the work of rude or primitive men. They are indeed the living breath of supremely inspired seers. For them, the art of expression is always a means, not an aim.

Their principal preoccupation was only practical and utilitarian. The hymn was, to the Rishi who composed it, a means of spiritual progress for himself and others. It arose out of his soul; it became a power of his mind; and it was the vehicle of self-expression of his life's inner journey. It helped him to express the god in him, and to destroy the devourer and the expresser of evil. It became a weapon in his hands to strive after spiritual perfection.

The Vedic thought, when considered in its depth, richness and subtlety, gives rise to some interesting speculations. It is possible to consider that such a fixed form and substance would not be possible in the beginnings of thought and psychological experience, or even during their early progress and unfolding. We may, therefore, surmise that our actual Samhita of the Veda represents the end of a period, not its commencement, nor even some of its successive stages.

It is possible that its most ancient hymns are a comparatively modern development or a version of a more ancient lyrical form. The Veda itself speaks constantly of 'ancient' and 'modern' Rishis, the former remote enough to be regarded as the first founders of knowledge. It may be that the whole voluminous mass of its litanies may be only a selection by Veda Vyasa out of a more richly vocal Aryan past. The compilation by Veda Vyasa is perhaps only the last testament of the Ages of Intuition to a human race already turning in spirit towards the lower levels, and the more easy and secure gains of the physical life, and of the intellect and logical reason. These are only speculations and inferences.

The system of the Vedic mystics seems to have been founded on experiences difficult to ordinary mankind to appreciate. It seems to have proceeded by the aid of faculties, which, in most of us, are only rudimentary and imperfectly developed. Even if the faculties are active, they are mixed and irregular in their operation. Once the first intensity of the search after truth has passed, periods of fatigue and relaxation generally follow in which the old truths would be partially lost. When once lost, it might be difficult to recover them even by scrutinizing their sense, for they are generally couched in a language deliberately ambiguous.

It is possible to understand correctly an unintelligible tongue when once a clue has been found. A diction that is deliberately ambiguous holds its secret much more obstinately and successfully. Its lures and indications are often misleading. In this context, when we turn to review the sense of the Veda, the task is rather difficult and the success can only be partial.

One source of light has still existed. It is the traditional knowledge handed down among those who have memorized and explained the Vedic text or had charge of the Vedic ritual. In the earlier days, the Vedic priest was also the teacher and the seer. But the clearness of the light has rather been obscure for the reason that even the priests of repute have performed the rites with imperfect knowledge of the power and the sense of the sacred words, which they repeat. The material aspects of the Vedic worship have become dominant, stifling the inner knowledge, which once it served to protect. The Veda has become a mass of myth and ritual. The power has begun to disappear out of the symbolic

ceremony. The light has departed from the mystic parable. It has only remained apparent.

But the Brahmanas and the Upanisads are the record of a powerful revival, which took the sacred text and ritual as a starting point for a new statement of spiritual thought and experience. This movement had two complementary aspects. One was the conservation of the forms, and the other the revelation of the soul of the Veda. The Brahmanas mainly represent the first, though they have their philosophical passages, and the Upanisads the second.

The Brahmanas seek to fix and preserve the details of the Vedic ceremony, the conditions of their material effectuality, the symbolic sense and purpose of their parts, movements, implements, the significance of texts important in the ritual, the drift of obscure allusions, the memory of ancient myths and traditions. Many of their legends are posterior to the hymns. Their purpose is mainly to explain the passages of the texts, which are not otherwise understood. Others may have been part of the original myth and parable employed by the ancient symbolists.

Oral tradition is always a light that obscures. A new symbolism working on an old one that is half lost is likely to overgrow, rather than reveal it. Therefore, the Brahmanas, though full of interesting hints, do not help much in revealing the true sense of the hymns. Nor are they a safe guide to the meaning of separate texts when they attempt an exact and verbal interpretation.

The Rishis of the Upanisads followed a different method. They sought to recover the lost or waning knowledge by meditation and spiritual experience. They used the text of the ancient *mantras* as an authority for their own intuitions and perceptions. The Vedic Word, for them, was only a seed of thought and vision by which they recovered old truths in new forms. What they found, they expressed in their own terms, more intelligible to the age in which they lived.

In a sense, they were seekers of higher than verbal truth, and used words merely as suggestions for the illumination towards which they were striving. They neglected the etymological sense and employed often a method of symbolic interpretation of component sounds in which it is very difficult to follow them. For this reason, the Upanisads are invaluable for the light they shed on the principal ideas and the psychological system of the ancient Rishis. But they are

of as little help as the Brahmanas in determining the accurate sense of the texts they quote. Their real work was to found Vedanta rather than to interpret the Veda.

This great movement of the Upanisads, however, resulted in a new and more permanently powerful statement of thought and spirituality, the Veda culminating in the Vedanta. This led to two strong tendencies that worked towards the disintegration of the old Vedic thought and culture. First, it tended to subordinate the outward ritual and the sacrifice to a more purely spiritual aim and intention. As a result, the balance and the synthesis preserved by the old Mystics between the material and the spiritual life was displaced and disorganized. This led to a new balance and a new synthesis leaning towards asceticism and renunciation. This was again displaced and disorganized by the exaggeration of its own tendencies in Buddhism. The sacrifice, the symbolic ritual, became a useless survival and an encumbrance; and it became mechanical and ineffective. A sharp practical division came into being, which could be expressed in the formula, 'the Veda for the priests, the Vedanta for the sages'.

The second tendency was to disencumber the Vedantic movement progressively of the symbolic language in which the Mystics had shrouded their thought, and to substitute a clearer statement and more philosophical language. The evolution of this tendency rendered obsolete the utility of the Vedic ritual as well as its text.

The Upanisads, clear and direct in their language, became the fountainhead of the highest Indian thought, and replaced the inspired verses of great Rishis such as Vasishtha and Vishvamitra. The Veda became less and less the indispensable basis of education. It was no longer studied with the same zeal and intelligence. Its symbolic language lost the remnant of its inner sense to new generations whose whole manner of thought was different from the Vedic forefathers. The Ages of Intuition were passing away into the early dawn of the Age of Reason.

Buddhism completed the revolution, and left the externalities of the ancient world with only some mechanical usages. It sought to abolish the Vedic sacrifice, and to bring into use the popular vernacular in the place of the literary

tongue. Though the Hinduism in the Puranic religions revived, the Veda did not benefit by it.

To combat the popularity of Buddhism, it became necessary to put forward scriptures written in an easy form of modern Sanskrit rather than the venerable but unintelligible texts of the Veda. For the mass of the people, the Puranas pushed aside the Veda, and the forms of new religious systems took the place of the ancient ceremonies. As the Veda had passed from the sage to the priest, now it began to pass from the priest to the scholar. In the process, it suffered the mutilation of its sense, and its true dignity and sanctity.

It does not mean that the dealings of the Indian scholarship with the Vedic hymns from the pre-Christian centuries have been a record of loss. It is to the scrupulous diligence and conservative tradition of the Vedic scholars that we owe the preservation of the Veda at all, after its secret had been lost and the hymns had ceased, in practice, to be a living scripture. The great contribution of the Vedic scholars is that they have retained scrupulously the text to its very accentuation. The important lexicon of Yaksha, and the great commentary by Sayana in spite of its many and startling imperfections, still remain for the scholars an indispensable first step towards the formation of a sound Vedic learning.



## 03

### The Scholars

The text of the Veda, which we possess, has remained uncorrupted for over two thousand years. It dates from that great period of Indian intellectual activity, which founded the culture, and civilization recorded, in the classical literature of the land.

There are considerations, which justify us in supposing for the Veda an almost enormous antiquity. An accurate text, accurate in every syllable, accurate in every accent, was a matter of supreme importance to the Vedic ritualists, for, on scrupulous accuracy depended the effectuality of the sacrifice. For instance, there is the story of Twashtri in the Brahmanas who, performing a sacrifice to produce an avenger of his son slain by Indra, produced, owing to an error of accentuation, not a slayer of Indra, but one of whom Indra must be the slayer.

The prodigious accuracy of the ancient Indian memory is well known. The sanctity of the texts prevented any interpolations, alterations, modernizing versions, as has been the case with the Mahabharata. It is not, therefore, improbable that we have the Samhita of Vyasa substantially as the great sage and compiler arranged it, though not in its present written form.

The Vedic prosody differed in many respects from the prosody of classical Sanskrit and employed a greater freedom in the use of that principle of euphonic combination of separate words (*sandhi*), which is a peculiar feature of the literary tongue. The Vedic Rishis followed the ear rather than fixed rules, which is only natural in a living speech. Sometimes, they combined the separate words; sometimes, they left them uncombined.

But when the Veda came to be written down, the principle of euphonic combination had turned authoritarian over the language, and the grammarians wrote the ancient texts, as far as possible, in consonance with its regulations. They were careful, however, to accompany it with another text, called the *Pada-patha*, in which all euphonic combinations were again resolved into the original and separate words. Even the components of the compound words were indicated.

Because of the fidelity of the ancient memorizers and their disciples over generations, it has always been perfectly easy to resolve the formal text into the original harmonies of the Vedic prosody. The exactness or the sound judgment of the *Pada-patha* is never called into question. We have, therefore, as our basis, a text, which we can confidently accept as the original one. There is good reason to believe that the hymns have been arrayed in the right order of their verses and in their exact entirety. If the hymns seem to us incoherent, it is because we do not understand them. Once we find the clue, we discover that they are perfect wholes as admirable in the structure of their thought, as in their language and in their rhythms.

As to the interpretation of the Veda, the ancient Indian scholarship is the available resource. Even in the earlier days, the ritualistic view of the Veda was already dominant. The original sense of the words, the lines, the allusions, the clue to the structure of the thought had been long lost or obscured. The scholars seeking their interpretation have not had either the intuition or the spiritual experience in the absence of which the lost secret cannot be retrieved. In this arena, mere learning, especially of a scholastic mind, is of no avail.

The lexicon of Yaksha is the most important help. When Yaksha gives, as a lexicographer, the various meanings of Vedic words, his authority is great and his help is of the first importance. It may be that his lexicon does not possess all the ancient significances, for many have been obliterated over a period of time. In the absence of scientific Philology, they may not be restored. But whatever has been preserved by tradition without the intervention of a grammarian, the meanings assigned to the words therein, though not always applicable to the text to which reference is made, can be confirmed as possible senses by a sound philology.

But Yaksha the etymologist does not rank with Yaksha the lexicographer. Indian learning first developed scientific grammar; but we owe the beginnings of sound philology to modern research. Mere ingenuity in the use of etymology is only fanciful. Yaksha is of no use in the arena of etymology. He is also not convincing in the interpretation of particular texts.

The commentary of Sayana closes the period of original scholastic work on the Veda, which Yaksha's Nirukta, among other important authorities, may be said to open. The lexicon was compiled in the earlier vigour of the Indian mind when it was assembling its prehistoric gains as materials of originality, while the commentary is almost the last great work of the kind left to us by the classical tradition. Since then there have been only scattered attempts at original work. But work of quite this general, massive and monumental character has hardly become possible.

The merits of the great legacy of the past are obvious. The commentary of Sayana, composed with the aid of the most learned scholars of his time, is a work of enormous labour of erudition. It bears the stamp of the coordinating mind. It is consistent in the mass in spite of many inconsistencies of detail. It is the result of detailed planning, lucid in style, and possessed of great literary grace. There is no display of any pedantry. The struggle with the difficulties of the text is skillfully veiled. There is an acute assumption of authority in the manner of presentation.

'Yet, even for the external sense of the Veda, it is not possible to follow either Sayana's method or his results without the largest reservation,' in the words of Sri Aurobindo. Sayana admits of licenses of language and construction, which are incredible and unnecessary, in his method. There is an inconsistency in his interpretation of common Vedic terms and even of fixed Vedic formulae. These are defects of detail, may be unavoidable in the context of the material handled.

But the central defect of the system of Sayana is that he is obsessed always by the ritualistic formula, and seeks continually to force the sense of the Veda into that narrow mould. So he loses many clues of the greatest suggestiveness and importance for the external sense of the ancient scriptures. This is true of its internal sense, too. The outcome is a representation of the Rishis, their thoughts, their culture, their aspirations so narrow and poverty-stricken that, if accepted, it renders the ancient reverence for the Veda, its sacred authority and its divine reputation quite incomprehensible to any reason. Alternatively, on the other hand, it can only be explained as a blind and unquestioning tradition of faith starting from an original error.

Sayana and his scholars had to work upon a great mass of often-conflicting speculation and tradition, which still survived from the past. They had to overlook some elements, or grant concessions to others. Anyway the firm shape and consistence of interpretation could be possible owing to the skill of Sayana in handling the disparate and otherwise confusing material on hand.

The first element with which Sayana had to deal was the remnant of the old spiritual, philosophical or psychological interpretations of the *Sruti*, which were the true foundation of its sanctity. So far as these had entered into the current conception, Sayana admits them. But they form an exceptional element in his work, though insignificant in bulk and in importance.

Occasionally, he makes a passing mention or concession to less current psychological renderings. For instance, he mentions an old interpretation of Vritra as the Coverer who holds back from man the objects of his desire and his aspirations, though he does not admit it. For Sayana, Vritra is either simply the enemy or the physical cloud-demon who holds back the waters, and has to be pierced by the Rain-giver.

The second element is the mythological or the Puranic – myths and stories of the gods given in their outward form, without delving deep into their sense and symbolic facts. There is reason to suppose that Purana and Itihasa were parts of Vedic culture long before the present forms of the Puranas and historical ethics were evolved. Sayana handles them cursorily.

The third element is the legendary and historic, the stories of old Kings and Rishis, given in the Brahmanas, or by later tradition in explanation of the obscure allusions of the Veda. There seems to be some kind of hesitation in his dealings with this element. Often he accepts them as the right interpretation of the hymns. Sometimes he gives an alternative sense, more out of intellectual sympathy for them. He appears to waver between the two authorities.

The element of naturalistic interpretation is more important. There are the obvious or the traditional identifications as in the case of Indra, the Maruts, the triple Agni, Surya, Usha, etc. We also find that Mitra is identified with the Day, Varuna with the Night, Aryaman and Bhaga with the Sun, the Ribhus with its rays. The seeds of the naturalistic theory are laid here. This element in the

commentary of Sayana is the true parent of the European Science of Comparative Mythology.

But it is the ritualistic conception that pervades in his commentary. That is the persistent note in which all others lose themselves. For him, the hymns are principally and fundamentally concerned with the *Karmakanda*, with works. By works is understood, preeminently, the ritualistic observance of the Vedic sacrifices. Sayana always labours in the light of this idea. He turns the mass of the characteristic words of the hymns into ritualistic significances.

For instance, wealth and food are the most egoistic and materialistic objects that are proposed as the aim of the sacrifice. Similar are possessions, strength, power, children, servants, gold, horses, cows, victory, the slaughter and the plunder of enemies, etc. Hymn after hymn is interpreted in this sense. It looks as though that all the flowery teachings of the Veda are devoted solely to material wealth, power and enjoyment.

It is the authoritative binding of the Veda to this lowest of all its possible senses that has been the most unfortunate result of Sayana's commentary. The dominance of the ritualistic interpretation had already deprived India of the living use of its greatest Scripture, and of the true clue to the entire sense of the Upanisads. Sayana's commentary put a seal of finality on the old misunderstanding, which could not be broken for many centuries.

In spite of the inadequacies listed above, his commentary is yet indispensable for opening the antechambers of Vedic learning. At every step, it becomes necessary to refer to it, though differ from it. It is indeed the springboard that opens the way to the clue to the Veda, though it does not lead to it.

## 18 The Symbolism in Rigveda

## 04

### Modern Theories

It is the European scholarship of the Veda that has questioned the final authoritativeness fixed by Sayana on the ritualistic interpretation of the Veda. The European scholarship is labourious, bold in speculation, ingenious in its flights of fancy, but totally ill-fitted to understand the method of the old mystic poets. It has had no clue, in its own intellectual or spiritual environment, to the ideas hidden in the Vedic figures and parables. This has resulted in a free handling of the problems of Vedic interpretation on one hand and the complete obscuration of its true and inner secret on the other.

The Vedic scholarship of Europe has founded itself on the traditional elements preserved in the commentary of Sayana, and not attempted an independent handling of the problem. By ingenious methods of etymology and speculation, it has built up a complete theory of Vedic mythology, Vedic history, Vedic civilization the edifice of which has been founded, though concealed, for the most part, on conjecture.

The modern theory of the Veda, therefore, starts with the conception, for which Sayana is responsible, being hymnal of an early, primitive and largely barbaric society crude in its moral and religious concepts. The European scholarship has considered the ritualism, which Sayana accepted as part of a divine knowledge, as an elaboration of the old savage propitiatory sacrifices offered to imaginary superhuman personalities.

The obvious identification of the Vedic gods in their external aspects with certain Nature-Powers is used as a starting point for a comparative study of Aryan mythologies. This way the Vedic Hymnology has come to be interpreted as a half-superstitious, half-poetic allegory of Nature with an important astronomical element. The rest is partly contemporary history, partly the formulae and practices of a sacrificial ritualism, not mystic, but merely primitive and superstitious. According to this theory, the Vedic Indians belonged to the so-called Aryan race, a set of northern barbarians who broke in from their colder climes in the North into the rich civilization of the Dravidian India.



But the Veda does not contain any indications on which this theory of a recent Aryan invasion is built. There is no actual mention of any such invasion at all. The distinction between the Aryan and the un-Aryan seems, on the mass of the evidence, to indicate a cultural rather than a racial difference. The language of the hymns clearly points to a particular worship or spiritual culture as the distinguishing sign of the Aryan. It is worship of Light and of the powers of the Light, and self-discipline based on the culture of the 'Truth' and the aspiration to Immortality – *Ritam* and *Amritam*. There is no reliable indication of any racial difference.

It is always possible that the bulk of the peoples now inhabiting the Indian subcontinent may have been the descendents of a new race from more northern latitudes, even the Arctic regions; but there is nothing in the Veda or in the present ethnological features of the Indian race to prove that this descent took place near to the time of the Vedic hymns, or was the slow penetration of a small body of fair-skinned barbarians into a civilized Dravidian peninsula.

Nor is it a certain conclusion that the early Aryan cultures including the Indian were really undeveloped and barbarous. A certain pure and high simplicity in their outward life and its organization, in certain concreteness and vivid human familiarity in their conception of, and relations with, the gods they worshipped, distinguish the Aryan type from the more materialistic Egypto-Chaldean civilization and its occult religions.

But those characteristics of the Aryan cultures are not inconsistent with a high internal culture. On the contrary, there are indications of a great spiritual tradition at many points, and negate the ordinary theory. The old Celtic races including the Indian race certainly possessed some of the highest philosophical conceptions. They preserve the result of an early mystic and intuitional development, which must have been highly evolved at that time to retain its traces to this day.

In keeping with this truth, it can be said that the Indian civilization has throughout been the prolongation of tendencies and ideas sown in us by the Vedic forefathers. The extraordinary vitality of these early cultures which still determine for us the principal types of modern man, the main elements of his

temperament, the chief tendencies of his thought, art and religion can have proceeded from no primitive savagery. They are the result of the deep and puissant prehistoric development.

We must recognize that the old religions were organic systems founded on ideas, which were as coherent as those, which constitute our modern systems of belief. We are also to recognize that there has been a perfectly intelligible progressive development from the earlier to the later systems of religious creed and of philosophical thought. It is only by studying the data widely and profoundly in this spirit, and discovering the true evolution of human thought and belief that we shall arrive at real knowledge.

The mere identification of Greek and Sanskrit names, and the ingenious discoveries such as the Heracles' pyre being an image of the setting sun, and that Paris and Helen being Greek corruptions of the Vedic Panis and Sarama, make an interesting reading, but may be of no use, even if they are true. It is by the imaginative and fragmentary method by which the sun and star myth interpretations are built up. Such myths can be applied convincingly to any human tradition, acceptable to a layman. For instance, a great scholar states that the Christ and his twelve apostles are the sun and the twelve months. The career of Napoleon is said to be the most perfect Sun-myth in all legend or history. All these methods lead us nowhere.

Comparative Philology can be an aid. But it has not so far been able to create a Science of Language and is still based on conjectures. But a conjectural Science is no science at all. In this background, Philology, imperfect as it is, may be a brilliant aid, but can never be a sure guide to the sense of the Veda.

It is not possible to compare Vedic scholarship related to the search of truth on the lines of physical sciences. There is an enormous gulf between the two approaches. The physical sciences are scrupulous and exact, while the Vedic scholarship relies on immature branches of learning, though brilliant. The physical sciences are careful of their foundation, slow to generalize and solid in their conclusions. On the other hand, the Vedic scholarship is compelled to build upon scanty data, large and sweeping theories, and supply the deficiency of sure indications by an excess of conjecture and hypothesis. It has brilliant beginnings,

but can come to no secure conclusions. It is in the nature of scaffolding for a Science, but not a Science as yet.

It follows that the problem of interpretation of the Veda still remains an open field in which any contribution that could throw light upon the problem should be welcome. Three such contributions have proceeded from Indian scholars. Mr. Tilak, in his *Arctic Home in the Vedas*, has accepted the general conclusions of European scholarship. But by a fresh examination of the Vedic Dawn, the figure of the Vedic cows and the astronomical data of the hymns, he has established a strong probability that the Aryan races descended originally from the Arctic regions in the glacial period.

Mr. P. Paramasiva Aiyar, in his book *The Riks*, has attempted to prove that the whole of the Rig-veda is a figurative representation of the geological phenomena belonging to the new birth of our planet after its long-continued glacial death in the same period of terrestrial evolution. It may be difficult to accept Mr. Aiyar's reasoning and conclusions in their mass, but he has thrown a new light on the great Vedic mythus of Ahi Vritra and the release of the seven rivers. His interpretation is far more consistent and probable than the current theory, which is not borne out by the language of the hymns.

If the work of Mr. Aiyar is taken in conjunction with the work of Mr. Tilak, it may serve as the basis for a new external interpretation of the old Scripture, which will explain much that is otherwise now inexplicable. It may recreate for us the physical origins, if not the actual physical environment of the old Aryan world.

The third Indian contribution is by Swami Dayananda, the founder of the Arya Samaj, to reestablish the Veda as a living religious Scripture. Dayananda took, as his basis, a free use of the old Indian philology, which he found in the Nirukta. A great scholar in Sanskrit himself, Dayananda handled his materials with remarkable power and independence. His use of that peculiar feature of the old Sanskrit tongue – the 'multi-significance of roots' in the words of Sayana – was creative. The right following of this clue is of great importance for understanding the peculiar method of the Vedic Rishis.

Dayananda's interpretation of the hymns is governed by the idea that the Veda sakhas are a plenary revelation of religious, ethical and scientific truth. Its religious teaching is monotheistic; and the Vedic gods are different descriptive names of one Deity. They are, at the same time, indications of His powers as we see them working in Nature. By a true understanding of the sense of the Veda, it is possible, according to him, to arrive at all the scientific truths, which have been discovered by modern research.

It may be rather difficult to establish such a theory. The Rig-veda itself asserts that gods are only different names and expressions of one universal Being who, in His own reality, transcends the universe (I.164.46). But from the language in the hymns, we perceive in the gods not only different names, but different forms, powers and personalities of the one Deity. The monotheism of the Veda includes in itself all the monistic, pantheistic and even polytheistic views of the cosmos. It is by no means the simple creed of modern Theism. It is indeed a great effort to arrive at a less complex aspect from the text of the Veda.

That the ancient races were far more advanced in the physical sciences, than is as yet recognized, calls for admission. The Egyptians and Chaldeans, it is now known, had discovered much that has since been rediscovered by modern Science and much also that has not been rediscovered. The ancient Indians were great astronomers, and were always skillful physicians. The Hindu medicine and chemistry do not seem to have had any foreign origin. It is possible that, in other branches of physical knowledge also, they were advanced even in the early times. It is, however, to be said that the completeness of scientific revelation asserted by Dayananda will need considerable proof.

Sri Aurobindo makes a hypothesis that the Veda has a double aspect, and that the two, though closely related, must be kept apart. According to him, the Rishis arranged the substance of their thought in a system of parallelism by which the same deities were at once internal and external Powers of universal Nature, and they managed its expression through a system of double values by which the same language served for their worship in both aspects. But the psychological sense predominates, and is more pervading, close-knit and coherent than the physical. The Veda is primarily intended to serve for spiritual enlightenment and self-culture. It is, therefore, this sense, which has first to be restored.

To seek to interpret the Veda in this method, it needs the assistance of the ancient and the modern systems of interpretation. Sayana and Yaksha provide the ritualistic framework of outward symbols, and their large store of traditional significances and explanations. The Upanisads give their clue to the psychological and the philosophical ideas of the earlier Rishis, and relate to us their method of spiritual experience and intuition. The European scholarship supplies a critical method of comparative research, which, though yet to be perfected, is most likely to give a scientific certainty and firm intellectual basis for the interpretation.

Dayananda has given the clue to the linguistic secret of the Rishis and reemphasized one central idea of the Vedic religion, the idea of the one Being, with the Devas expressing, in numerous names and forms, the many-sidedness of His unity.

## 05

**The Psychological Theory**

Any hypothesis of the sense of the Veda is to emerge in the language of the Veda itself. Even though the bulk of the substance of the Veda is in symbols and figures, we should find clear indications in the explicit language of the hymns to guide us to that sense. The symbols are in themselves ambiguous. Unless we find the indications in the language of the hymns, there is the danger of creating a system out of our imagination like a building in the air, without any reality or solidity.

It is necessary to determine whether there is, apart from figure and symbol, in the clear language of the hymns, a sufficient kernel of psychological notions to justify us in supposing a higher sense of the Veda than is generally conceived. Thereafter, we have to find, from the internal evidence of the Suktas themselves, the interpretation of each symbol and image, and the right psychological function of each of the gods.

It is, therefore, necessary to find a firm sense for each of the fixed terms of the Veda founded on good philological justification, and fitting naturally into the context. For, the language of the hymns is fixed and invariable. It is the carefully preserved and scrupulously respected diction, consistently expressing either a formal creed and ritual, or a traditional doctrine and constant experience.

If the language of the Vedic Rishis was free and variable, and if their ideas were in a state of flux, we could justify incoherence in the sense of the hymns. But the hymns themselves, on the very face of them, bear exactly the contrary testimony. The interpreter is, therefore, to demonstrate his fidelity and scrupulousness as in the original he interprets. There is obviously a constant relation between the different notions and cherished terms of the Vedic religion. Any incoherence and uncertainty in the interpretation will only establish that the interpreter has failed to discover the right relations.

If the hymns, in their entirety, give us a clear and connected sense, and the successive verses show a logical succession of related thoughts, and if the result

as a whole is a profound, consistent and antique body of doctrines, then the method will have a right of acceptance for interpretation of the Veda.

It is necessary to attribute natural psychological significance to many ordinary and current words of the Veda without reference to the commentary of Sayana to start with. For instance, the understanding of the common words of the Veda such as *dhi* as thought or understanding, *manas* as mind, *mati* as thought, feeling or mental state, *manisaa* as intellect, *rtam* as truth, *kavi* as seer, *manisi* as thinker, *vipra* or *vipascit* as enlightened in mind, etc will bring to bear a psychological sense on the hymns. The psychological theory of the Veda rests upon our ability to concede their natural significance to these vocables.

Sayana gives to the words *dhi*, *rtam*, etc very variable significances. *Rtam* is almost the keyword of any psychological or spiritual interpretation. Sayana renders it sometimes as 'truth', sometimes as 'sacrifice' and occasionally in the sense of water. The psychological interpretation gives it invariably the sense of truth. Similarly, Sayana renders *dhi* variously as thought, prayer, action, food, etc. The psychological interpretation gives it consistently the sense of thought or understanding. So is the case with the other fixed words of the Veda.

Further Sayana's tendency is to obliterate all fine shades and distinctions between words, and to give them their most vague general significance. All epithets conveying ideas of mental activity mean for him simply 'intelligent'. Similarly, all words suggesting various ideas of force, and the Veda is full of them, are, for him, mere 'strength'.

It is important to fix and preserve the right shade of meaning and precise association to be given to different words. We should suppose that the Vedic Rishis used words giving them their right and exact force in the verbal combination.

If one follows this method of giving natural and straightforward sense to words and clauses, one comes across an extraordinarily large body not only of separate verses, but also of entire passages, altering the very character of the Veda.

This Scripture then appears to have a constant vein of the richest gold of thought and spiritual experience running all through it, one way or the other, in

the majority of the hymns. 'Besides the words that, in their plain and ordinary sense, give at once a wealth of psychological significance to their context, the Veda is full of others to which it is possible to give either an external and material, or an internal and psychological value according to our conception of the general purport of the Veda', in the words of Sri Aurobindo.

For instance, words such as *raaye*, *rayi*, *raadhas*, *ratna* may mean either merely material prosperity and riches, or internal felicity and plenitude applying itself equally to the subjective and the objective world. *Dhana*, *vaaja*, *posa* may mean respectively objective wealth, plenty and increase of all possessions internal and external, their plenitude and their growth in the life of the individual. *Raaye* is used in the Upanisads, in a quotation from the Rig-veda, meaning spiritual felicity. It should be understood in the same sense in the original text, too. *Vaaja* occurs frequently in a context in which every other word has a psychological significance. If it were to mean 'physical plenty', it sets in incoherence into the homogenous totality of the thought. It is, therefore, necessary that the use of these words with psychological import should be admitted in the Veda.

If this is done consistently, it is seen that not only whole verses and passages, but also whole hymns assume at once the psychological complexion. This transformation is frequently complete, leaving no word or phrase unaffected, on the condition that we admit the symbolic character of the Vedic sacrifice. We find in the Bhagavad-Gita the word *yajna*, sacrifice, used in a symbolic sense for all action, whether internal or external, that is consecrated to the gods or to the Supreme.

In the Veda itself there are hymns in which the idea of the *yajna* or of the victim is openly symbolical, and others in which the veil is rather transparent. There is a constant recurrence of psychological passages in the Veda. The whole hymns naturally take a psychological sense, proceeding with a perfect and luminous coherence from verse to verse. The only points of obscurity in them may be the mention of the sacrifice, or of the offering, or, sometimes, of the officiating priest, who might be either a man or a god. If these words can be interpreted symbolically, one finds the progression of thought more perfect, more luminous, and more coherent. The sense of the hymn is complete in its entirety.



The real difficulty now arises in symbolic interpretation. While proceeding in the straightforward and natural method of interpretation based on the surface meaning of the words and sentences, there arises a need where the surface meaning has, in a sense, to be overridden to arrive at the psychological interpretation. One is never sure, even with the utmost care, of having it on the right clue, and the just interpretation.

The Vedic sacrifice consists of three features, besides the god and the mantra. They are the persons who offer, the offering and the fruits of the offering. If the *yajna* is the action consecrated to the gods, one is to take the *yajnamaana*, the giver of the sacrifice, as the doer of the action. *Yajna* is works, internal and external; and the *yajnamaana* must be the soul or the personality as the doer. But there are also the officiating priests – *hotaa*, *rtviz*, *purohita*, *brahmaa*, *adhvaryu*, etc.

If we suppose a symbolic sense for the sacrifice, we must suppose also a symbolic value for each feature of the ceremony. The gods are continually spoken of as priests of the offering. In many passages, it is a non-human power or energy, which presides over the sacrifice, undisguised. Further, throughout the Veda, the elements of our personality are themselves continually personified.

Sri Aurobindo explains the manner of understanding the psychological significance of the hymns in relation to the sacrifice thus: 'I had only to apply this rule inversely and to suppose that the person of the priest in the external figure represented, in the internal activities figured, a non-human power or energy or an element of our personality. It remained to fix the psychological sense of the different priestly offices. Here I found that the Veda itself presented a clue by its philological indications and insistences, such as the use of the word *purohita* in its separated form with the sense of the representative 'put in front' and a frequent reference to the god Agni who symbolizes the divine Will or Force in humanity that takes up the action in all consecration of works.'

The offerings are more difficult to understand. Even the *Soma-wine*, by the context in which it occurs, its use and effect, and the philological indication of its synonyms suggest its own interpretation. What can possibly be indicated by the word *ghrtam*, the clarified butter in the sacrifice? This word as used in the Veda constantly insists on its own symbolic significance.

This word *ghrtam* is used in the context of clarified butter dropping from heaven, or dripping from the horses of Indra, or dripping from the mind. Sri Aurobindo finds that the word *ghrta* is constantly used in connection with the thought or the mind, that heaven in the Veda is symbol of the mind, that Indra represents the illuminated mentality, and his two horses represent double energies of that mentality. Even the Veda sometimes speaks plainly of offering the intellect (*dhisanaa*) as purified *ghrta*, to the gods – *ghrtam na putam dhisanaam* (III.2.1). The word *ghrta* counts also, among its philological significances, the sense of a rich or warm brightness. This concurrence of indication justifies in fixing a certain psychological significance for the figure of the clarified butter.

Further, the fruits of the offering are, in appearance, purely material such as cows, horses, gold, offspring, men, physical strength, victory in battle. The difficulty in interpretation of the fruits of the offering can be resolved if the Vedic cow, for instance, is considered an exceedingly enigmatic animal and is of no earthly herd. The word *go* means both cow and light. In a number of passages in the Veda, the word means light, even while putting forward the image of the cow.

This becomes clear when we have to deal with the cows of the Sun – the Homeric kine of Helios and the cows of the Dawn. Psychologically, the physical light may well be used as symbol of knowledge, especially of the divine knowledge. The environment of the passages in which the image of the cow interferes with its obtrusive material suggestion is only psychological, in their context.

For instance, a passage runs thus: 'Indra is invoked as the maker of perfect forms to drink the wine of Soma. So drinking, he becomes full of ecstasy and a 'giver of cows'. Then we can attain to his most ultimate right thinking, and his clear discernment brings us our highest good.'

It is obvious that in such a passage, the cows cannot be material herds, nor would the giving of physical light carry any sense in the context. The phrase 'giver of cows' is, therefore, open to interpretation that Indra becomes the giver of divine knowledge. Similar interpretation wherever the word 'cows' occurs results in the best sense and the greatest possible coherence in the context.

The cow and horse – *go* and *asva* – are constantly associated. Usha, the Dawn is described as *gomati asvavati*; and the Dawn gives to the sacrificer horses and cows. The Dawn cannot be physical dawn; and *gomati* means accompanied by or bringing the rays of light. It is an image of the dawn of illumination in the human mind. Therefore, *asvavati* also cannot refer merely to the physical steed. It must have a psychological significance as well. Sri Aurobindo interprets that *go* and *asva* represent the two companion ideas of Light and Energy, Consciousness and Force, which, to the Vedic and the Vedantic mind, are the double or the twin aspect of all the activities of existence.

It is, therefore, apparent that the two chief fruits of the Vedic sacrifice, the wealth of cows and the wealth of horses are symbolic of richness of mental illumination and abundance of vital energy. It follows that the other fruits continually associated with these two chief results of the Vedic karma must also be capable of psychological significance. What remains is to fix their exact purport.

Another important feature of the Vedic symbolism is the system of the worlds and the functions of the gods. Sri Aurobindo states that he finds the clue to the symbolism of the worlds in the Vedic conception of the *vyaahrtis*, the three symbolic words of the mantra, *om bhuur bhuvah svah*, and in the connection of the fourth *vyaahrti*, *Mahas*, with the psychological term *rtam*.

The Rishis speak of three cosmic divisions, Earth, the *Antariksa* or middle region, and Heaven (*dyau*). But there is a greater Heaven (*brhad dyau*) also called the Wide World, the Vast (*brhat*), and typified sometimes as the Great Water, *Maho-arnah*. This *brhat* is again described as *rtam brhat* or in a triple term *satyam rtam brhat*. And as the three worlds correspond to the *vyaahritis*, so this fourth world of the Vastness and the Truth seems to correspond to the fourth *vyaahriti* mentioned in the Upanisads, *Mahas*. In the Puranic formula, these four are complemented by three others, *Jana*, *Tapas* and *Satya*, the three supreme worlds of the Hindu cosmology.

In the Veda also we have three supreme worlds whose names are not given. But in the Vedantic and Puranic system, the seven worlds correspond to seven psychological principles or forms of existence, namely, *Sat*, *Chit*, *Ananda*, *Vijnana*,

*Manas, Praana and Anna*. Now *Vijnana*, the central principle, the principle of *Mahas*, the Great World, is the Truth of things, identical with the Vedic *rtam*, which is the principle of *brhat*, the Vast. While in the Puranic system, *Mahas* is followed in the ascending order by *Jana*, the world of *Ananda*, of the divine Bliss, in the Veda also *rtam*, the Truth, leads upward to *Mayas*, Bliss.

Therefore, we may be fairly certain that the two systems are identical and that both depend on the same idea of seven principles of subjective consciousness formulating themselves in seven objective worlds. On this principle, Sri Aurobindo says that he is able to identify the Vedic worlds with the corresponding psychological planes of consciousness.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the central idea of the Vedic Rishis is the transition of the human soul from the state of death to a state of immortality by the exchange of the Falsehood for the Truth, of divided and limited being for integrality and infinity. Death is the mortal state of Matter with Mind and Life involved in it. Immortality is a state of infinite being, consciousness and bliss. Man rises beyond the two firmaments, *rodasi*, Heaven and Earth, mind and body, to the infinity of the Truth, *Mahas*, and so to the divine Bliss. This is the 'great passage' discovered by the ancient Rishis.

The ancient Rishis describe the gods as children of Light, sons of Aditi, of Infinity. Without exception, the gods are described 'as increasing man, bringing him light, pouring on him the fullness of the waters, the abundance of the heaven, increasing the truth in him, building up the divine worlds, leading him against all attacks to the great goal, the integral felicity, the perfect bliss', in the words of Sri Aurobindo. Their separate functions are due to their activities, their epithets, the psychological sense of the legends connected with them, the indications of the Upanisads and Puranas, the occasional sidelights from Greek myth.

On the other hand, the demons that oppose the gods are all powers of division and limitation - Coverers, Tearers, Devourers, Confiners, Dualisers, and Obstructers. As the names indicate, they are powers that work against the free and unified integrality of the being.

These Vritras, Panis, Atris, Rakshasas, Sambara, Vala, Namuchi, etc are not Dravidian kings and gods as some people presume them to be. They represent a more antique idea better suited to the religious and the ethical preoccupations of our forefathers. They represent the struggle between the powers of the higher Good and the lower desire.

Incidentally, this conception in the Rig-veda, with the same opposition of the good and evil, is expressed, with less psychological subtlety and more ethical directness, in the scriptures of the Zoroastrians. They happen to be our ancient neighbours and kindred. Probably these conceptions proceeded from a common original discipline of an Aryan culture.

Further, the systematic symbolism of the Rig-veda extends to the legends related to the gods and of their dealings with the ancient seers. Some of these myths may have had a naturalistic and astronomical origin. But, then, their original sense may have been supplemented by a psychological symbolism.

Once the sense of the Vedic symbols is known, the spiritual intention of these illusions becomes apparent and inevitable. Every element of the Veda is inextricably bound up with every other. Once we adopt a principle of interpretation, the very nature of these compositions compels us to carry it to its farthest rational limits. We then find that their materials have been skillfully welded together by firm hands. Any inconsistency in our handling them shatters the whole fabric of their sense and their coherent thinking.

If the above method is adopted, according to Sri Aurobindo, what emerges of the ancient verses of the Rig-veda is a Veda, which is 'throughout the Scripture of a great and antique religion already equipped with a profound psychological discipline, a Scripture not confused in thought or primitive in its substance, not a medley of heterogeneous or barbarous elements, but one, complete and self-conscious in its purpose and in its purport, veiled indeed by the cover, sometimes thick, sometimes transparent, of another and material sense but never losing sight for a single moment of its high spiritual aim and tendency.'

## 06

**The Philological Method**

No interpretation of the Veda can be sound which does not rest on a sound and secure philological basis. Yet this Scripture with its obscure and antique tongue offers unique difficulties. It is not possible to rely entirely on the traditional and often imaginative renderings of the Indian scholars alone. Modern philology seeks a more secure and scientific basis for interpretation.

In the psychological interpretation of the Veda, there are two difficulties, which can only be met by a satisfactory philological justification. This interpretation necessitates the acceptance of several new senses for a fair number of fixed technical terms of the Veda such as *uti*, *avas*, *vayas*. These new renderings fit in every context, clarify the sense and free us from the necessity of attributing quite different significances to the same term of the Veda. But this alone is not sufficient.

It is necessary to have a philological basis, which will not only account for the new sense, but also explain how a single word came to be capable of so many different meanings, the sense attached to it by the psychological interpretation, those given to it by the old grammarians and those, if any, which are attached to it in later Sanskrit. But this is not easily possible unless we find a more scientific basis for our philological deductions.

Secondly, the theory of the psychological interpretation depends very often on the use of a double meaning for important words, the key words of the secret teaching. The figure is one that is traditional in Sanskrit literature and another, sometimes, employed with an excess of artifice in the later classical works. But its very artificiality predisposes us to believe that this poetic device must belong necessarily to a later and more sophisticated culture. How are we to account for its constant presence in a work of the remote antiquity?

Further, there is a peculiar extension of it in the Vedic use known as the 'multi-significance' of Sanskrit roots in order to pack as much meaning as possible into a single word. This, at first sight, enhances the difficulty of the problems very considerably.

For instance, the word, *asva*, usually signifying a horse, is used as a figure of the *Praana*, the nervous energy, the vital breath, the half-mental, half-material dynamism, which links mind and matter. Its root is capable, among other senses, of the ideas of impulsion, force, possession and enjoyment. We find all these meanings united in this figure of the Steed of Life, to indicate the essential tendencies of the *Praanic* energy. Such a use of language would not be possible if the tongue of the Aryan forefathers obeyed the same conventions as our modern speech, or were in the same stage of development.

Sri Aurobindo explains the manner of understanding the Aryan tongue thus: 'If we can suppose that there was some peculiarity in the old Aryan tongue as it was used by the Vedic Rishis by which words were felt to be more alive, less merely conventional symbols of ideas, more free in their transitions of meaning than in our later use of speech, then we shall find that these devices were not at all artificial or far-fetched to their employers, but were rather the first natural means which would suggest themselves to men anxious at once to find new, brief and adequate formulae of speech for psychological conceptions not understood by the vulgar and to conceal the ideas contained in their formulae from a profane intelligence.' He believes that the Aryan 'language did pass through a stage peculiarly favourable to this cryptic and psychological use of words, which, in their popular handling, have a plain, precise and physical significance.'

Philology, as a Science of Language, stresses that whatever may be the deeper nature of Speech, in its outward manifestation as human language, it is an organism, a growth, and a terrestrial evolution. It contains indeed a constant psychological element, and is, therefore, more free, flexible, consciously self-adaptive than purely physical organisms.

Its secret is more difficult to seize; and its constituents yield themselves only to a subtler and less trenchant methods of analysis. But law and process exist in mental no less than in material phenomena, in spite of their more volatile and variable appearances. Law and process must have governed the origins and developments of language. They must be discoverable if there is necessary clue and sufficient data. It is possible to find the clue in the Sanskrit language and the data is already on hand for investigation.

The error of Philology, which prevents it in arriving at satisfactory results, is its preoccupation in the physical parts of speech as well as its psychological parts. In the physical parts of speech, its preoccupation is with the exterior morphology of language. In its psychological parts, it is with the equally external connections of formed vocables and of grammatical inflexions in kindred languages. But the true method of Science is to go back to the origins, the embryology, the elements and more obscure processes of things.

From the obvious, only the obvious and the superficial result. 'The profundities of things, their real truth can best be discovered by penetration into the hidden things that the surface of phenomena conceals, into that past development of which the finished forms present only secret and dispersed indications or into the possibilities from which the actualities we see are only a narrow selection. A similar method applied to the earlier forms of human speech can alone give us a real Science of Language.'

According to Sri Aurobindo, words like plants and animals are, in no sense, artificial products. They are living growths of sound with certain seed-sounds as their basis. Out of these seed-sounds develop a small number of primitive root-words with an immense progeny. These root-words have their successive generations and arrange themselves in tribes, clans, families, selective groups, each having a common stock and a common psychological history.

The one factor, which is responsible for the development of language, is the association, at the initial stage, of certain general significances or rather general utilities and sense values with articulate sounds. The process of this association is not artificial, but natural, governed by simple and definite psychological laws.

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

To use Vedic symbols, Agni and Vayu, not Indra, were the original artificers of human language. Mind has emerged out of vital and sensational activities. Intellect in man has built itself upon a basis of sense-associations and sense-reactions. By a similar process, the intellectual use of language has developed by a natural law out of the sensational and emotional. Words were originally vital



ejections of a vague sense-potentiality. But they have evolved into fixed symbols of precise intellectual significances.

In retrospect, we find that the word originally was not fixed to any precise idea. It had a general character or quality. It was capable of a great number of applications and, therefore, of a great number of possible significances. And this quality and its results it shared with many kindred sounds.

At first, therefore, word-clans, word-families started life on the communal system with a common stock of possible and realized significances and a common right to all of them. Their individuality lay in shades of expression of the same ideas rather than in any exclusive right to the expression of a single idea.

The early history of language was a development from this communal life of words to a system of individual property in one or more intellectual significances. The principle of division or partition was fluid in the beginning. It increased in rigidity as time passed by. Word-families and finally single words began to start life on their own. This last stage of the growth of language comes when the life of the word is entirely subjected to the life of the idea it represents.

Thus, in the first state of language, the word is more a living force than its idea; and sound determines its sense. In its last state, the positions get reversed; the idea becomes all-important, the sound secondary.

There is another feature of the early history of language. At the early stage, the language expresses a remarkably small stock of ideas, which are the general notions and the most concrete such as light, motion, touch, substance, extension, force, speed, etc. As time passes by, there is gradual increase in variety and precision of idea. The progression is from the general to the particular, from the vague to the precise, from the physical to the mental, from the concrete to the abstract, from the expression of an abundant variety of sensations about similar things to the expression of precise differences between similar things, feelings and actions.

This progression is worked out by processes of association in ideas, which are always the same, and recurrent. These ideas also appear as fixed natural laws of development owing to the environment and actual experiences of the men who

speak the language. After all, a law is but a process that has been worked out by the nature of things in response to the necessities of their environment, and has become the fixed habit of their action.

From this past history of language certain consequences ensue, which are of considerable importance in Vedic interpretation. In the first place, it is possible, to a great extent, to restore the past history of the individual words by a knowledge of the laws under which the relations of sound and sense formed themselves in the Sanskrit tongue, and, secondly, by a careful and minute study of its word-families. It is possible to account for the meanings actually possessed by them, to show how they were worked out through the various stages of language development, to establish the mutual relations of different significances. It is possible to explain how they came to be attached to the same word in spite of wide difference and even the contrariness of their sense values. It is also possible to restore lost senses of words on a sure and scientific basis and to justify them to the secret evidence of the word itself, and to the corroborative evidence of its immediate kindred. It thus becomes possible to deal with the vocables of the Vedic language upon a solid and reliable foundation instead of basing on conjectures.

It does not, however, follow that because the Vedic word may or must have had, at one time, a particular significance, that significance can be safely applied to the actual text of the Veda. It only establishes a sound sense and a clear possibility of its being the right sense for the Veda. The rest is a matter for comparative study of the passages in which the word occurs and of its fitness in the context. It is possible that a sense so restored always illumines the context wherever it is applied. On the other hand, we may be led by the history of the word always to the context that the sense demands. This is a sufficient basis for a moral, if not for an absolute certainty.

Further, a remarkable feature of language in its inception is the enormous number of different meanings of which a single word was capable, and also the enormous number of words, which could be used to represent a single idea. This possibility gradually dwindles as the intellect intervenes with the growing need of precision and growing sense of economy. The bearing capacity of words progressively diminishes. It becomes less burdened with more words for the

same idea, and a variety of ideas for the same word, as the law of language gets perfected.

But the Sanskrit tongue never quite reached the final stages of this development. It dissolved too early into the Prakrit dialects. Even in its latest and most literary form, it is lavish of varieties of meanings for the same word. It overflows with a redundant wealth of synonyms. Even the latest Sanskrit language has an extraordinary capacity for rhetorical devices, which, in any other language, would be difficult. This capacity has rather forced, especially for the figure of double sense, artificial *slesa*.

The Vedic Sanskrit represents a still earlier stratum in the development of language. Even in its outward features, it is less fixed than any classical tongue. It abounds in a variety of forms and inflexions. It is fluid and vague, yet subtle in its use of its cases and tenses. On its psychological side, it has not yet crystallized, is not entirely hardened into the rigid forms of intellectual precision.

The word for the Vedic Rishi is still a living thing, a thing of power, creative and formative. It is not a conventional symbol for an idea, but itself the parent and former of ideas. It carries within it the memory of its roots, is still conscient of its own history.

The Rishis' use of language was governed by this ancient psychology of the Word. When we use the word cow or horse in English, we mean it simply by the animal designated. We are not conscious of any reason why we should use that particular sound for the idea except the immemorial custom of the language. Further we cannot use it for any other sense or purpose.

But, for the Vedic Rishi, the word *vrka* meant the tearer and, therefore, among other applications of the sense, a wolf. Similarly, the word *dhenu* meant the foster, nourisher, and, therefore, a cow. But the original and general sense predominates; and the derived and particular sense is only secondary.

It was, therefore, possible for the Vedic seer to use these common words in the hymns with a great pliability. He used the words to put forward sometimes the image of the wolf or the cow, sometimes using it to colour the more general sense, sometimes keeping it merely as a conventional figure for the psychological

conception on which his mind was dwelling, sometimes losing sight of the image altogether.

It is in the light of this psychology of the old language that we have to understand the peculiar figures of Vedic symbolism, as handled by the Rishis, even to the most apparently common and concrete. It is so that words like *ghrtam*, the clarified butter, *Soma*, the sacred wine and a host of others are used.

Also the divisions made by the thought between different senses of the same word were much less separative than in modern speech. In English, for instance, the word 'fleet' meaning a number of ships and the word 'fleet' meaning swift are two different words. When we use the first word in the sense of the number, we do not think of the swiftness of the ship in motion. Similarly, when we use the second word in the sense of swiftness, we do not think of the number.

This was precisely what was apt to occur in the Vedic use of language. *Bhaga*, enjoyment, and *bhaaga*, share, were, for the Vedic mind, not different words, but one word which had developed two different uses. It was, therefore, easy for the Rishis to employ it in one of the two senses, with the other at the back of the mind colouring its overt connotation, or even to use it equally in both senses at a time by a sort of figure of cumulative significance.

To take another example, *canas* meant food, but also meant enjoyment, pleasure. Therefore, the Vedic Rishi used it to suggest to the profane mind only the food given at the sacrifice to the gods, but for the initiated, it meant the *Ananda*, the joy of the divine bliss entering into the physical consciousness. Similarly, the image of the Soma-wine is at once food of the gods, and the Vedic symbol of the *Ananda*.

Sri Aurobindo says that 'we see everywhere this use of language dominating the Word of the Vedic hymns. It was the great device by which the ancient Mystics overcame the difficulty of their task'.

For example, Agni for the ordinary worshipper simply means the god of the Vedic fire, the principle of heat and light in physical nature; to the most ignorant, it means simply a superhuman personage, a satisfier of human desire, or one of the many 'givers of wealth'. On the other hand, for the initiated, as Agni meant the Strong, the Bright, even Force and Brilliance, it means the idea of the

illuminated Energy, which builds up the worlds and which exalts man to the Highest, the doer of the great work, the *Purohit* of the human sacrifice.

How do we know that all the gods that appear in the Veda are only personalities of the one universal Godhead? The names of the gods, in their very meaning, recall that they are only epithets, significant names, descriptions and not personal appellations. Mitra is the lord of love and harmony; Bhaga of enjoyment; Surya of illumination; Varuna of the all-pervading Vastness, and purity of the Divine supporting and perfecting the world.

The Rishi Dirghatamas says thus: 'The Existent is One, but the sages express It variously; they are Indra, Varuna, Mitra, Agni; they call It Agni, Yama, Matariswan' (I.164.46).

Incidentally it may be observed that in the earlier days, the initiate of Vedic knowledge had no need of such express statement. The names of the gods carried to him their own significance, and recalled the great fundamental truth, which remained with him always.

But in the later stages, the very device used by the Rishis turned against the preservation of the knowledge. For language changed its character, rejected its earlier pliability and shed off old familiar senses. The word rather shrank into concrete significance. The divine wine of Ananda was forgotten in the physical offering. The image of the clarified butter turned into gross libations to mythological deities devoid of anything but external luster. The letter of the hymn lived on and the spirit was forgotten. The symbol and the body of the doctrine remained, but the soul of knowledge had fled away.

## 07

**Agni and the Truth**

The Rig-veda is one in all its parts. It is the same substance, the same ideas, the same images and the same phrases in all its ten Mandalas. The Rishis are the seers of a single truth, and use, in its expression, a common language. They differ in temperament and personality. Some are inclined to a more rich, subtle and profound use of Vedic symbolism. Others give voice to their spiritual experience in simple diction, with less fertility of thought, richness of poetic image or depth and fullness of suggestion.

Often, the songs of one seer vary in their manner; they range from the utmost simplicity to the most curious richness. Or, there are risings and failings in the same hymn. It proceeds from the most ordinary conventions of the general symbol of sacrifice to a movement of packed and complex thought. Some of the Suktas are plain and almost modern in their language. Others carry the semblance of antique obscurity.

But all these differences of manner take nothing from the unity of spiritual experience. Nor are they complicated by any variation of the fixed terms and the common formulae. We have the same firm foundation of knowledge and the same scrupulous adherence to the sacred conventions of the Initiates in the renderings of all the seers, in spite of their striking variation in presentation.

The Samhita of the Rig-veda (Saakala sakha) is arranged in ten books or Mandalas. A double principle is observed in the arrangement. Six of the Mandalas are given each to the hymns of a single Rishi or a family of Rishi. Thus, the second Mandala is devoted chiefly to the Suktas of the Rishi Gritsamada, the third and the seventh similarly to the great names of Vishvamitra and Vasishtha respectively, the fourth to Vamadeva, and the sixth to Bharadwaja. The fifth is occupied by the hymns of the House of Atri.

In each of these Mandalas, the Suktas addressed to Agni are first collected together and followed by those of which Indra is the deity. The invocations of other gods, Brihaspati, Surya, the Ribhus, Usha, etc close the Mandala.

The ninth Mandala is given to a single god, Soma. The first, the eighth and the tenth Mandalas are collections of Suktas by various Rishis. But the hymns of each seer are ordinarily placed together in the order of their deities, Agni leading, Indra following and the other gods succeeding.

Thus, the first Mandala opens with ten hymns of the seer Madhuchchandas, son of Vishvamitra, and the eleventh ascribed to Jetri, son of Madhuchchandas. The eleventh Sukta is, however, identical in style, manner and spirit with the ten that precede it, and they can all be taken together as a single block of hymns, one in intention and diction.

A certain principle of thought-development appears present in the arrangement of these Vedic hymns. The opening Mandala seems to have been designed that the general thought of the Veda in its various elements should gradually unroll itself under the cover of the established symbols by the voices of a certain number of Rishis who rank high as thinkers. They are among the most famous names of the Vedic tradition.

It may not be by accident that the tenth Mandala gives us the last developments of the thought of the Veda, and some of the most modern in language of its Suktas. Besides, it has a great miscellany of authors. It is here that we find the Sacrifice of the Purusa and the great Hymn of the Creation. It is here also that modern scholars think they discover the first origins of the Vedantic philosophy, the Brahmavaada.

In any case, the hymns of the son and the grandson of Vishvamitra with which the Rig-veda opens strike admirably the first essential notes of the Vedic harmony. The first hymn, addressed to Agni, suggests the central conception of the Truth, which is confirmed in the second and third Suktas invoking Indra in company with other gods. In the remaining eight hymns with Indra as the sole deity, except for one which he shares with the Maruts, we find the symbols of the Soma and the Cow, the obstructor Vritra, and the great role played by Indra in leading man to the Light, and overthrowing the barriers to his progress. These hymns are, therefore, crucial to the psychological interpretation of the Veda.

There are four verses in the hymn to Agni, the fifth to the eighth in which the psychological sense comes out with great force and clarity.

*Agnir hotaa kavikratuh, satyascitrasravastamah,*

*devo devebhir aagamat.*

*Yad anga daasuse tvam, agne bhadram karisyasi,*

*tavet tat satyam angirah.*

*Upa tvaagne divedive, dosaavastar dhiyaa vayam,*

*namo bharanta emasi.*

*Raajantam adhvaraanaam, gopaam rtasya didivim,*

*vardhamaanam sve dame (I.1.5-8).*

In this passage, there is a series of terms plainly bearing or obviously capable of a psychological sense and giving their colour to the whole context. Sayana, however, insists on a purely ritual interpretation.

In the first phrase, there is the word *kavi* meaning a seer. Even if we take *kratu* to mean work of the sacrifice, what results is, 'Agni, the priest whose work or rite is that of the seer'. This gives a symbolic character to the sacrifice. It is in itself sufficient to serve as the seed of a deeper understanding of the Veda.

But Sayana feels that he has to turn the difficulty at any cost. He, therefore, gets rid of the sense of seer for *kavi* and gives it an unusual significance. He explains that Agni is *satya*, true, because he brings about the true fruit of the sacrifice. Sayana again renders *sravas* as 'fame', and Agni has an exceedingly various renown. If the word is taken in the sense of wealth, it avoids the incoherence. The result of the fifth verse will then be, 'Agni the priest, active in the ritual, who is true (in its fruit) – for his is the most varied wealth - let him come, a god with the gods.'

To the sixth verse (Rik), Sayana gives an abrupt construction and trivial turn of thought which breaks entirely the flow of the verse. 'That good (in the shape of varied wealth), which thou shalt effect for the giver, thine is that. That is true, O Angiras'. It means that if Agni does good to the giver by providing him with



wealth, he in turn will perform fresh sacrifices to Agni, and thus the good of the sacrificer becomes the good of the god. There can be no doubt about this fact.

But it would be better to render the verse thus: 'The good that thou wilt do for the giver, that is that truth of thee, O Angiras'. In this rendering, we get a simple sense and construction, and an explanation of the epithet, *satya*, true, as applied to the god of sacrificial fire. This is the truth of Agni that to the giver of the sacrifice he surely gives good in return.

The next (seventh) verse offers no difficulty to the ritualistic interpretation except the curious phrase, 'we come bearing the prostration'. Sayana explains that bearing here simply means doing. He renders it thus: 'To thee day by day we, by night and by day, come with the thought of performing the prostration.'

In the eighth verse, Sayana takes *rtasya* in the sense of truth and explains it as the true fruit of the ritual: 'To Thee, shining, protector of the sacrifices, manifesting always their truth (that is, their inevitable fruit), increasing in thy own house.' Here it may be simpler and better to take *rtam* in the sense of sacrifice and to render it thus: 'To Thee, shining out in the sacrifice, protector of the rite, ever luminous, increasing in thy own house.' According to Sayana, the 'own house' of Agni is the place of sacrifice and this is frequently referred to in Sanskrit, 'the house of Agni'.

We thus see that with a little managing, a purely ritual sense, empty of thought, arises even for a passage that offers a considerable wealth of psychological significance. However ingeniously it is effected, flaws and cracks remain betraying the artificiality of the work.

For the ritual interpretation, we have to throw overboard the plain sense of *kavi*, which adheres to it throughout the Veda, and foist in an unreal rendering. We have similarly either to divorce the two words *satya* and *rta*, which are closely associated in the Veda, or to give a forced sense to *rta*. All this is so, by avoiding the natural suggestions made by the language of the Rishi.

Let us see how it works if we follow the opposite principle and give full psychological value to the words of the inspired text.

*Kratu* means, in Sanskrit, work or action, and especially work in the sense of the sacrifice. It also means power or strength effective of action. Psychologically, this power effective of action is the will. The word may also mean mind or intellect. Even Sayana admits thought or knowledge as a possible sense for *kratu*.

Similarly, *sravas* means literally hearing. From this primary significance is derived its secondary sense 'fame'. But, psychologically, the idea of hearing leads up, in Sanskrit, to another sense, which we find in *sravana*, *sruti*, *sruta*, etc. All these relate to revealed knowledge, the knowledge, which comes by inspiration.

*Drsti* and *sruti*, sight and hearing, revelation and inspiration are the two chief powers of that supra-mental faculty, which belongs to the old Vedic idea of the Truth, the *rtam*. The lexicographers do not recognize the word *sravas* in this sense, but it is accepted in the sense of a hymn, the inspired word of the Veda.

This indicates clearly that at one time it conveyed the idea of inspiration or of something inspired, whether word or knowledge. We are entitled to give this significance, provisionally at least, in the present passage, as other sense of fame is entirely incoherent and meaningless in its context.

Again, the word *namas* is also capable of a psychological sense. Literally, it means 'bending down', and is applied to the act of 'adoring submission' to the deity, rendered physically by the prostration of the body. When, therefore, the Rishi speaks of 'bearing obeisance to Agni by the thought', we can hardly doubt that he gives to *namas* the psychological sense of the inward prostration, the act of submission or surrender to the deity.

On the above basis, the rendering of the four verses stated above may be as follows.

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

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

To thee day by day, O Agni, in the night and in the light, we, by the thought, come bearing our submission.

To thee who shinest out from the sacrifices (or, who governest the sacrifices), guardian of the Truth and its illumination increasing in thy own home.'

It may be seen from the above rendering that one and the same word is used for *satyam* and *rtam*, even though in the formula *satyam rtam brhat*, there is a distinction in the Vedic mind between the precise significances of the two words.

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

It is not the sacrificial Fire that is capable of these functions. It cannot be any material flame, or the principle of physical heat and light. Yet, throughout, the symbol of the sacrificial Fire is maintained. It is, therefore, evident that we are in the presence of mystic symbolism to which the fire, the sacrifice, the priest are only outward figures of a deeper teaching, and yet figures, which it was thought necessary to maintain and to hold constantly in front.

In the early Vedantic teaching of the Upanisads, we come across a conception of the Truth, which is often expressed by formulae taken from the hymns of the Veda such as *satyam rtam brhat*, the truth, the right, the vast. This Truth is spoken of in the Veda as a path leading to felicity, leading to immortality. In the Upanisads also, it is by the path of the Truth that the sage or seer, *Rishi* or *Kavi*, passes beyond. He passes out of the falsehood, out of the mortal state into an immortal existence. We can, therefore, assume that the same conception is at issue in both Veda and Vedanta.

This psychological conception is that of a truth, which is truth of divine essence, not truth of mortal sensation and appearance. It is *satyam*, truth of being. It is in its action *rtam*, right – truth of divine being regulating right activity

both of mind and body. It is *brhat*, the universal truth proceeding direct and undeformed out of the infinite.

The consciousness that corresponds to it is also infinite, *brhat*, large as opposed to the consciousness of the sense-mind, which is founded upon limitation. The one is described as *bhuumaa*, the large, and the other as *alpa*, the little.

Another name for this supra mental or Truth-Consciousness is *Mahas*, which also means the great, the vast. As for the facts of sensation and appearance, which are full of falsehoods (*anrtam*), we have, for instruments, the senses, the sense-mind (*manas*) and the intellect working upon their evidence. For the Truth-Consciousness, there are corresponding faculties, namely, *drsti* (the direct vision of the Truth), *sruti* (the direct hearing of its word) and *viveka* (the direct discrimination of the right). Whoever is in possession of this Truth-Consciousness or open to the action of these faculties is the *Rishi* or *Kavi*, sage or seer. It is these conceptions of the Truth, *satyam* and *rtam* that we have to apply in this opening hymn of the Veda.

Agni in the Veda is always presented in the double aspect of force and light. He is the divine power that builds up the worlds, a power, which acts always with perfect knowledge, for it is *jaatavedas*, knower of all births, *visvaani vaayunaani vidvaan*, knower of all manifestations or phenomena, or possessor of all forms and activities of the divine wisdom. Further, it is repeatedly said that the gods have established Agni as the immortal in mortals, the divine power in man, the energy of fulfillment through which they do their work in him. It is this work symbolized by the sacrifice.

Psychologically, we can take Agni to be the divine will perfectly inspired by divine Wisdom, rather one with it. The divine Wisdom is the active or effective power of the Truth-Consciousness. This is the obvious sense of the word *kavikratu*, he, whose active will or power of effectivity is that of the seer. In other words, it is the knowledge, which comes by the Truth-Consciousness and in which there is no misapplication of error. The epithets that follow confirm this interpretation.

Agni is *satya*, true in his being. Perfect possession of his own truth, and the essential truth of things give him the power to apply it perfectly in all act and movement of force. He has both the *satyam* and the *rtam*. Moreover, he is *citrasravastamah*. From the *rtam*, there proceeds a fullness of richly luminous and varied inspirations. These inspirations give the capacity for doing the perfect work.

All these are the epithets of Agni, the priest of sacrifice, *hotr*, he who performs the offering. It is the power of Agni to apply the truth in the work (*karma* or *apas*) symbolized by the sacrifice that makes him the object of human invocation.

The importance of the sacrificial fire in the outward ritual corresponds to the importance of this inward force of unified Light and Power in the inward rite by which there is communication and interchange between the mortal and the immortal. Agni is elsewhere frequently described as the envoy, *duuta*, the medium of that communication and interchange.

We then realize the capacity in which Agni is called to the sacrifice. 'Let him come, a god with the gods.' The emphasis here is on the repetition of divinity. It becomes intelligible when we recall the standing description of Agni as the god in human beings, the immortal in mortals, the divine guest. If the invitation to Agni to come is translated 'let him come, a divine power with the divine powers', it will have full psychological sense.

In the external sense of the Veda, the gods are universal powers of physical Nature personified. In any inner sense, they must be universal powers of Nature in her subjective activities such as Will, Mind. But, in the Veda, there is always a distinction between the ordinary human or mental action of this puissance, *manusravat*, and the divine. It is supposed that man, by the right use of his mental action in the inner sacrifice to the gods, can convert the subjective activities such as will, mind into their true or divine nature. The mortal can become immortal.

Thus, the *Ribhus*, who were at first human beings or represented human faculties, became divine and immortal powers by perfection in the work, *suktyayaa*, and *svapasyayaa*. It is a continual self-offering of the human to the

divine, and a continual descent of the divine into the human, which seems to be symbolized in the sacrifice.

The state of immortality thus attained is conceived as a state of felicity or bliss founded on perfect Truth and Right, *satyam rtam*. The verse that follows is to be understood in this sense. 'The good (happiness), which thou wilt create for the giver, that is that truth of thee, O Agni' (I.1.6). In other words, the essence of this truth, which is the nature of Agni, is the freedom from evil, the state of perfect good and happiness, which the *rtam* carries in itself, and which is sure to be created in the mortal when he offers the sacrifice by the action of Agni as the divine priest.

*Bhadram* means anything good, auspicious and happy. It need not carry any deep significance on its own. But, in the Veda, this word is used, like *rtam*, in a special sense. It is described in one of the hymns (V.82.4-5) as the opposite of the evil dream (*duhsvapnyam*), the false-consciousness of that, which is not the *rtam*, and of *duritam*, false-going, which means all evil and suffering.

*Bhadram* is, therefore, equivalent to *suvitam*, right going, which means all good and felicity belonging to the state of the Truth, the *rtam*. It is *mayas*, the felicity, and the gods who represent the Truth-Consciousness are described as *mayobhuvah*, those who bring or carry, in their being, the felicity.

Thus, every part of the Veda, if properly understood, throws light upon every other part. It is only when we are misled by its veils that we find in it an incoherence.

In the next verse (I.1.7), there seems to be stated the condition of the effective sacrifice. It is the continual resort day by day, in the night and in the light, of the thought in the human being, with submission, adoration, self-surrender to the divine Will and Wisdom represented by Agni. Night and Day, *naktosaasaa*, are also symbolical, like all the other gods in the Veda, and the sense seems to be that, in all states of consciousness, whether illumined or obscure, there must be a constant submission and reference of all activities to the divine control.

Whether by day or night, Agni shines out in the sacrifices. He is the guardian of the Truth, of the *rtam* in man and defends it from the powers of the darkness. He is constant illumination burning up even in obscure and besieged states of the

mind. The ideas thus briefly stated in the eighth verse are constantly found throughout the hymns to Agni in the Rig-veda.

Agni is finally described as increasing in his own home. 'His own home' is not the fire-room of the Vedic householder. We find a proper interpretation for it in the following hymn.

*Yajaa no mitraavarunaa yajaa devaan rtam brhat,  
agne yaksi svam damam.*(I.75.5)

'Sacrifice for us to Mitra and Varuna, sacrifice to the gods,  
to the Truth, the Vast; O Agni, sacrifice to thy own home.'

Here *rtam brhat* and *svam damam* seem to express the goal of the sacrifice. This is perfectly in consonance with the imagery of the Veda, which frequently describes the sacrifice as travelling towards the gods, and man himself as a traveller moving towards the truth, the light or the felicity. It is, therefore, evident that the Truth, the Vast and Agni's own home are identical.

Agni and other gods are frequently spoken of as being born in the Truth, dwelling in the Wide or Vast. The sense, in this passage, then, will be that Agni, the divine will and power in man, increases in the Truth-Consciousness, its proper sphere, where false limitations are broken down in the Wide and the Limitless.

Thus, in these four verses of the opening hymn of the Rig-veda, we get the first indications of the principal ideas of the Vedic Rishis. They are 'the conception of a Truth-Consciousness, supra mental and divine, the invocation of the gods as powers of the Truth to raise man out of the falsehoods of the mortal mind, the attainment in and by this Truth of an immortal state of perfect good and felicity, and the inner sacrifice and offering of what one has and is, by the mortal to the Immortal as the means of the divine consummation', in the words of Sri Aurobindo.

All the rest of the Vedic thought, in its spiritual aspects, is grouped around these central conceptions.

## 08

**Varuna, Mitra and the Truth**

In the second hymn of Madhuchchandas addressed to Indra and Vayu, we have a passage full of clear and invincible psychological suggestions. In this hymn, the idea of the *rtam* is insisted upon with an even greater force than in the hymn to Agni.

The passage comprises the last three Riks of the Sukta

*Mitram huve puutadaksam, varunam ca risaadasam,*

*dhiyam ghrtaacim saadhantaa.*

*Rtena mitraavarunaa, rtaavrdhaa rtasprasa,*

*Kratum brhantam aasaathe.*

*Kavi no mitraavarunaa, tuvijaataa uruksayaa,*

*daksam dadhaate apasa (I.2.7-9).*

Sayana explains the word *daksa* in the first Rik of the passage as strength. But this is capable of a psychological significance. The word *ghrta* in the adjectival form *ghrtaaci* and the remarkable phrase *dhiyam ghrtaacim* are quite important. Literally, the first Rik may be translated thus: 'I invoke Mitra of purified strength (or, purified discernment) and Varuna, destroyer of our foes, perfecting (or, accomplishing) a bright understanding'.

In the second Rik, we have the word *rtam* repeated thrice, and also the words *brhat* and *kratu* both of which seem to have considerable importance in the psychological interpretation of the Veda. *Kratu* here may mean either work of sacrifice or effective power.

In favour of the sense of 'work of sacrifice', we have a similar passage in the Veda in which Varuna and Mitra are said to attain to or enjoy, by the Truth, a mighty sacrifice, *yajnam brhantam aasaathe*. But this parallel is not considered conclusive, for, while in one expression it is sacrifice itself spoken of, and in the other it is the power or the strength, which effects the sacrifice. Against this background, the verse may be translated literally thus. 'By Truth, Mitra and



Varuna, truth increasing, truth touching, enjoy (or, attain to) a mighty work' or a 'vast (effective) power'.

In the third Rik again we have the word *daksa*. We have the word *kavi*, seer, already associated by Madhuchchhandas with *kratu*, work or will. We have the idea of the Truth, and we have the expression *uruksayaa*, where *uru*, wide or vast, may be an equivalent of *brhat*, the vast, which is used to describe the world or plane of the Truth-Consciousness, the 'own home' of Agni. This verse may then be translated literally thus: 'For us Mitra and Varuna, seers, multiply-born, wide-housed, uphold the strength (or, discernment) that does the work.'

It may be seen that we have, in this passage of the second hymn, precisely the same order of ideas and many of the same expressions as those we find in the first Sukta. But the application is different. The conceptions of the purified discernment, the richly bright understanding, *dhiyam ghrtaacim*, and the action of the Truth in the work of the sacrifice, *apas*, introduce certain fresh precisions, which throw further light on the central ideas of the Rishis.

The word *daksa* in this passage admits of some doubt as to its sense. Sayana renders it as strength, as already stated. Its root is *das*, *dis*, or *dah* any of which suggests, as one of its characteristic significances, an aggressive pressure, and hence any form of injury. Specially, it suggests an injury resulting from dividing, cutting, crushing or sometimes burning.

Many of the words for strength had originally this idea of a force for injury, the aggressive strength of the fighter and slayer, the kind of force most highly prized by primitive man. We see this connection in the ordinary Sanskrit word for strength, *balam*.

But this order of division led up also, in the psychology of language development, to quite another order of ideas. For, when man wished to have words of mental conceptions, his ready method was to apply the figures of physical action to mental movement. The idea of physical division or separation was thus used and converted into that of distinction.

It seems to have been first applied to distinguishing by the ocular sense, and then to the act of mental separation, namely, discernment, discriminative thought power and judgment.

There may thus be three possible senses for *daksa* in the Rig-veda, namely, strength generally, mental power or the power of judgment and discernment. *Daksa* is continually associated with *kratu*. The Rishis aspire to them together, *daksaaya kratave*, which they mean simply, 'capacity and effective power' or 'will and discernment'. We find the word occurring continually in passages where the whole context relates to mental activities.

Finally, we have the goddess Dakshina who may well be a female form of Daksha, himself a god, and, afterwards in the Purana, one of the Prajapatis, the original progenitors. We have Dakshina associated with knowledge, and sometimes almost identified with Usha, the divine Dawn, who is the bringer of illumination.

It may be that Dakshina is one of the four goddesses, the other three being Ila, Saraswati and Sarama. The four goddesses may be representing the four faculties of the *rtam* or Truth-Consciousness. Ila may be representing truth-vision or revelation, Saraswati truth-audition, inspiration, the divine word, Sarama intuition and Dakshina the separative intuitional discrimination. *Daksa* then may mean this discrimination either as mental judgment on the mind plane, or as intuitional discernment on the plane of the *rtam*.

The above three Riks occur as the closing passage of a hymn of which the first three verses are addressed to Vayu alone and the next three to Indra and Vayu. In the psychological interpretation of the hymns, Indra represents Mind-Power. *Indriya*, the word for the sense-faculties, is derived from his name. His special realm is Swar, a word which means sun or luminous, being akin to *sura* and *surya*, the sun, and is used to indicate the third of the Vedic *vyaahrtis* and the third of the Vedic worlds corresponding to the principle of the pure or unobscured Mind.

Surya represents the illumination of the *rtam* rising upon the mind. Swar is that plane of mental consciousness which directly receives the illumination.

Vayu, on the other hand, is always associated with the *Praana* or Life-energy, which contributes to the very functioning of the mental-energies governed by Indra. Their combination constitutes the normal being of man. These two gods are invited in the hymn to come and partake together of the Soma-wine. This

wine of Soma represents, as stated in the ninth Mandala, a collection of more than a hundred hymns to the deity Soma, the intoxication of the Ananda, the divine delight of being, flowing upon the mind from the supra-mental consciousness through the *rtam* or truth. Based on this interpretation, it becomes easy to translate the hymn into its psychological significance.

Indra and Vayu awaken in consciousness (*cetathah*) to the flowing of the Soma-wine. In other words, the mind power and the life power work together in a human being to awaken to the inflowing of this Ananda, this Amrita, this delight and immortality. They receive them into the full plenitude of the mental and nervous energies, *cetathah sutaanaam vaajinivasuu* (I.2.5).

The Ananda thus received constitutes a new action preparing immortal consciousness in the mortal. Indra and Vayu are invoked to come and swiftly perfect these new workings by the participation of the thought, *aa yaatam upa niskrtam maksu.... dhiyaa* (I.2.6). Here *dhi* is thought-power, intellect or understanding. It is intermediate between the normal mentality represented by the combination of Indra and Vayu, and the *rtam* or Truth-Consciousness.

It is at this stage that Varuna and Mitra intervene, and the passage begins. Without the psychological clue, the connection between the first part of the hymn and the next (concluding part) is not clear. Similarly, the relation between the couple Varuna-Mitra and the couple Indra-Vayu will be unclear.

In the first part of the hymn is the rendering of the vital forces represented by Vayu who alone is invoked. Then follows the mentality represented by the couple Indra-Vayu for the activities of the Truth-Consciousness in the human being. The hymn closes on the working of the Truth on the mentality so as to perfect the intellect, and to enlarge the actions. Varuna and Mitra are two of the four gods who represent the working of this Truth in the human mind and temperament.

‘In the style of the Veda’, Sri Aurobindo says, ‘when there is a transition of this kind from one movement of thought to another developing out of it, the link of connection is often indicated by the repetition in the new movement of an important word which has already occurred in the close of the movement that

precedes'. This principle of suggestion by echo pervades the hymns and is a mannerism common to all the Rishis.

The connecting word here is *dhi*, thought or intellect. *Dhi* differs from the more general word, *mati*, which means mentality or mental action generally, and which indicates sometimes thought, sometimes feeling, and sometimes the whole mental state. *Dhi* is the thought-mind or intellect. As understanding, it holds all that comes to it, defines everything and puts it into the right place. The root *dhi* means to hold or to place. Often times it also indicates the activity of intellect, particular thought or thoughts.

It is by the thought that Indra and Vayu have been called upon to perfect the nervous mentality, *niskrtam.....dhiyaa*. But this instrument, thought, has itself to be perfected, enriched, clarified before the mind can become capable of free communication with the Truth-Consciousness. Therefore, Varuna and Mitra, powers of the Truth, are invoked 'accomplishing a richly luminous thought', *dhiyam ghrtaacim saadhantaa*.

This is the first occurrence in the Rig-veda of the word *ghrta*, in a modified adjectival form. It is significant that it should occur as an epithet of the Vedic word for the intellect, *dhi*. This word occurs in other passages also continually in connection with the words *manas*, *manisaa*, or in a context where some activity of thought is indicated.

The root *ghr* conveys the idea of strong brightness or heat such as that of fire or the summer sun. It means also to sprinkle or anoint. It is capable of being used to signify a bright, thick liquid. It is the ambiguity of these two possible senses of which the Vedic Rishis took advantage to indicate by the word outwardly the clarified butter in the sacrifices, inwardly a rich and bright state or activity of the brain-power, *medhaa*, as basis and substance of illuminated thought. By *dhiyam ghrtaacim* is meant, therefore, the intellect full of a rich and bright mental activity.

Varuna and Mitra, who accomplish or perfect this state of intellect, are distinguished by two different epithets. Mitra is *puutadaksa*, possessed of a purified judgment. Varuna is *risaadas*, destroyer of all enemies.

In the Veda, there are no ornamental epithets for their own sake. Every word is meant to tell, to add something to the sense and bear a strict relation to the thought of the sentence in which it occurs. There are two obstacles, which prevent the intellect from being a perfect and luminous mirror of the Truth-Consciousness. The first is impurity of the discernment or discriminative faculty, which leads to confusion of the truth. The second is the many causes or influences which interfere with the growth of the truth by limiting its full application, or by breaking up the connections and harmony of the thoughts that express it, and which thus bring about poverty and falsification of its content.

Just as the gods in the Veda represent universal powers descended from the Truth-Consciousness, which build up the harmony of the worlds, and in man his progressive perfection, so the influences that work against these objectives are represented by hostile agencies, *Dasyus* and *Vritras*. The hostile agencies seek to break up, to limit, to withhold and to deny.

Varuna in the Veda is always characterized as a power of wideness and purity. Therefore, when he is present in man as the conscious force of the Truth, all that limits and hurts the nature, by introducing into it fault, sin and evil, is destroyed by contact with him. He is thus *risaadas*, destroyer of the enemy, of all that seeks to injure the growth.

Mitra, likewise, is a power of the Light and Truth. He represents, especially, Love, Joy and Harmony, the foundations of *mayas*, the Vedic beatitude. Working with the purity of Varuna, and imparting that purity to the discernment, Mitra enables it to get rid of all discords and confusions, and establish the right working of the strong and luminous intellect.

This progress enables the Truth-Consciousness, the *rtam*, to work in the human mentality. With the *rtam* as the agency, *rtena*, increasing the action of the truth in man, *rtaavrdhaa*, touching or reaching the Truth, enabling, that is to say, the mental consciousness to come into successful contact with and possession of the Truth-Consciousness, *rtasprasa*, Mitra and Varuna are able to enjoy the use of a vast effective will-power, *kratum brhantam aasaathe*.

It is the Will that is the chief effective agent to the inner sacrifice. But it is the Will in harmony with the Truth, guided, therefore, by a purified discernment.

The Will, as it enters, more and more, into the wideness of the Truth-Consciousness, becomes itself wide and vast, free from limitation in its view and of hampering impediments in its efficiency. It works *urau anibaadhe*, in the wideness where there is no obstacle or limitation.

Thus the two requisites Light and Power on which the Vedic Rishis always insist are secured. The Light of the Truth works in the knowledge, *dhiyam ghrtaacim*. The Power of the Truth works in the effective and enlightened Will, *kratum brhantam*.

As a result, Varuna and Mitra are shown in the closing verse of the hymn, working in the full sense of their truth, *kavi tuvijaataa uruksayaa*. *Kavi* means possessed of the Truth-Consciousness, and using its faculties of vision, inspiration, intuition and discrimination. *Tuvijaataa* is 'multiply-born'. For, *tuvi* means originally strength or force, in the sense of many. In the Veda, by the birth of the gods is always meant their manifestation. Thus *tuvijaataa* signifies 'manifested multiply', in many forms and activities.

*Uruksayaa* means dwelling in the wideness, an idea, which occurs frequently in the hymns. *Uru* is equivalent to *brhat*, the Vast and indicates the infinite freedom of the Truth-Consciousness. Thus we have, as the result of increasing activities of the *rtam*, the manifestation, in the human being, of the powers of wideness and purity, of joy and harmony – a manifestation rich in forms, seated in the wideness of the *rtam*, and using the faculties of the supra-mental consciousness.

This manifestation of the Powers of the Truth upholds or confirms the discernment, while it does the work, *daksam dadhaate apasam*. The discernment, purified and supported, works in the sense of the Truth, as a power of the Truth. It accomplishes the perfection of the activities of Indra and Vayu by freeing the thoughts and the will from all defect and confusion in their working and results.

The following Rik confirms the above interpretation.

*Adhaa hyagne krator bhadrasya daksasya saadhoh,  
rathir rtasya brhato babhuutha (IV.10.2)*

‘Then indeed, O Agni, thou becomest the charioteer of the happy will, the perfecting discernment, the Truth that is the Vast.’

We have here the same idea as in the first hymn of the first Mandala. It is the effective will that is the nature of the Truth-Consciousness, *kavikratuh*. It, therefore, works out the good, *bhadram*, in a state of beatitude. The phrase *daksasya saadhoh* is at once a variant and an explanation of the last phrase of the second hymn, *daksam apasam*, the discernment perfecting and accomplishing the inner work in man.

We have the vast Truth as the consummation of these two activities of power and knowledge, Will and Discernment, *kratu* and *daksa*. The hymns of the Veda always confirm each other by this reproduction of the same terms and ideas, and the same relation of ideas. This is just not possible unless they are based on a coherent doctrine with a precise significance for such common terms as *kavi*, *kratu*, *daksa*, *bhadram*, *rtam*, etc.

The internal evidence of the Riks themselves establishes that this significance is psychological. Otherwise, these terms lose their fixed value, their precise sense, and necessary connection. Otherwise, their constant recurrence in relation to each other has to be regarded as fortuitous and void of reason or purpose.

Similarly, in the second hymn, there are the same governing ideas as in the first. All is based on the central Vedic conception of the Supramental or Truth-Consciousness towards which the progressively perfected mentality of the human being labours as towards a consummation and a goal. In the first hymn, this is merely stated as the aim of the sacrifice and the characteristic work of Agni. The second hymn indicates the preliminary work of preparation, by Indra and Vayu, by Mitra and Varuna of the ordinary mentality of man through the force of the Ananda, and the increasing growth of the Truth.

The whole of the Rig-veda is thus practically a constant variation on this double theme, the preparation of the human being in mind and body, and the fulfillment of the Godhead or Immortality in man by his attainment and development of the Truth and the Beatitude.

## 09

### The Ashwins, Indra and the Vishwadevas

The third hymn of Madhuchchhandas is also a hymn of the Soma sacrifice. It is composed, like the second before it, in movements of three verses, the first addressed to the Ashwins, the second to Indra, the third to the Vishwadevas, and the fourth to the goddess Sarawati. In this hymn, in the closing movement, in the invocation to Saraswati, there is a passage of clear psychological significance of great import.

This whole hymn, indeed, is full of psychological suggestions. We find in it the close connection, even identity, which the Vedic Rishis sought to establish and perfect among the three main interests of the human Soul, Thought and its final victorious illuminations, Action and its last all-supreme, all-achieving puissance, enjoyment and its highest spiritual ecstasies.

The Soma-wine symbolizes the replacing of ordinary sense-enjoyment by the divine Ananda. Divinizing our thought-action brings about this substitution. As it progresses, it helps in its turn the consummation of the movement, which has brought it about.

The Cow, the Horse, and the Soma-wine are the figures of this triple sacrifice. The offering of *ghrta*, the clarified butter, which is the yield of the cow, the offering of the horse, *asvamedha*, the offering of the wine of Soma are its three principal forms or elements. Less prominently, there is also the offering of the cake, which is possibly symbolic of the body, Matter.

The hymn commences with an invocation of the two Ashwins, the two Riders on the Horse. They are first described as 'Ashwins, swift-footed lords of bliss, much enjoying – *dravatpaani subhaspati purubhujaa*'. The word *subha*, like the words *ratna* and *candra*, is capable of signifying either light or enjoyment. But, in this passage, it occurs in connection with the adjective *purubhujaa*, 'much enjoying', and the verb *canasyatam*, 'take delight', and must, therefore, be taken in the sense of weal or bliss.



Next, these twin gods are described as 'Ashwins, divine souls, many-actioned, thought-holding' who accept and rejoice in the words of the *mantra* 'with an energetic thought' – *purudamsasaa naraa savirayaa dhiyaa dhisnyaa*.

*Nr* in the Veda is applicable both to gods and men, and does not mean simply a man. It is possible that it meant originally strong or active, and then a male, and is applied to the male gods, active divine souls or powers, *purusas*, as opposed to the female deities, *gnaah*, who are their energies. It still preserved in the minds of the Rishis much of its original sense, as we see from the word *nrmna*, strength, and the phrase *nrtamo nrnaam*, strongest of the divine powers.

*Savas* and its adjective *savitra* give the idea of energy, but always with an association of the farther idea of flame or light. *Savira* is, therefore, a very appropriate epithet for *dhi*, thought, full of a shining or flashing energy. *Dhisnyaa* is connected with *dhisnaa*, intellect or understanding, and Sayana renders it 'intellectual', *buddhimantau*.

Again the Ashwins are described as 'effectual in action, powers of the movement, fierce-moving in their paths', *dasraa naasatyaa rudravartani*. Sayana renders the Vedic epithets *dasra* and *dasma* indifferently as 'destroying' or 'beautiful' or 'bountiful'.

It is possible to connect the word with the root *das*, not in the sense of cutting, dividing, from which it gets the two significances of destroying and giving, not in the sense of 'discerning, seeing', from which Sayana interprets it as 'beautiful' – *darsaniya*, but in the sense of doing, acting, shaping, accomplishing, as in *purudamsasaa* in the second Rik.

Similarly, *naasatyaa* is supposed to mean 'true, not false' which is not correct interpretation. We are to bear in mind that the Ashwins are riders on the horse, that they are described often by epithets of motion such as 'swift-footed', 'fierce-moving in their paths'. They are also represented as powers that carry over the Rishis as in a ship, or save them from drowning in the ocean. In this context, the word *naasatyaa* is to have its root in *nas*, meaning to move. *Naasatyaa* may, therefore, very well mean lords of the voyage, journey, or powers of the movement.

Some scholars render *rudravartani* as 'red-pathed', an epithet supposed to be well suited to stars. Certainly, *rudra* must have meant at one time 'shining, deep-coloured, red' like the roots *rus*, *rudhira* - 'blood', 'red'.

*Rodasi*, the dual Vedic word for heaven and earth, meant probably, like *rajas* and *rocanaa*, other Vedic words for the heavenly and earthly worlds, 'the shining'.

On the other hand, the sense of injury and violence is equally inherent in this family of words and is almost universal in the various roots, which form it. 'Fierce' or 'violent' is likely to be as good a sense for *rudra* as 'red'.

The Ashwins are both *hiranyavartani* and *rudravartani*, because they are both powers of Light and of nervous Force. In the former aspect, they have a bright gold movement; in the latter they are violent in their movement. In one hymn (V.75.3), we have the combination *rudraa hiranyavartani*, violent and moving in the paths of light. We do not have any coherence if we understand the passage to mean that the stars are red, but their movement or their path is golden.

But, in these three verses, there is an extraordinary series of psychological functions to apply to two stars of a heavenly constellation. They are riders on the horse, the Ashwa, symbolic of force and especially of life-energy and nervous force, the *Praana*. Their common character is that they are gods of enjoyment, seekers of honey. They are physicians; they bring back youth to the old, health to the sick, and wholeness to the maimed.

Another characteristic is movement, swift, violent, irresistible. Their rapid and indomitable chariot is a constant object of celebration, and they are described as swift-footed and violent in their paths. They are like birds in their swiftness, like the mind, like the wind (V.77.3 & 78.1).

They bring in their chariot ripe or perfected satisfactions to man; they are creators of bliss, *mayas*. These indications are perfectly clear and show that the Ashwins are twin divine powers whose special function is to perfect the nervous or vital being in man, in the sense of action and enjoyment.

But they are also powers of Truth, of intelligent action, of right enjoyment; they are powers that appear with the Dawn, effective powers of action born out

of the ocean of being who, because they are divine, are able to mentalize securely the felicities of the higher existence by a thought-faculty which finds or comes to know that true substance and true wealth:

*Yaa dasraa sindhumaataraa, manotaraa rayinaam;  
dhiyaa devaa vasuvidaa* (I.46.2).

They give that impelling energy for the great work which, having for its nature and substance the light of the Truth, carries man beyond the darkness.

*Yaa nah piparad asvinaa, jyotismati tamas tirah;  
taam asme raasaathaam isam* (I.46.6).

They carry man in their ship to the other shore beyond the thoughts and states of human mind, that is, the supra-mental consciousness – *naava matinaam paaraaya* (I.46.7). *Suuryaa*, daughter of the Sun, Lord of the Truth, mounts their car as their bride.

In the present hymn, the Ashwins are invoked as swift-moving lords of bliss who carry with them many enjoyments, to take delight in the impelling energies of the sacrifice – *yajvarir isah...canasyatam*. These impelling forces are born evidently of the drinking of the Soma-wine, that is to say, of the inflow of the divine Ananda.

For the expressive words, *girah*, the impelling forces are to make new formations in the consciousness and are rising, the seat of the sacrifice has been piled, and vigorous juices of the Soma-wine are pressed out. The Ashwins are to come as effective powers of action, *purudamsasaa naraa*, to take delight in the words and to accept them into the intellect where they shall be retained for the action by a thought full of luminous energy.

They are to come to the offering of the Soma-wine, in order to effect the action of the sacrifice, *dasraa*, as fulfillers of action, by giving to the delight of the action that violent movement of theirs, *rudravartani*, which carries them irresistibly on their path, and overcomes all opposition. They come as powers of the Aryan journey, lords of the great human movement, *naasatyaa*.

From the above, it is evident that it is energy, which these Riders on the Horse are to give; they are to take delight in the sacrificial energies, to take up the word into an energetic thought, and to bring to the sacrifice their own violent movement on the path. It is effectiveness of action and swiftness in the great journey that is the object of this demand for energy. In this interpretation, there is total consistency of conception and coherence of structure, and this is in the supreme tradition of the Veda as a book of wisdom and deepest knowledge.

We then have the following rendering for the first three verses.

‘O Riders of the Steed, swift-footed, much enjoying lords of bliss, take delight in the energies of the sacrifice’ (I.3.1).

‘O Riders of the Steed, male souls effecting a manifold action, take joy of the words, O holders in the intellect, by a luminously energetic thought’ (I.3.2).

‘I have piled the seat of sacrifice, I have pressed the vigorous Soma juices; fulfillers of action, powers of the movement, come to them with your fierce speed on the path’ (I.3.3).

In the third hymn, the Rishi begins by invoking deities who act in the nervous or vital forces. He calls the Ashwins who use the vital forces, ride on the steed. He proceeds from the vital or nervous action to the mental; and he invokes in his second movement the might of Indra.

The out-pressings of the wine of delight desire him, *sutaa ime tvaayavah*; they desire the luminous mind to take possession of them for its activities; they are purified, *anvibhis tanaa*, ‘by the fingers and the body’ as Sayana explains it, by the subtle thought-powers of the pure mind, and by extension in the physical consciousness.

These ‘ten fingers’, if they are fingers at all, are the ten fingers of Suryaa, daughter of the Sun, bride of the Ashwins. In the first hymn of the ninth Mandala, the same Rishi Madhuchchandas expands the idea, addressing the deity Soma, ‘the daughter of the Sun purifies thy Soma as it flows abroad in her straining vessel by a continuous extension’, *vaarena sasvataa tanaa*. He adds further, ‘the subtle ones seize it in their labour (or, in the great work, struggle, aspiration, *samarye*), the ten Brides, sisters in the heaven that has to be crossed’.

This phrase at once recalls the ship of the Ashwins that carries us over beyond the thoughts. This is for the reason that Heaven is the symbol of the pure mental consciousness in the Veda as is Earth of the physical consciousness.

These sisters who dwell in the pure mind, the subtle ones, *anviih*, the ten brides, *dasa yosanaah*, are elsewhere called the ten Casters, *dasa kshipah*, because they seize the Soma and speed it on its way. They are probably identical with the ten Rays, *dasa gaavah*, sometimes spoken of in the Veda. They seem to be described as grandchildren or descendents of the Sun, *naptibhir...vivasvatah* (IX.14.5).

They are aided in the task of purification of the seven forms of Thought-consciousness, *sapta-dhitibhih* (IX.9.4). Again, we are told that 'Soma advances, heroic with his swift chariots, by the force of the subtle thought, *dhiyaa anvayaa*, to the perfected activity (or perfected field) of Indra and takes many forms of thought to arrive at that vast extension (or, formation) of the Godhead where the Immortals are'.

*Esa puruu dhiyaayate, brhate devataataya,  
yatraamrataasa aasate* (IX.15.1-2).

All the above demonstrate how entirely symbolical is the Soma-wine of the Vedic Rishis, and how richly surrounded with psychological conceptions.

However, the important point here is not the Soma and its purification, but the psychological function of Indra. He is addressed as Indra of the richly various lustres, *indra citrabhaano*. The Soma juices desire him. He comes impelled by the thought, driven forward by the illumined thinker within, *dhiyesito viprajuutah*. He comes to the soul-thoughts of the Rishi who has pressed out the wine of delight, and seeks to manifest them in speech, in the inspired *mantras*, *sutaavatah upa brahmaani vaaghatah*.

Indra comes with the speed and force of the illumined mind-power, in possession of his brilliant horses to those thoughts, *tuutujaana upa brahmaani harivah*. The Rishi prays to Indra to confirm or hold the delight in the Soma offering, *sute dadhisva nas canah*. The Ashwins have brought and energized the pleasure of the vital system in the action of the Ananda. Indra is necessary to

hold that pleasure firmly in the illuminated mind so that it may not fall away from the consciousness.

The sense of the three Riks may, therefore, run thus:

‘Come, O Indra, with thy rich lustres, these Soma-juices desire thee; they are purified by the subtle powers and by extension in body’ (I.3.4).

‘Come, O Indra, impelled by the mind, driven forward by the illumined thinker, to my soul-thoughts, I who have poured out the Soma-juice and seek to express them in speech’ (I.3.5).

‘Come, O Indra, with forceful speed to my soul-thoughts, O lord of the bright horses; hold firm the delight in the Soma-juice’ (I.3.6).

The Rishi next passes to the Vishwadevas, all the gods or the All-gods. There is a point of dispute whether the Vishwadevas form a class by themselves or are simply the gods in their generality. It is more appropriate to consider the Vishwadevas as the universal collectivity of the divine powers. This interpretation is in keeping with the sense of the actual expressions of the hymns in which they are invoked.

In this hymn, they are called for a general action, which supports and completes the functions of the Ashwins and Indra. They are to come to the sacrifice in their collectivity, and divide among themselves, each for the divine and joyous working of his proper activity, the Soma which the giver of the sacrifice distributes to them – *visve devaasa aagata, daasvaamso daasusah sutam*.

In the next Rik, the Rishi repeats the call with greater insistence. They are to arrive swiftly, *tuurnayah*, to the Soma-offering. It may mean that they are to make their way through all the planes of consciousness, ‘waters’ which divide the physical nature of man from their Godhead and are full of obstacles to communication between earth and heaven – *apturah sutam aa ganta tuurnayah*. They are to come like cattle hastening to the stalls of their rest in the evening, *usraa iva svasaraani*. Thus gladly arriving, they are gladly to accept and cleave to the sacrifice, and support it, bearing it up in its journey to its goal, in its ascent to the gods or to the home of the gods, the Truth, the Vast – *medham jusanta vahnayah*.

The epithets of the Vishwadevas, which qualify their character, and the functions for which they are invited to the Soma-offering, have the same generality. They are common to all the gods, and applied indifferently to any or all of them throughout the Veda. They are fosterers or increasers of man, and upholders of his labour and effort in the work, the sacrifice, *omaasas carsanidhrtah*.

Sayana renders these words protectors and sustainers of men. While it is easy to attribute the sense of 'man' to the two kindred words *carsani* and *krsti* when they stand by themselves, this meaning does not seem appropriate in compound forms such as *vicarsani*, *visvacarsani*, *visvakrsti*.

Sayana himself is obliged to render *visvacarsani* 'all-seeing' and not 'all-man' or 'all-human'. *Carsani* and *krsti*, appropriately, mean effort, labourious action or work, or else the doers of such action. They are two among the many words – *karma*, *apas*, *kaara*, *kiri*, *duvas*, etc – which are used to indicate the Vedic work, the sacrifice, the toil of aspiring humanity, the *arati* of the Aryan.

The common preoccupation of the Vedic gods is the fostering or increasing of man in all his substance and possessions, his continual enlargement towards the fullness and richness of the vast Truth-Consciousness, and the upholding of him in his great struggle and labour.

They, the Vedic gods, are *apturah*, they who cross the waters. Sayana takes the word to mean that 'they who give the waters'. He understands it in the sense of 'rain-givers'. It is perfectly true that all the Vedic gods are givers of the rain, the abundance (*vrsti*, rain, has both senses) of heaven, sometimes described as the solar waters, *svarvatir apah*, or waters which carry in them the light of the luminous heaven, Swar.

But the ocean and the waters in the Veda, as this phrase itself indicates, are the symbol of conscient being in its mass and in its movements. The gods pour the fullness of these waters, especially the upper waters, the waters of heaven, the streams of the Truth, *rtasya dhaaraah*, across all obstacles, into the human consciousness. In this sense they are all *apturah*.

But man is also described as crossing the waters over to his home in the Truth-Consciousness, and the gods as carrying him over. It is doubtful, whether this may not be the true sense here, especially as we have these two words

*apturah....tuurnayah* close to each other in a connection that may well be significant.

Again, the gods are all free from effective assailants, free from the harm of the hurtful powers. Therefore, the creative formations of their conscious knowledge, their *Maya*, move freely, pervasively and attain to their right goal – *asridha ahimaayaaso adruhah*.

If we take into account the numerous passages of the Veda, which indicate the general object of the sacrifice, of the work, of the journey, of the increase of the light and abundance of the waters to be the attainment of the Truth-Consciousness, *rtam*, with the resultant Bliss, *mayas*, and that these epithets commonly apply to powers of the infinite, integral Truth-Consciousness, we realize that it is this attainment of the Truth, which is indicated in these three verses.

The All-gods increase man; they uphold him in the great work; and they bring him the abundance of the waters of Swar, the streams of the Truth. They communicate the unassailably integral and pervading action of the Truth-Consciousness with its wide formations of knowledge, *maayaah*.

In the Veda, even poetical similes are never employed for mere decoration. They are utilized to deepen the psychological sense, and with a figure of symbolic or double meaning.

Sri Aurobindo translates the phrase, *usraa iva svasaraani*, in the most external sense possible. The word *usra* is always used in the Veda, like *go*, with the double sense of the concrete figure or symbol, the bull or cow, and also the psychological indication of the bright or luminous ones, the illumined powers of the Truth in man. It is as such illumined powers that the All-gods have to come, and they come to the Soma-juice, *svasaraani*, as if to seats or forms of peace or of bliss. This interpretation is based on the fact that the root *svas*, like *sas* and many others, means both to rest and to enjoy. They are the powers of Truth entering into the outpourings of the Ananda in man, as soon as that movement has been prepared by the vital and mental activity of the Ashwins, and the pure mental activity of Indra.

The sense of the three Riks may, therefore, run thus:



‘O fosterers who uphold the doer in his work, O All-gods, come and divide the Soma-wine that I distribute’ (I.3.7).

‘O All-gods who bring over to us the Waters, come passing through to my Soma-offerings as illumined powers to your places of Bliss’ (I.3.8.).

‘O All-gods, you who are not assailed, nor come to hurt, free-moving in your forms of knowledge, cleave to my sacrifice as its up-bearers’ (I.3.9).

In the last movement of the hymn, there is the clear and unmistakable indication of the Truth-Consciousness as the goal of the sacrifice, the object of the Soma-offering, the culmination of the work of the Ashwins, Indra and the All-gods in the vitality and in the mind. For, these are the three Riks devoted to Sarasvati, the divine Word, who represents the stream of inspiration that descends from the Truth-Consciousness.

The sense of the three Riks may, therefore, run thus:

‘May purifying Sarasvati with all the plenitude of her forms of plenty, rich in substance by the thought, desire our sacrifice’ (I.3.10).

‘She, the impeller to happy truths, the awakener in consciousness to right mentalizings, Sarasvati, upholds the sacrifice’ (I.3.11).

‘Sarasvati by the perception awakens in consciousness the great flood (the vast movement of the *rtam*) and illumines entirely all the thoughts’ (I.3.12).

The above interpretation shows ‘the intimate connection between the Vedic sacrifice and a certain state of mind and soul, the interdependence of the offering of the clarified butter and the Soma-juice, and luminous thought, richness of psychological content, right states of the mind and its awaking and impulsion to the truth and light’, in the words of Sri Aurobindo.

It also reveals the figure of Sarasvati as the goddess of the Inspiration, of *Shruti*. It further establishes the connection between the Vedic rivers and psychological states of mind. The passage is one of those luminous hints, which the Rishis have left scattered amidst the deliberate ambiguities of their symbolic style to guide us towards their secret.

## 10

**Sarasvati and Her Consorts**

The symbolism of the Rig-veda is at its highest clarity in the figure of the goddess Sarasvati. In many of the other gods, the balance of the internal sense and the external figure is carefully preserved. The veil for them is never completely removed.

One may doubt whether Agni is anything more than the personification of the sacrificial Fire or of the physical principle of light and heat in things. Similarly, one may doubt whether Indra is anything more than the god of the sky and the rain, or of physical light; or Vayu anything more than the divinity in the wind and air, or at most of the physical life-breath.

In the lesser gods, the naturalistic interpretation has less ground for confidence. For, it is obvious that Varuna is not merely a Vedic Uranus or Neptune, but a god with great and important moral functions. Similarly, Mitra and Bhaga have the same psychological aspect. So is the case with the Ribhus.

But Sarasvati will submit to no such consideration. She is, plainly and clearly, the goddess of the Word, the goddess of a divine Inspiration. Besides, she is one of the seven rivers of the early Aryan world. The question arises, whence came this extraordinary identification. And how does the connection of the two ideas present itself in the Vedic hymns? Sarasvati is important on another count, not only in herself, but also by her connections.

Sarasvati means 'she of the stream, the flowing movement'. It is, therefore, a natural name both for a river and for the goddess of Inspiration. But by what process of thought or association does the general idea of the river or inspiration come to be associated with a particular earthly stream?

In the Veda, it is not a question of one river which, by its surroundings, natural and legendary, might seem more fitly associated with the idea of the sacred inspiration than any other. Here it is a question not of one, but of seven rivers always associated together in the minds of Rishis; all of them released together by the stroke of Indra when he smote the Python who coiled across their fountains, and sealed up their outflow.

It seems impossible to suppose that one river only in all this sevenfold out-flowing acquired a psychological significance, while the rest were associated with the annual coming of the rains in the Punjab. The psychological significance of Sarasvati carries with it a psychological significance for the whole symbol of the Vedic waters. The rivers have a symbolic sense in the later Indian thought, too. For instance, the Ganges, Yamuna and Sarasvati, and their confluence are, in the Tantric imagery, Yogic symbols, and they are used, though in a different way, in Yogic symbolism generally.

Sarasvati is not only connected with other rivers but with other goddesses who are plainly psychological symbols. Especially, she is connected with Bharati and Ila. In the later Puranic forms of worship, Sarasvati is the goddess of speech, learning and poetry. Bharati is one of her names.

But in the Veda, Bharati and Sarasvati are different deities. Bharati is also called Mahi, the Large, Great or Vast. The three, Ila, Mahi or Bharati and Sarasvati are associated together in a constant formula, in those hymns of invocation in which Agni calls the gods to sacrifice.

*Ilaa sarasvati mahi tisro devir mayobhuvah,  
barhih sidantvasridhah (I.13.9).*

‘May Ila, Sarasvati and Mahi, three goddesses who give birth to the bliss, take their place on the sacrificial seat, they who stumble not’, or ‘who come not to hurt’, or ‘do not hurt’.

The epithet means that they, in whom there is no false movement with its evil consequences, *duritam*, do not stumble into pitfalls of sin and error.

The formula is expanded in Hymn 110 of the Tenth Mandala thus:

*Aa no yajnam bharati tuuyam etu,  
ilaa manusvad iha cetayanti  
tisro devir bahir edam syonam  
sarasvati svapasah sadantu.*

‘May Bharati come speeding to our sacrifice and Ila hither awakening our consciousness (or, knowledge or perceptions) in human wise, and Sarasvati – three goddesses sit on this blissful seat, doing well the Work.’

The import of the hymn is that these goddesses have closely connected functions akin to the inspirational power of Sarasvati. Sarasvati is the Word, the inspiration that comes, the *rtam*, the Truth-Consciousness. Bharati and Ila must also be different forms of the same Word or knowledge.

In the eighth hymn of Madhuchchandas, there is a Rik in which Bharati is mentioned under the name of Mahi.

*Evaa hyasya suunrtaa, virpsi gomati mahi,  
pakvaa saakhaa na daasuse.*

‘Thus Mahi for Indra, full of the rays, overflowing in her abundance, in her nature a happy truth, becomes as if a ripe branch for the giver of the sacrifice’ (I.8.8).

The rays in the Veda are the rays of Surya, the Sun. Are we to interpret that the goddess is a deity of the physical light, or are we to translate, as *go* by cow, and suppose that Mahi is full of cows for the sacrificer? Certainly not!

The psychological character of Sarasvati can help, but it negatives the naturalistic interpretation. This characterization of Mahi, Sarasvati’s companion in the sacrifice, entirely identified with her in the later mythology, is proof enough that light in the Veda is symbol of knowledge, of spiritual illumination. Surya is the Lord of the supreme Sight, the vast Light, *brhat jyotih*, or, the true light, *rtam jyotih*, as it is sometimes called. The connection between the words *rtam* and *brhat* is constant in the Veda.

The above expressions clearly indicate of a state of illumined consciousness. Its nature is that it is wide or large, *brhat*, full of the truth of the being, *satyam*, and of the truth of knowledge and action, *rtam*. The gods have this consciousness. Agni, for instance, is termed *rtacit*, he who has the Truth-Consciousness. Mahi is full of the rays of this Surya. She carries in her this illumination.

Moreover, Mahi is *suunrtaa*. She is the word of a blissful Truth, even as Sarasvati is the impeller of happy truths, *codayitri suunrtaanaam*. Further, she is *virapsi*, large or breaking out into abundance. This is similar to the Truth meaning Largeness, *rtam brhat*.

Mahi is described in another hymn (I.22.10), as *varuutri dhisanaa*, a widely covering or embracing Thought-power. Mahi, then, is the luminous vastness of the Truth. She represents the Largeness, *brhat*, of the superconscient in us containing in itself the Truth, *rtam*. She is, therefore, for the sacrificer, like a branch covered with ripe fruit.

Ila is also the word of the truth, though, later, her name has become identical with the idea of speech. As Sarasvati is the awakener of the consciousness to the right thinking or the right state of mind, *cetanti sumatinaam*, so also Ila comes to the sacrifice, awakening the consciousness to knowledge, *cetayanti*. She is full of energy, *suviraa*, and brings knowledge. She is also connected with Surya, the Sun, as when Agni, the Will is invoked (V.4.4) to labour by the rays of the Sun, Lord of the true Light, being of one mind with Ila, *ilayaa sajosaa yatamaano rasmibhih suuryasya*. She is the mother of the Rays, the herds of the Sun. Her name means she who seeks and attains. It contains the same association of ideas as the words *rtam* and Rishi. Ila may, therefore, well be the vision of the seer who attains the truth.

Thus Sarasvati represents the truth-audition, *sruti*, which gives the inspired word; and Ila represents *drsti*, the truth-vision. As *drsti* and *sruti* are the two powers of the Rishi, we can understand the close connection of Ila and Sarasvati. Bharati or Mahi is the largeness of the Truth-Consciousness. This Truth-Consciousness dawns on man's limited mind and brings with it the twin-puissance.

As Vedic knowledge declined, these fine and living distinctions among the three were ignored, and all the three deities melted into one.

It is important to note that these three goddesses are said to bring to birth for man the Bliss, *mayas*. It is by the dawning of the true or infinite consciousness in man that he arrives out of the evil dream of pain and suffering, the divided creation, into the Bliss, the happy state described in the Veda by the words

*bhadram*, *mayas* (love and bliss), *svasti* (the good state of existence, right being). For the Vedic Rishi, Truth is the passage; the Bliss of the divine existence is the goal. In other words, Truth is the foundation and Bliss is the supreme result.

How is Sarasvati, as a Vedic river, related to her six sister streams? The number seven plays an important part in the Vedic system, as in most very ancient schools of thought. This number recurs constantly – the seven delights, *sapta ratnaani*; the seven flames, tongues or rays of Agni, *sapta arcisah*, *sapta jvaalaah*; the seven forms of the Thought-principle, *sapta dhitayah*; the seven Rays or Cows, forms of the Cow un-slayable, Aditi, mother of the gods, *sapta gaavah*; the seven rivers, the seven mothers or fostering cows, *sapta maatarah*, *sapta dhenavah*, a term applied indifferently to the Rays and to the Rivers.

All these sets of seven depend upon the Vedic classification of the fundamental principles, the *tattvas*, of existence, according to Sri Aurobindo. The enquiry into the number of these *tattvas* greatly interested the speculative mind of the ancients.

In Indian philosophy, we find various answers ranging from the one upward and running into the twenties. In Vedic thought, the basis chosen is the number of the psychological principles, as all existence is conceived by the Rishis as a movement of conscious being. For the Vedic Rishis, there are no mere dry metaphysical distinctions, but closely connected with a living psychological practice.

In the Veda we find the number of the principles variously stated. According to Sri Aurobindo, the full number ordinarily recognized is seven. It is arrived at by adding the three divine principles, namely, *Sat*, *Cit* and *Ananda* to the three mundane principles, namely, Mind, Life and Body, and interpolating a link principle, which is that of the Truth-Consciousness, *rtam brhat*.

All these principles are supposed to be inseparable and omnipresent. They, therefore, apply themselves to each separate formation of Nature. The seven Thoughts, for instance, are Mind applying itself to each of the seven planes, and formulating Matter-mind. The seven planes are the nervous mind, the pure mind, the truth mind, etc culminating in the highest summit, *paramaa paraavat*.

Similarly, the seven Rays or Cows are Aditi, the infinite Mother, the Cow un-slayable, supreme Nature or infinite Consciousness, pristine source of the later idea of *Prakrti* or *Shakti*, the Mother of things taking form on the seven planes of her world-action as energy of conscious being.

Similarly, the seven Rivers are conscious currents corresponding to the sevenfold substance of the ocean of Being, which appears formulated in the seven worlds enumerated in the Puranas. It is their full flow in the human consciousness, which constitutes the entire activity of the being, his full treasure of substance, his full play of energy. In the Vedic image, his cows drink of the water of the seven rivers.

If this imagery is admitted, it looks to be the natural imagery for a people living the life, and placed in the surroundings of the ancient Aryans. On the other hand, if we relate it to the psychological levels or planes, the place of Sarasvati as one of the seven Rivers becomes clear.

Sarasvati is, then, the current, which comes from the Truth-principle, from the *rtam* to *Mahas*, which means the Large, *brhat*. We find this principle spoken of in the Veda as in the closing passage of our third hymn, as the Great Water, *maho arnah*, which is the origin of the later term, *Mahas*, *mahaan arnavah*. We see, in the third hymn, the close connection between Sarasvati and this Great Water.

## 11

### The Image of the Oceans and the Rivers

The three Riks of the third hymn of Madhuchchandas, in which Sarasvati has been invoked, run as follows.

*Paavakaa nah sarasvati vaajebhir vaajinivati;*

*yajnam vastu dhiyaavasuh.*

*Codayitri suunrtaanaam, cetanti sumatinaam;*

*yajnam dadhe sarasvati.*

*Maho arnah sarasvati, pra cetayati ketunaa;*

*dhiyo visvaa vi raajati (I.3.10-12).*

Sarasvati is the power of the Truth, which we call inspiration. Inspiration from the Truth purifies by getting rid of all falsehood, as all sin, according to the Indian thought, is merely falsehood, wrongly inspired emotion, wrongly directed will and action.

The central idea of life and ourselves from which we start is a falsehood, and all else is falsified by it. Truth comes to us as a light, a voice, compelling a change of thought, imposing a new discernment of ourselves, and all around us. Truth of thought creates truth of vision, and truth of vision forms in us truth of being. Out of truth of being (*satyam*) flows naturally truth of emotion, will and action. This is indeed the central notion or idea of the Veda.

Sarasvati, the inspiration, is full of her luminous plenitudes, rich in substance of thought. She upholds the sacrifice. The sacrifice is only the offering of the mortal being's activities to the divine by awakening his consciousness so that it assumes right states of emotion and right movements of thought in accordance with the Truth. Sarasvati pours her illuminations into the sacrifice and rises those truths which liberate the life and being from falsehood, weakness and limitation. It thus opens the doors of supreme felicity to the sacrificer.

This constant awakening and impulsion is summed up in the word perception, *ketu*, often called the divine perception, *daivya ketu*, to distinguish it



from the false mortal vision of things. Sarasvati brings into active consciousness in the human being the great flood or great movement, the Truth-Consciousness itself, and illumines with it all our thoughts.

This Truth-Consciousness is a supra-mental plane, a level of the being, *adreh saanu*, which is beyond our ordinary reach, and to which we have to climb with difficulty. It is not part of our waking consciousness, but is hidden from us in the sleep of the super-conscient. This is what Madhuchchhandas means when he says that Sarasvati, by the constant action of the inspiration, awakens the Truth to consciousness in our thoughts.

Mere grammatically, it is possible to render the verse (I.3.12) as follows.

‘Sarasvati, the great river, awakens us to knowledge by the perception, and shines in all our thoughts’.

If we understand by the expression ‘the great river’, the physical river in the Punjab, there is no coherence of thought, and looks rather odd. But it is possible to suppose that Sarasvati means the great flood of inspiration and that there is no reference to the great ocean of the Truth-Consciousness.

In the Vedic writings, Sarasvati is also spoken of as the secret self of Indra, an expression that has no sense if Sarasvati is only a physical river and Indra, the god of the sky. But it will have a profound and striking significance if Indra is considered the illumined Mind and Sarasvati the Inspiration that proceeds from the hidden plane of the supra-mental Truth.

But it is not possible to give Sarasvati so important a place with regard to the other gods, by interpreting the phrase *mahnā mahato arnavasya* in the sense ‘by the greatness of Sarasvati’. The gods act by the power of the Truth, *rtena*, but Sarasvati is only one of the deities of the Truth, and not even the most important or universal of them. The interpretation for the hymns stated earlier alone appears sound and reasonable.

The Vedic Rishis used the image of water, a river or an ocean, in a figurative sense and as a psychological symbol. Existence itself is constantly spoken of as an ocean in the Veda, Purana and even philosophical reasoning. The Veda speaks of two oceans, the upper and the lower waters. These are the oceans of

the sub-conscious, dark and inexpressive, and the ocean of the super-conscious, luminous and eternal expression but beyond the human mind.

Vamadeva speaks of these two oceans in the last hymn of the fourth Mandala.

*Samudraad uurmir madhumaan udaarad,  
upaamsunaa sam amrtatvam aanat;  
ghrtasya naama guhyam yad asti,  
jihvaa devaanaam amrtasya naabhih (IV.58.1).*

‘A honeyed wave climbs up from the ocean, and by means of this mounting wave which is the Soma (*amsu*) one attains entirely to immortality; that wave or that Soma is the secret name of the clarity (*ghrtasya*, the symbol of the clarified butter); it is the tongue of the gods; it is the nodus (*naabhi*) of immortality.’

The sea, the honey, the Soma, and the clarified butter in this passage are all psychological symbols. What Vamadeva means to say clearly is that out of the sub-conscious depths in us arises a honeyed wave of Ananda or pure delight of existence. It is by this Ananda that we can arrive at immortality. This Ananda is the secret being, the secret reality behind the action of the mind in its shining clarity.

Soma, the god of the Ananda, according to the Vedanta, too, is that which has become mind or sensational perception. In other words, all mental sensation carries in it a hidden delight of existence, and strives to express that secret of its own being. Therefore, Ananda is the tongue of the gods with which they taste the delight of existence. It is the nodus in which all the activities of the immortal state or divine existence are bound together.

Vamadeva goes on to say further.

*Vayam naama pra bravaamaa ghrtasya,  
asmin yajne dhaarayaamaa namobhih;  
upa brahmaa srnavac chasyamaanam,  
catuhsrngo avamid gaura etat (IV.58.2).*

‘Let us give expression to this secret name of the clarity, that is to say, let us bring out this Soma-wine, this hidden delight of existence; let us hold it in this world-sacrifice by our surrendering or submission to Agni, the divine Will or Conscious-power, which is the Master of being. He is the four-horned Bull of the worlds, and when he listens to the soul-thought of man in its self-expression, he ejects this secret name of delight from its hiding place’.

In passing, we may observe that as the wine and the clarified butter here are only symbolic, the sacrifice also must be symbolic. In such hymns as these, the ritual no longer holds. What emerges is the Vedantic truth, the secret of the Veda.

There can be no doubt as to the nature of the ocean of which Vamadeva speaks. In the fifth verse, he openly describes it as the ocean of the heart, *hrdyaat samudraat*. The flow, therein, becomes progressively purified by the mind and the inner heart, *antar hrdaa manasaa puuyamaanaah*. In the closing verse, he speaks of the whole of existence being triply established, first in the seat of Agni, second in the heart and third in the life of man. The seat of Agni is the Truth-Consciousness, Agni’s own home, *svam damam, rtam brhat*. The heart is the sea, the same as the heart-ocean.

Dhaaman te visvam bhuvanam adhisritam,  
antah samudre hrdayantar aayusi. (IV.58.11)

‘The super-conscious, the sea of the sub-conscious, the life of the living being between the two’ – this is the Vedic idea of existence.

The sea of the super-conscious is the goal of the rivers of clarity, of the honeyed wave. The sea of the sub-conscious in the heart within is their place of rising. This upper sea is spoken of as the Sindhu, a word, which may mean either river or ocean. But, in this hymn, it clearly means ocean.

Vamadeva speaks of these rivers of clarity in a remarkable way. First he says that the gods sought and found the clarity, the *ghrtam*, triply placed and hidden by the Panis in the cow, *gavi*. It is beyond doubt that *gauh* is used in the Veda in the double sense of Cow and Light. The Cow is the outer symbol; and the inner meaning is the Light.

The figure of the cows stolen and hidden by the Panis is constant in the Veda. Here the sea is a psychological symbol, the heart-ocean, samudre hr̥di; the Soma is a psychological symbol; and the clarified butter is a psychological symbol. As such, the cow in which the gods find the clarified butter hidden by the Panis must also be a symbol of inner illumination, and not physical light. The Cow is really Aditi, the infinite consciousness hidden in the sub-conscious, and the triple ghr̥tam is the triple clarity of the liberated sensation. The sensation finds its secret of delight, of the thought-mind attaining to light and intuition, and of the truth itself, the ultimate supra-mental vision.

This is clear from the second half of the verse (IV.58.4) in which it is said thus. 'One Indra produced, one Surya, one the gods fashioned by natural development out of Vena'. The symbolism is clear. Indra is the Master of the thought-mind; Surya is of the supra-mental light; Vena is Soma, the master of mental delight of existence, creator of the sense-mind.

Panis here are spiritual enemies, powers of darkness. They are not Dravidian gods or tribes or merchants as some scholars presume them to be.

In the next verse, Vamadeva says of the streams of the ghr̥tam that they move from the heart-ocean shut up in a hundred prisons (pens) by the enemy so that they are not seen. The enemy Pani, Vritra of the hymns, is purely a psychological conception.

Vamadeva says thus. 'These move from the heart-ocean, penned by the enemy in a hundred enclosures they cannot be seen; I look toward the streams of the clarity, for in their midst is the Golden Reed. Entirely they stream like flowing rivers becoming purified by the heart within and the mind; these move, waves of the clarity, like animals under the mastery of their driver. As if on a path in front of the Ocean (Sindhu, the upper ocean), the mighty ones move compact of forceful speed but limited by the vital force (vaata, vaayu), the streams of clarity; they are like a straining horse, which breaks its limits, as it is nourished by the waves' (IV.58.5-7).

On the very face of it, the above passage is the poetry of a mystic concealing his sense from the profane under a veil of images. What he means here is that the divine knowledge is all the time flowing behind our thoughts, but is shut

from us by the internal enemies who limit our material of mind to the sense-action and sense perception. Our being seeks to attain to the super-conscious, but is limited by the nervous action of the sense-mind. They are like horses, controlled and reined in. 'Only when the waves of the Light have nourished their strength in full does the straining steed break these limits, and they flow freely towards That from which the Soma-wine is pressed out and the sacrifice is born', in the words of Sri Aurobindo.

*Yatra somah suuyate yatra yajno*

*ghrtasya dhaaraa abhi tat pavante* (IV.58.9).

This goal is explained to be that which is all honey – *ghrtasya dhaaraa madhumat pavante* (IV.58.10). It is Ananda, the divine Beatitude. That this goal is the Sindhu, the super-conscious ocean, is made clear in the last Rik.

*Apaam anike samithe ya aabhrtah,*

*tam asyaama madhumantam ta uurmin* (IV.58.11).

'May we taste that honeyed wave of thine (of Agni, the divine Purusa, the four-horned Bull of the worlds), which is borne in the force of the Waters where they come together.'

We find this fundamental idea of the Vedic Rishis brought out in the Hymn of Creation (X.129.3-5) where the sub-conscious is thus described.

'Darkness hidden by darkness in the beginning was this all, an ocean without mental consciousness ... Out of it the One was born by the greatness of its energy. It first moved in it as desire, which was the first seed of mind. The Masters of Wisdom found out in the non-existent that which builds up the existent; in the heart they found it by purposeful impulsion and by the thought-mind. Their ray was extended horizontally; there was something above, there was something below.'

In this passage, the same ideas are brought out as in Vamadeva's hymn, but without the veil of images. Out of the sub-conscious ocean, the One arises in the heart first as desire. He moves there in the heart-ocean as an unexpected desire of the delight of existence, and this desire is the first seed of what afterwards

appears as the sense-mind. The gods thus find out the means of building up the existent, the conscious being, out of the sub-conscious darkness. They find it in the heart and bring it out by the growth of thought and purposeful impulsion, *pratisyaa*.

By *pratisyaa* is meant mental desire as distinguished from the first vague desire that arises out of the sub-conscious in the merely vital movements of nature. The conscious existence, which they thus create, is stretched out as if it were horizontally between two other extensions. Below is the dark sleep of the sub-conscious; above is the luminous secrecy of the super-conscious. These are the lower and the upper ocean.

The Vedic imagery throws a clear light on the similar symbolic images of the Puranas. One famous symbol is that of Vishnu sleeping after the *pralaya* on the folds of the snake Ananta upon the ocean of sweet milk. Some people say that superstitious Hindu priests or poets wrote the Puranas, and it is a vain ingenuity to seek for a spiritual meaning in these fables.

These 'superstitious' poets have put these fables in the Puranas for a purpose. In the case of the parable just mentioned above, the name of Vishnu's snake is Ananta, meaning the Infinite. The authors are very clear that the image is only an allegory. Vishnu, the all-pervading Deity, sleeps, in the periods of non-creation, on the coils of the Infinite. As for the ocean, the Vedic imagery shows that it must be the ocean of eternal existence. This ocean of eternal existence is an ocean of absolute sweetness, in other words, of pure Bliss. For, the sweet milk (itself a Vedic image) has, evidently, a sense not essentially different from the *madhu*, honey or sweetness of Vamadeva's hymn.

Thus it is possible to find that both the Veda and the Purana use the same symbolic images. For the Rishis, the ocean is the image of infinite and eternal existence. The image of a river or a flowing current is the symbol of the stream of consciousness of a human being. For, Sarasvati, one of the seven rivers, is the river of inspiration flowing from the Truth-Consciousness. The other six rivers are no more than psychological symbols.



## 12

**The Seven Rivers**

In the hymn of Vamadeva, the rivers, *ghrtasya dhaaraah*, are not rivers of clarified butter or of physical water, but psychological symbols. There is similar compelling evidence as to the image of the seven rivers in the hymn of the Rishi Vishvamitra to the god Agni. Here, Vishvamitra speaks of the seven rivers in language as remarkable and unmistakable as the language of Vamadeva about the rivers of clarity.

The Veda speaks constantly of the waters or the rivers, especially of the divine waters, *aapo devih*, or *aapo divyaah*. Occasionally, it speaks of the waters, which carry in them the light of the luminous solar world or the light of the sun, *svarvatir apah*.

The passage of the waters effected by the gods, or by man with the aid of the gods is a constant symbol. The three great conquests to which the human being aspires are the herds, the waters and the Sun or the solar world, *gaah*, *apah* and *svah*. The gods are in constant battle with the Vritras and Panis for these possessions.

The question is whether these references are to the rains of heaven, the rivers of northern India possessed or assailed by the Dravidians, the herds possessed or robbed from the Aryan settlers by the indigenous 'robbers', the Panis, or is there any deeper or spiritual meaning? Or, is the winning of Swar, simply the recovery of the Sun from its shadowing by the storm-cloud, or its seizure by eclipse, or its concealment by the darkness of Night? Or, does the conquest of Swar simply mean the winning of heaven by sacrifice? In either case, what is the sense of the curious collocation of cows, waters and the sun, or cows, waters and the sky?

It is rather a system of symbolic meanings in which the aspirations of a human being are indicated. The herds, indicated by the word *gaah*, convey the sense both of cows and rays of light, the illuminations from higher consciousness, which have their origin in the Sun of Light, the Sun of Truth. Swar itself conveys the sense of the world or plane of immortality governed by



that Light or Truth of the all-illuminating Sun, the Vast Truth, *rtam brhat*, the true Light. The divine waters, *aapo devih*, *divyaah* or *svarvatih* are the floods of the higher consciousness pouring on that mortal mind from that plane of immortality.

It is, no doubt, easy to point to passages or hymns in which, on the surface, there seems to be no need of any such interpretation, and the *Sukta* can be understood as a prayer or praise for the benediction. But the Veda cannot be interpreted by separate passages or hymns. To have any coherent or consistent meaning, we have to interpret it as a whole. To interpret different words and phrases differently in different contexts, in a light-hearted way, does not lead us to the original sense of the Vedic hymns.

If we adopt a more consistent method, serious difficulties in the way oppose themselves to the purely material sense. For instance, the second verse of the hymn of Vasishtha to the divine waters, *aapo devih*, *aapo divyaah*, runs thus: 'The divine waters that flow whether in channels dug or self-born, they whose movement is towards the ocean, pure, purifying – may those waters foster me' (VII.49.2).

Here, the sense is quite clear. It is to material waters, earthly rivers and canals. If the word *khanitrimaah* means simply 'dug', it means wells, too. It is possible to render this verse differently presuming that three kinds of waters are described. They are the waters of heaven, the rain, the water of wells and the water of rivers. But when we study the hymn as a whole, this does not stand.

The whole hymn runs as follows.

'May those divine waters foster me, the eldest (or greatest) of the ocean from the midst of moving flood that go purifying, not settling down, which Indra of the thunderbolt, the Bull, clove out.

The divine waters that flow whether in channels dug or self-born, whose movement is towards the ocean – may those divine waters foster me.

In the midst of whom King Varuna moves looking down on the truth and the falsehood of the creatures, they that stream honey and are pure and purifying – may those divine waters foster me.

In whom Varuna the King, in whom Soma, in whom all the gods have the intoxication of the energy, into whom Agni Vaishwanara has entered – may those divine waters foster me’ (VII.49.1-4).

It is evident that Vasishtha is referring here to the same waters, the same streams that Vamadeva hymns. The waters rise from the ocean and flow into the ocean; the honeyed wave rises upward from the sea; the streams of the clarity, *ghrtasya dhaaraah*, etc. They are the floods of the supreme and universal conscious existence in which Varuna moves, looking down on the truth and the falsehood of mortals. This is a phrase that cannot apply to the descending rains or the physical ocean.

Varuna in the Veda is not an Indian Neptune. He is not either the sky. He is the master of an ethereal wideness, an upper ocean, of the vastness of being, of its purity. In that vastness, he has made paths in the pathless infinite along with Surya, the Sun, the Lord of Truth. And the Light can move. From there, he looks down on the mingled truths and falsehoods of the mortal consciousness.

We may further note that these divine waters are those, which Indra has cloven out and made to flow upon the earth. Throughout the Rig-veda, this description of the seven rivers is uniformly applied.

That these waters of Vasishtha’s prayer are the same as the waters of Vamadeva’s great hymn is further demonstrated in another *Sukta* of Vasishtha.

‘O Waters, that supreme wave of yours, the drink of Indra, which the seekers of the Godhead have made for themselves, that pure, inviolate, clarity-streaming, most honeyed (*ghrtaprusam madhumantam*) wave of you – may we today enjoy.

O Waters, may the son of the waters (Agni), he of the swift rushings, foster that most honeyed wave of you; that way of yours in which Indra with the Vasus is intoxicated with ecstasy – may we, who seek the Godhead, taste today.

Strained through the hundred purifiers, ecstatic by their self-nature, they are divine and move to the goal of the movement of gods (to Supreme Ocean); they limit not the workings of Indra – they offer to the rivers a food of oblation full of the clarity (*ghrtavat*).

May the rivers, which the Sun has formed by his rays, from which Indra clove out a moving wave, establish for us the supreme good. And do ye, O gods, protect us ever by states of felicity' (VII.47.1-4).

In this passage, we have Vamadeva's *madhumaan uurmih*, the sweet intoxicating wave. It is plainly said that this honey, this sweetness is the Soma, the drink of Indra. Further, the epithet *satapavitraaha* refers, in the Vedic language, only to the Soma. It is the epithet of the rivers themselves; the honeyed wave is brought flowing from them by Indra; and its passage is cloven out on the mountains by the thunderbolt that slew Vritra. It states clearly that these waters are the seven rivers released by Indra from the hold of Vritra, the Besieger, the Coverer, and sent flowing down upon the earth.

What can the rivers be whose wave is full of Soma-wine, full of the *ghrta*, full of *uurj*, the energy? What are these waters that flow to the goal of the god's movement, that establish for man the supreme good? They cannot be physical rivers.

In the forty-ninth hymn (earlier referred to), the Rishi refers briefly to the divine waters as honey-streaming, *madhuscutah*, and speaks of the gods enjoying in them the intoxication of their energy, *uurjam madanti*. It is evident from this hymn that the honey or sweetness is the *madhu*, the Soma, the wine of the Ananda, of which the gods are ecstatic.

Obviously, these are the waters of the Truth and the Bliss that flow from the supreme ocean. These rivers do not flow on the earth, but in the heaven. They are prevented by Vritra, the Besieger, from flowing down upon the earth-consciousness in which we mortals live, until Indra intervenes. Indra, the god-mind, smites the Coverer with his flashing lightning and cuts out a passage for that earth-consciousness to flow.

The above only can be the rational, coherent and sensible explanation of the thought and language of the Vedic sages. For the rest, Vasishtha makes matters quite clear. These are the waters, which Surya has formed by his rays. Unlike earthly movements, these waters do not diminish or limit the workings of Indra, the supreme Mind. In other words, they are the waters of the Vast Truth, *rtam*

*brhat*, which creates the Bliss. These waters of the Truth, *rtasya dhaaraah*, establish for men the supreme good, felicity, the Bliss of the divine existence.

Further, the hymn (V.12.2) reinforces the view that these waters are of the Truth. The verse runs thus. 'O, perceiver of the Truth, perceive the Truth alone, cleave out many streams of the Truth'.

Either the above hymns or those of Vamadeva do not make an express mention of the seven rivers. Vishwamitra's hymn to Agni, which makes a mention of these seven rivers, is quite relevant. Here is an account of the verses.

'We have made the sacrifice to ascend toward the supreme, let the Word increase. With kindlings of his fire, with obeisance of submission they set Agni to his workings; they have given expression in the heaven to the knowings of the seers and they desire a passage for him in his strength, in his desire of the word.

Full of intellect, purified in discernment, the perfect friend (or, perfect builder) from his birth of Heaven and of Earth, he establishes the Bliss; the gods discovered Agni visible in the Waters, in the working of the sisters.

The seven Mighty Ones increased him who utterly enjoys felicity, white in his birth, ruddy when he has grown. They moved and laboured about him, the Mares around the newborn child; the gods gave body to Agni in his birth.

With his pure bright limbs he extended and formed the middle world purifying the will-to-action by the help of the pure lords of wisdom; wearing light as a robe about all the life of the Waters he formed in himself glories vast and without any deficiency.

He moved everywhere about the Mighty Ones of Heaven, and they devoured not, neither were overcome - they were not clothed, neither were they naked. Here the eternal and ever young goddesses from one womb held the one Child, they the Seven Words.

Spread out were the masses of him in universal forms in the womb of the clarity, in the flowing of the sweetness; here the fostering Rivers stood nourishing themselves; the two Mothers of the accomplishing god became vast and harmonized.

Borne by them, O child of Force, thou didst blaze out holding thy bright and rapturous embodiments; out flow the streams of the sweetness, the clarity, where the Bull of the abundance has grown by the Wisdom.

He discovered at his birth the source of the abundance of the Father and he loosed forth wide His streams, and wide His rivers. By his helpful comrades and by the Mighty Ones of Heaven he found Him moving in the secret places of existence, yet himself was not lost in their secrecy.

He bore the child of the Father and of him that begot him; one, he fed upon his many mothers in their increasing. In this pure Male both these powers in man (Earth and Heaven) have their common lord and lover; do thou guard them both.

Great in the unobstructed Vast he increased; yea, many Waters victoriously increased Agni. In the source of the Truth he lay down, there he made his home, Agni in the working of the undivided Sisters.

As the mover in things and as their sustainer he in the meeting of the Great Ones, seeking vision, straight in his lustres for the presser-out of the Soma-wine, he who was the father of the Radiances, gave them now their higher birth – the child of the Waters, the mighty and most strong Agni.

To the visible Birth of the Waters and of the growths of Earth the goddess of Delight now gave birth in many forms, she of the utter felicity. The gods united in him by the mind and they set him to his working that was born full of strength and mighty for the labour.

Those vast shinings clove to Agni straight in his lustre and were like bright lightning; from him increasing in the secret places of existence in his own seat within the shore-less Vast they milked out Immortality' (III.1.2-14).

It is absolutely clear that the above hymn has a mystic significance, and is no mere sacrificial ritualistic hymn. The seven rivers, the waters and the seven sisters stated therein cannot be the seven rivers of the Punjab. The waters in which the gods discovered the visible Agni cannot be terrestrial and material streams.

This Agni increases by knowledge, and makes his home and rest in the source of the Truth. Heaven and earth are the wives and lovers of this Agni. The divine waters in the unobstructed Vast, his own seat, increase him. Dwelling in that shore-less infinity, he yields to the illumined gods the supreme Immortality. This being so, can he be the god of physical Fire?

In this passage, the mystical, the spiritual and the psychological character of the burden of the Veda reveals itself openly, insistently, but in a disguise, though transparent. The secret truth of the Veda appears here, like the rivers of Vishwamitra's hymn, 'neither veiled nor naked'.

These Waters are the same as those of Vamadeva's hymn, of Vasishtha's, closely connected with the clarity and the honey, *ghrtasya yonau sravathe madhuunaam, scotanti dhaaraa madhuno ghrtasya*. They lead to the Truth; they are themselves the source of the Truth; and they flow in the unobstructed and shore-less Vast as well as here upon the earth.

They are figured as fostering cows (*dhenavah*), mares (*asvaah*); they are called *sapta vaanih*, the seven Words of the creative goddess *Vak*, speech, the expressive power of Aditi, of the supreme *Prakrti* who is spoken of as the Cow just as the *Deva* or *Purusa* is described in the Veda as *Vrishabha* or *Vrishan*, the Bull. They are, therefore, the seven strands of all being, the seven streams or currents of forms of movement of the one conscious existence.

This passage, though mysterious and enigmatic, becomes perfectly straightforward and coherent when once the right clue is found. We have only to fix the psychological function of Agni, the priest, the fighter, the worker, the truth finder, the winner of beatitude for man. This has been fixed in the first hymn of the Rig-veda, of Madhuchchhandas' description of Agni, 'the Will in works of the Seer true and most rich in varied inspiration'. Agni is the *Deva*, the All-Seer, manifested as conscious-force, or the Divine or the Cosmic Will, first hidden and building up the eternal worlds, then manifest, 'born', building up in man the Truth and the Immortality'.

The teaching of Vishwamitra is, in effect, that gods and men kindle this divine force by lighting the fires of the inner sacrifice. They enable it to work by their adoration and submission to it. In other words, they express in the pure

mentality, symbolized by *dyauh*, the knowings of the Seers, that is, the illuminations of Truth-Consciousness, which exceed Mind.

They do this to make a passage for this divine force, which aspires beyond mind, seeking right self-expression. This divine will, carrying in all its workings the secret of the divine knowledge, *kavikratuh*, befriends or builds up the mental and physical consciousness in man, *divah prthivyaah*. It perfects the intellect, purifies the discernment so that the gods and men grow to be capable of the 'knowings of the seers'. This enables the super-conscious truth conscient in us, and firmly establishes the Beatitude (III.1.2-3).

The rest of the passage describes the ascent of the divine conscious force, Agni. Agni is the Immortal in mortals, who, in the sacrifice, takes the place of the ordinary will and knowledge of man. It takes the mortal and physical consciousness to the immortality of the Truth and the Beatitude.

The Vedic Rishis speak of five births for man, five worlds of creatures where works are done, *panca janaah*, *pancha krstih* or *ksitih*. *Dyauh* and *prthivi* represent the pure mental and physical consciousness. Between them is the *antariksa*, the intermediate or the connecting level of the vital or nervous consciousness. *Dyauh* and *prthivi* are *rodasi*, are two firmaments. They have to be over-passed for us to find admission to the heaven other than that of the pure mind. This heaven is the wide, the Vast, which is the basis, the foundation (*budhna*) of the infinite consciousness, Aditi.

This Vast is the Truth, which supports the supreme triple world, those highest steps or seats (*padaani*, *sadaamsi*) of Agni, of Vishnu, those supreme Names of the Mother, the Cow, Aditi. The Vast or Truth is declared to be the own or proper seat or home of Agni, *svam damam*, *svam sadah*. This hymn describes Agni as ascending from earth to his own seat.

The gods visible in the Waters find this divine power in the working of the Sisters. These are the sevenfold Waters of the Truth, the divine Waters brought down from the heights of our being by Indra.

First it is secret in the earth's growths *osadhih*, the things that hold her heats, and has to be brought out by a pressure of the two *aranis*, earth and heaven. Therefore, it is called the child of the earth's growths and the child of the earth

and heaven. This immortal Force is produced by man with pain and difficulty from the workings of the pure mind upon the physical being.

But in the divine Waters, Agni is found visible, and easily born in all his strength, in all his knowledge, and in all his enjoyment. He is entirely white and pure, growing ruddy with his action as he increases (III.1.3).

From his very birth, the gods give him force, splendour and body. The seven mighty Rivers increase him in his joy. They move about this great newborn child, and labour over him as the mares, *asvaah* (III.1.4).

The rivers, usually named *dhenavah*, fostering cows, are here described as *asvaah*, Mares, because while the Cow is the symbol of consciousness in the form of knowledge, the Horse is the symbol of consciousness in the form of force. *Ashva*, the Horse is dynamic force of Life, and the rivers labouring over Agni on the earth become the waters of Life, the *Praana*, which moves and acts, and desires and enjoys.

Agni himself begins as material heat and power, manifests secondarily as Horse, and then only becomes the heavenly fire. His work is to give, as the child of the Waters, its full form, extension and purity to the middle world, the dynamic plane, *raja aatatanvaan*. He purifies the nervous life in man pervading it with his own pure bright limbs. He lifts upward its impulses and desires, its purified will in works (*kratum*) by the pure powers of the super-conscient Truth and Wisdom, *kavibhih pavitraih*. So he wears his vast glories, beyond desires and instincts, all about the life of the Waters (III.1. 4-5).

The sevenfold Waters thus rise upward and become the pure mental activity, the Mighty Ones of Heaven. There they reveal themselves as the first eternal ever-young energies, separate streams but of one origin, the seven Words or fundamental creative expressions of the divine Mind, *sapta vaanih*. They are of the same origin as they are all sourced in the super-conscient Truth.

This life of the pure mind is not like that of the nervous life, which devours its objects to sustain its moral existence. Its waters do not devour, but they do not fail. They are the eternal truth robed in a transparent veil of mental forms. Therefore, it is said that they are neither clothed nor naked (III.1. 6).



But this is not the last stage. The Force rises into the birthplace of the mental clarity, *ghrtasya* where the waters flow as streams of the divine sweetness, *sravathe madhuunaam*. There it assumes universal forms, masses of the vast and infinite consciousness.

As a result, the fostering rivers in the lower worlds are nourished by this descending higher sweetness, and the mental and physical consciousness. The latter are the two first mothers of the all-effecting Will, perfectly equal and harmonized by this light of the Truth, through this nourishing by the infinite Bliss. They bear the full force of Agni, the blaze of his lightning, the glory and rapture of his universal forms. This is for the reason that wherever the Lord, the Male, the Bull of the abundance is increased by the wisdom of the super-conscient Truth, there always flow the streams of the clarity, and the streams of the bliss (III.1. 7-8).

The Father of all things is the Lord and Male. He is hidden in the secret source of things, in the super-conscient. With his companion gods and the sevenfold Waters, Agni enters into the super-conscient, without disappearing from our conscient existence. He finds the source of the honeyed plenty of the Father of things, and pours them out on our life. He bears and himself becomes the Son, the pure *Kumara*, the pure Male, the One, the soul in man revealed in its universality. The mental and the physical consciousnesses in the human being accept him as their Lord and lover. Though one, he still enjoys the manifold movement of the rivers, the multiple cosmic energies (III.1. 9-10).

This infinite, into which he has entered and in which he grows, in which the many Waters, victoriously reaching their goal, *yasasah*, increase him, is the unobstructed Vast where the Truth is born. It is the shore-less infinite, his own natural seat in which he now takes up his home.

There, the seven rivers, the sisters, work no longer separated, though of one origin as on the earth and in the mortal life, but rather as indivisible companions *jaaminaam apasi svasrnaam*. In that entire meeting of the great ones, Agni moves in all things and up-bears all things. The rays of his vision are perfectly straight, no longer affected by the lower crookedness. He now gives the radiances of

knowledge, the brilliant herds this new and supreme birth. He turns them into divine knowledge, the immortal consciousness (III.1.11-12).

This also is his new and last birth. He was born as the Son of Force from the growths of the earth; he was born as the child of the Waters. Now he is born in many forms to the goddess of Bliss, the divine conscious Beatitude in the shoreless Infinite.

The gods or divine powers in man using the mind as an instrument reach him there, unite around him, set him to the great work of the world in this new, mighty and effective birth. They, the out-shinings of the vast consciousness, cleaves to this divine Force as its bright lightning. From him in the super-conscious, the shoreless vast, his own home, they draw for man the Immortality.

Such is the Vedic symbol of the seven rivers, of the Waters, of the five worlds, of the birth and ascent of Agni, which is also the upward journey of man and gods whose image man forms in himself, from level to level, of the great hill of being, *saanoḥ saanum*.

Once we seize the true sense of the symbol of the Cow and of the Soma, with a just conception of the psychological functions of the gods, all inconsistencies and obscurities disappear in the Veda. We then see the profound and luminous doctrine of the ancient Mystics, the secret of the Veda.



## 13

**The Herds of the Dawn**

The Seven Rivers of the Veda, the Waters, *aapah*, are usually designated or figured in the Vedic language as the seven Mothers or the seven fostering Cows, *sapta dhenavah*. The word *aapah* itself has, covertly, a double significance. The root *ap* meant to move, from which is derived, in all probability, the sense of waters, and 'to be' or 'to bring into being' as in *apatya*, a child or *appaa*, father. The seven Waters are the waters of being. They are the Mothers from whom all forms of existence are born.

There is another expression, *sapta gaavah*, the seven Cows or the seven Lights, and the epithet *saptagu*, that which has seven rays. *Gu* (*gvah*) and *go* (*gaavah*) bear this double sense of cows and radiances throughout the Vedic hymns.

In the ancient Indian system of thought, being and consciousness are aspects of each other. Aditi, infinite existence from whom the gods are born, is described as the Mother with her seven names and seven seats, *dhaamaani*. Aditi is also conceived as the Infinite Consciousness, the Cow, the primal Light manifest in seven Radiances, *sapta gaavah*.

The sevenfold principle of existence is, therefore, imagined, in one sense, from the figure of the Rivers that arise from the ocean, *sapta dhenavah* and, in another sense, from the figure of the Rays of the all-creating Father, Surya Savitri, *sapta gaavah*.

The image of the Cow is the most important of all the Vedic symbols. For the ritualist, the word 'go' means simply a physical cow, and nothing else. Similarly, 'asva' means simply a physical horse, as 'ghrta' means only water or clarified butter, as 'vira' means only a son, a retainer or servant.

When the Rishi prays to the Dawn, *gomad viravad dhehi ratnam uso asvaavat*, the ritualistic commentator interprets the invocation as a prayer for 'pleasant wealth to which are attached cows, men (or sons) and horses'. If these words are considered symbolic, the sense will run thus. 'Confirm in us a state of bliss full of light, of conquering energy and of force of vitality.'

It is, therefore, necessary to determine the significance of the word *go*, once and for all. If it proves to be symbolic, then the other words *asva*, horse, *vira*, man or hero, *apatya* or *prajaa*, offspring, *hiranya*, gold, *vaaja*, plenty, by which it is continually accompanied, must also assume a symbolic and kindred significance.

The image of the Cow is constantly associated in the Veda with the Dawn and the Sun. It also recurs in the legends of the recovery of the lost cows from the cave of the Panis by Indra and Brihaspati, with the aid of the hound *Sarama* and the Angirasa Rishis. The conception of the Dawn and the legend of the Angirasas are at the very heart of the Vedic cult, and hold the key to the secret of the significance of the Veda.

Even a perfunctory reading of the Vedic hymns to the Dawn makes it clear that the cows of the Dawn, the cows of the Sun are a symbol for Light. It is evident that we are to take the word in a double sense, 'light' as the true significance, 'cow' as the concrete image and verbal figure.

The sense of 'rays' is not in dispute in such passages as 'Indra for far vision made the Sun to ascend in heaven; he sped him all over the hill by his rays', *vi gobhir adrim airayat* (I.7.3). *Gobhih* here must mean 'radiances' not 'cows'. At the same time, the rays of Surya are the herds of the Sun. They are the cows said concealed by the enemy Vala, by the Panis.

When Madhuchchhandas invokes Indra, 'thou didst uncover the hole of Vala of the Cows', he means that Vala is the withholder of the Light and it is the concealed Light that Indra restores to the sacrificer.

When once this sense is established, the material explanation of the Vedic prayer for 'cows' is at once shaken. If they are not the physical herds for which the Rishis invoke Indra for restoration, but the shining herds of the Sun, of the Light, we are justified in considering that the same figure applies when there is the simple prayer for cows.

For instance, in the verses, I.4.1-2, it is said of Indra, the maker of perfect forms, that his ecstasy of Soma-wine is verily 'cow-giving', *godaa id revato madah*. When we consider the Cow the symbol of Light, we are to understand the verses to mean that Indra, when full of the Soma-ecstasy, is sure to give us the Light.

In the hymns to the Dawn, the symbolic sense of the Cows as Light is equally clear. Dawn is described always as *gomati*, which must mean luminous or radiant. But the image of the cows is there in the epithet, for Usha is not only *gomati*, but also *gomati asvaavati*. She has always with her, her cows and her horses. She creates Light for the entire world and opens out the darkness as the pen of the Cow (I.92.4). Here, that cow is the symbol of light is beyond doubt.

We may note that in the hymn I.92.16, the Ashwins are asked to drive downward their chariot on a path that is radiant and golden, *gomad hiranyavad*. Besides, Dawn is said to be drawn in her chariot, sometimes by ruddy cows, sometimes by ruddy horses. 'She yokes her host of the ruddy cows', *yunkte gavaam arunaanaam anikam* (I.124.11), meaning that 'she yokes her host of the ruddy rays'.

Dawn is described as the Mother of the cows (radiances), *gavaam janitri akrtā pra ketum* (I.124.5) - 'the Mother of the cows (radiances) has created vision'. Elsewhere it is said of her action, 'vision (or) perception has dawned now where naught was'. It is clear that the cows, in this verse, are the shining herds of the Light.

She is also praised as 'the leader of the shining herds', *netri gavaam* (VII.76.6). There is an illuminating verse in which the two ideas are combined, 'the Mother of the herds, the guide of the days', *gavaam maataa netri ahnaam* (VII.77.2).

To remove the veil of the image entirely, the Veda itself states that the herds are a figure for the rays of the Light. 'Her happy days come into sight like the cows released into movement', *prati bhadraa adrksata gavaam sargaa na rasmayah* (IV.52.5). Another verse is more illuminating and direct. 'Thy cows (rays) remove the darkness and extend the Light', *sam te gaavas tama aa vartayanti, jyotir yacchanti*. It cannot, of course, be disputed that *gauh* means light in the Veda. For instance, when it is said that Vritra is slain *gavaa*, by light, there is no question of the physical cow; the question is of the use of the double sense, and of the cow as a symbol.

These shining herds do not only draw Dawn; and the Dawn brings them as a gift to the sacrificer. Like Indra in his Soma-ecstasy, she is a giver of the Light. Vasishtha describes her in a hymn as sharing in the action of gods by which the

strong places where the herds are concealed are broken open and they are given to men. 'True with the gods who are true, great with the gods who are great, she breaks open the strong places, and gives of the shining herds; the cows low towards the dawn', *rujad drlhaani dadad usriyaanaam, prati gaava usasam vaavasanta* (VII.75.7).

In the very next verse, she is asked to confirm or establish, for the sacrifices *gomad ratnam asvaavat purubhojah*, a state of bliss full of the light (cows), of the horses (vital force) and of many enjoyments. The herds, which Usha gives, are, therefore, the shining troops of the Light recovered by the gods and the Angirasa Rishis from the strong places of Vala and Panis. The wealth of cows (and horses) for which the Rishis constantly pray can be no other than a wealth of this same Light.

It is impossible to suppose that the cows, which Usha is said to give in the verse VII.75.7 are different from the cows, which are prayed for in the next verse. It cannot be that the word in the former verse means light, and in the next physical cows. It cannot be that the Rishi uses the same word in two different senses in two successive verses.

Sometimes, the prayer is not for luminous delight or luminous plenitude, but for a luminous impulsion or force. One verse reads thus: 'Bring to us, O Daughter of Heaven, luminous impulsions along with the rays of the Sun.' *gomatir isa aa vaha duhitar divah, saakam suuryasya rasmithih* (V.79.8). Sayana explains that to mean 'shining foods'. If it means food, we have to understand the phrase as 'food of cow's flesh'. This makes an absurd reading. That the verse refers to 'luminous impulsions' is proved by another verse of the Rig-veda wherein the Ashwins are invoked to give the luminous impulsions that carry us through to the other side of the darkness, *yaa nah piparad asvinaa jyotismati tamas tirah, taam asme raasaathaam isam* (I.46.6).

From the above examples, we can see that the image of the Cow as Light is pervading in the Rig-veda. Inevitably it points to a psychological sense for the Veda. Some doubts arise. Supposing that we accept that the cow is an image for Light, can we not understand it simply as light of the day, as the language of the Veda seems to intend. Why are we to suppose a symbol where there is only an

image? Why do we have a double figure in which 'cow' means the light of dawn and the light of dawn is again the symbol of an inner illumination? Why are we to take that the Rishis were praying only for spiritual illumination, and not for daylight?

The Rishis speak of the undeviating rule of the action of the gods, and of Dawn following always the path of the eternal Law or Truth. They constantly assert of the Light found by the Fathers as in the verse 'Our Fathers found out the hidden light, by the truth in their thoughts they brought to birth the Dawn', *guulham jyothih pitaro anvavindan, satyamantraa ajanayam usaasam* (VII.76.4). This verse has only a psychological or spiritual sense. There is no just reason for a different treatment of the Veda.

If, however, we are to give a naturalistic explanation to the Vedic hymns, it is quite clear that the Vedic Dawn and Night cannot be the dawn and night of India. It is only in the Arctic regions that the attitude of the Rishis towards these natural circumstances and the statements about the Angirasas become intelligible at all. Even though it is extremely probable that the memories of the Arctic Home enter into the external sense of the Veda, the Arctic theory does not exclude an inner sense behind the ancient images drawn from Nature. Nor does it dispense with the necessity for a more coherent and straightforward explanation of the hymns to the Dawn.

For instance, the hymn of Praskanwa Kanwa to the Ashwins (I.46) has a reference to the luminous impulsion that carries us through to the other shore of the darkness. This hymn is intimately connected with the Vedic idea of the Dawn and the Night. It contains references to many of the fixed Vedic images, to the path of the Truth, the crossing of the rivers, the rising of the sun, the connection between the Dawn and the Ashwins, the mystic effect and oceanic essence of the Soma-wine. The hymn runs as follows.

'Lo, the Dawn than which there is none higher, opens out full of delight in the Heavens; O Ashwins, the Vast of you I affirm, ye of whom the Ocean is the mother, accomplishers of the work who pass beyond through the mind to the felicities and, divine, find that substance by the thought ...



O Lords of the Voyage, who mentalize the word, this is the dissolver of your thinking - drink ye of the Soma violently; give to us that impulsion, O Ashwins which, luminous, carries us through beyond the darkness.

Travel for us in your ship to reach the other shore beyond the thoughts of the mind. Yoke, O Ashwins, your car - your car that becomes the vast-oared ship in Heaven, in the crossing of its rivers!

By the thought the powers of Delight have been yoked. The Soma-powers of delight in heaven are that substance in the place of the Waters. But where shall you cast aside the veil you have made to conceal you?

Nay, Light has been born for the joy of the Soma; the Sun that was dark has shot out its tongue towards the Gold. The path of the Truth has come into being by which we shall travel to that other shore; seen is all the wide way through Heaven.

The seeker grows in his being towards increasing manifestation, after manifestation of the Ashwins when they find satisfaction in the ecstasy of the Soma. Do ye, dwelling (or, shining) in the all-luminous Sun, by the drinking of the Soma, by the Word come as creators of the bliss into our humanity.

Dawn comes to us according to your glory when you pervade all our worlds and you win the Truths out of the Nights. Both together drink, O Ashwins, both together extend to us the peace by expanding, whose wholeness remains un-torn' (I.46)

The above is the straightforward and natural sense of the hymn. The Night is clearly the image of an inner darkness. By the coming of the Dawn, the Truths are won out of the Nights. This is the rising of the Sun, which was lost in the obscurity – the familiar figure of the lost Sun recovered by the gods and the Angirasa Rishis. It is the Sun of Truth that shoots out its tongue of fire towards the golden Light. This is because *hiranya*, gold is the concrete symbol of the higher Light, the gold of the Truth. It is this treasure, not golden coins, for which the Vedic Rishis pray to the gods.

This great change from the inner obscuration to the illumination is effected by the Ashwins, lords of the joyous upward action of the mind and the vital powers.

This is done through the immortal wine of the Ananda poured into mind and body, and there drunk by them. They mentalize the expressive Word; they lead us into the heaven of pure mind beyond this darkness. There, by the Thought, they set the powers of the Delight to work.

The power of the Soma-wine helps them to dissolve all mental constructions. They cross over the heavenly Waters and cast aside the veil. They go beyond Mind, and the last attainment is described as the crossing of the rivers, the passage through the heaven of the pure mind, the journey, by the path of the Truth, to the other side. Not until we reach the highest supreme pinnacle, *paramaa paraavat*, do we rest at last from the great human journey!

Not only in this hymn, but also everywhere in the Rig-veda, Dawn comes as a bringer of the Truth, is herself the outshining of the Truth. She is the divine Dawn, and the physical dawning is only her shadow and symbol in the material universe.



## 14

**Dawn and the Truth**

Usha, the Dawn, is described repeatedly in the Veda as the Mother of the Cows. If the cow is a Vedic symbol for the physical light or for spiritual illumination, then the phrase ‘the Mother of the Cows’ is to bear the sense of either the source of the physical rays of the daylight or the source that creates the radiances of the supreme Day, the splendour and clarity of the inner illumination.

In the Rig-veda, Aditi, the Mother of the gods, is described both as the Cow and as the general Mother. She is the supreme Light, and all radiances proceed from her. Psychologically, Aditi is the supreme or infinite Consciousness, mother of the gods, as opposed to *Danu* or *Diti*, the divided consciousness, mother of Vritra and the other *Danavas* – enemies of gods and of man in progress. Incidentally, the word Aditi is not etymologically the opposite of Diti. The two words derive from entirely different roots, *ad* and *di*.

In a more general aspect, Aditi is the source of all the cosmic forms of consciousness from the physical upward; the seven cows, *sapta gaavah*, or her forms. There are seven names and seven seats of the Mother. Usha, as the mother of the cows, can only be a form or power of this supreme Light, of this supreme Consciousness, of Aditi. In fact, she is thus described in the verse I.113.19, *maataa devaanaam aditer anikam*, ‘Mother of the gods, form (or, power) of Aditi’.

But the illumining dawn of the undivided Consciousness is always the dawn of the Truth. As Usha is that illumining dawn, we find her frequently associated with the idea of the Truth, the *rtam* in the Rig-veda.

Usha is described as ‘following effectively the path of the Truth’, *rtasya panthaam anveta saadhu* (I.124.3). Here neither the ritualistic nor the naturalistic sense suggested for *rtam* can at all apply. It carries no meaning if it is suggested that Usha follows the path of the sacrifice or of the water.

The Veda describes the sun as following the path of the Usha. But it is the natural image suggested to an observer of the physical dawn. Even if the phrase

does not specifically say so, the psychological significance intervenes. Then the sense will be that the dawn of illumination follows the path of the Truth or the lord of the Truth, Surya Savitri.

This idea is repeated with clearer psychological indications. The verse states thus. 'She moves according to the path of the Truth and, as one that knows, she limits not the regions', *rtasya panthaam anveti saadhu, prajaanativa na diso minaati* (I.124.3). Dawn adheres to the path of the Truth, and because she has this knowledge or perception, she does not limit the infinity, the *brhat*, of which she is the illumination.

That this is the true sense of the verse is corroborated by another verse, which describes Usha *dyutad-yaamaanam brhatim rtena rtaavarim svar aavahantim*, 'of a luminous movement, vast with the Truth, supreme in (or possessed of) the Truth bringing with her *Swar*' (V.80.1). We have the idea of the Vast, the idea of the Truth, the idea of the solar light of the world of *Swar*. All these ideas are associated with no mere physical dawn.

This view is further strengthened if we compare the above ideas with the idea in the verse, which reads thus. 'Dawn born in heaven opens out things by the Truth; she comes manifesting the greatness', *vyusaa aavo divijaa rtena, aaviskrnvaanaa mahimaanam aagaat* (VII.75.1). Here, Dawn is said to be revealing all things by the power of the Truth, and the result is the manifestation of a certain Vastness.

The same idea is stated with the use of another word for Truth, *satya*, which does not, like *rtam*, carry any ambiguity. The verse reads thus. 'Dawn true in her being with the gods who are true, vast with the gods who are vast', *satyaa satyehhir mahati mahadbhir devi devebhih* (VII.75.7).

Vamadeva insists on this truth of the Dawns in one of his hymns (IV.51). There he speaks of the Dawn 'encompassing the worlds immediately with horses yoked by the Truth', *rtayughbir asvaih*. But he speaks of them as *bhadraa rtajaatasatyaah*, 'happy, and true because born from the Truth' (VI.65.2). In another verse, he describes them as 'the goddesses who awake from the seat of the Truth' (IV.51.8).

The close connection of *bhadra* and *rta* reminds us of the same connection of ideas in Madhuchchhandas hymn to Agni. In the psychological interpretation of the Veda, we meet with the same connection, the conception of the Truth as the path to the Bliss. Usha, the dawn of the illumination of the Truth, must necessarily also bring joy and beatitude.

This idea of the Dawn as the bringer of delight is seen in the Veda continually. Vasishtha gives a positive expression to it in the verse, which reads thus. 'Thou who bearest to the giver the beatitude as a manifold and desirable ecstasy', *yaa vahasi puru spaarham ratnam na daasuse mayah* (VII.81.3).

A common Vedic word is *suunrtaa*, which Sayana interprets as 'pleasant and true speech'. But it seems to have often the more general sense of 'happy truths'. Dawn is sometimes described as *rtaavari*, full of the Truth, sometimes as *suunrtaavari*.

She comes uttering her true and happy words, *suunrtaa irayanti*. As she is described as leader of the radiant herds and the leader of the days, so she is described as the luminous leader of the happy truths, *bhaasvati netri suunrtaanaam* (I.92.7).

This close connection in the mind of the Vedic Rishis between the idea of light, of the rays or cows, and the idea of the truth is evident in the verse, which reads thus. 'Dawn with the shining herds, with thy steeds, widely luminous, full of happy truths', *gomati asvaavati vibhaavari.... suunrtaavati* (I.92.14)! A similar verse points the significance of this collocation of the epithets thus. 'Dawns with their radiances (herds), their swiftness (horses), rightly knowing all things', *gomatir asvaavatir visvasuvidah* (I.48.2).

These are, by no means, all the indications of the psychological character of the Vedic Dawn in the Rig-veda. Dawn is constantly represented as awakening to vision, perception, and right movement. Gotama Rahugana says, 'The goddess fronts and looks upon all the words, the eye of vision shines with an utter wideness; awakening all life for movement she discovers speech for all that thinks', *visvasya vaacam avidat manaayoh* (I.92.9).

We have here a Dawn that releases life and mind into their fullest wideness. We miss the true sense of the Rishi if we limit the suggestion to the mere

reawakening of earthly life into the physical dawning. The word used for the vision brought by the Dawn, *caksuh*, may indicate only physical light. But in other passages, the word used *ketuh* means perception, a perceptive vision in the mental consciousness, a faculty of knowledge. Usha is *pracetaah*, she who has this perceptive knowledge. Mother of the radiances, she has created this perceptive vision of the mind, *gavaam janitri akarta pra ketum* (I.124.5).

Usha is herself that vision. 'Now perceptive vision has broken out into its wide dawn where naught was before', *vi nuunam ucchaad asati pra ketuh* (I.124.11). She is, by her perceptive power, possessed of the happy truths, *cikitvit suunrtaavari* (IV.52.4).

This vision, this perception is that of the Immortality, *amrtasya ketuh* (III.61.3). It is the light of the Truth and the Bliss, which constitute the higher or immortal consciousness.

Night in the Veda is the symbol of our obscure consciousness, of ignorance in knowledge and of stumblings in will and act, therefore, of all evil, sin and suffering. Light is the coming of the illuminated higher consciousness, which leads to truth and happiness.

We find constantly the opposition of the two words *duritam* and *suvitam*. *Duritam* literally means wrong doing, figuratively all that is wrong and evil, all sin, error, and calamity. *Suvitam* literally means right or good going, and expresses all that is good and happy. It means, especially, the felicity that comes by following the right path.

Vasishtha, therefore, says of the goddess, 'Dawn comes divine repelling by the Light all darknesses and evils', *visvaa tamaamsi duritaa*. (VII.78.2). In a number of verses, the goddess is described as awakening, impelling or leading men to right going, to the happiness, *suvitaaya*.

Therefore, she is the leader not only of happy truths, but also of our spiritual wealth and joy. She is the bringer of the felicity, which is reached by man or brought to him by the Truth, *esaa netri raadhasah suunrtaanaam* (VII.76.7).

This wealth for which the Rishis pray is described under the figure of material riches. It is *gomad asvaavad viravad*, or it is *gomad asvaavad rathavacca*

*raadha*. Go, the cow, *asva*, the horse, *prajaa* or *apatya*, the offspring, *nr* or *vira*, the man or hero, *hiranya*, gold, *ratha*, the chariot, *sravas*, food or fame are said to be the constituents of the wealth desired by the Vedic sages. Nothing could be more earthly material. These are the blessings for which a race of lusty barbarians would pray to their primitive gods. Not the Vedic Rishis!

All the earthly riches stated above have each a psychological sense. They are not material riches, which the Vedic Rishis pray for. Their prayer is for dawning of illumination.

Dawn is described as *gomati asvaavati viravati*. The epithets *gomati* and *asvaavati* applied to her are only symbolical, and mean 'radiant with illuminations of knowledge, and accompanied by the swiftness of force'. Similarly, the epithet *viravati* signifies that she is attended by conquering energies or some such symbolic sense.

This is evident in the verse, *yaa gomatir usasah sarvaviraah.... taa asvadaa asnavat somasutvaa*, which means, 'the Dawn is the inner dawn, which brings to man all the varied fulnesses of his widest being, force, consciousness, joy; it is radiant with its illuminations, it is accompanied by all possible powers and energies, it gives man the full force of vitality so that he can enjoy the infinite delight of that vaster existence' (I.113.18).

It is not appropriate to take *gomad asvaavad viravad raadha* in the physical sense. The very language of the Vedic text points to another truth. Therefore, the circumstances of this god-given wealth must be taken in a spiritual significance. The offspring, gold and chariots are symbolical. *Sravas* is not fame or food. Its psychological sense is higher knowledge, which comes, not to the senses or the intellect, but to the divine healing, and the divine vision of the Truth.

Similarly, the symbolism of the horse is evident in the hymns of Dirghatamas to the Horse of the Sacrifice, the hymns of various Rishis to the Horse Dadhikravan, and again in the opening of the Brhadaraanyaka Upanisad in which 'Dawn is the head of the Horse' is the first phrase of a very elaborate figure.



Similarly, the symbolic sense of the Vedic Horse is evident in the hymn of Vasishtha, which states thus. 'Happy, bringing the gods' eye of vision, leading the white Horse that has perfect sight, Dawn is seen expressed entirely by the rays, full of her varied riches, manifesting her birth in all things' (VII.77.3).

Similarly, the phrase the White Horse, which is applied to the god Agni who is the Seer-Will, *kavikratu*, the perfectly seeing force of divine will in its works, is only symbolical (V.11.4). The 'varied riches' she brings with her are also a figure, and certainly do not mean physical wealth.

So is the case with *raadhah dirghasruttamam* (VII.81.5), *rayim sravasyum* (VII.75.2), which is that rich state of being, that spiritually opulent felicity, which turns towards the knowledge (*sravasyu*), and has a far extended hearing for the vibrations of the Word that comes to us from the regions (*disah*) of the Infinite.

Thus the luminous figure of the Dawn liberates us from the material, ritual and ignorant misunderstanding of the Veda. It admits us to the heart of the Vedic knowledge.

## 15

### The Cow and the Angirasa Legend

The Vedic parable or legend of the Angirasa Rishis is the most important of all the Vedic myths.

The Rig-vedic hymns are, throughout, an invocation to certain 'Aryan' gods, friends and helpers of man, for ends, which are held supremely desirable (*vara*, *vaara*). These desirable ends or boons of the gods are summed up in the words *rayi*, *raadhas*, which may mean physically wealth or prosperity. Psychologically, they mean a felicity or enjoyment, which consists in the abundance of certain forms of spiritual wealth.

Man contributes, as his share of the joint effort, the work of the sacrifice, the Word, the Soma-wine and the *ghrta* or clarified butter. The gods are born in the sacrifice; they increase by the Word, the Wine and the *ghrta*; and in that strength, the ecstasy and intoxication of the Wine, they accomplish the aims of the sacrificer.

The chief elements of the wealth thus acquired are the Cow and the Horse. But there are others such as *hirnya*, gold, *vira*, men or heroes, *ratha*, chariots, *prajaa* or *apatya*, offspring.

The gods supply the very means of the sacrifice, the fire, the Soma, the *ghrta*, and they attend the sacrifice as its priests, purifiers, upholders, and heroes of its warfare. There are those who hate the sacrifice and the Word, attack the sacrificer and tear or withhold from him the coveted wealth. To protect the sacrifice from such beings, they have to be heroes of its warfare.

The chief conditions of the prosperity so ardently desired are the rising of the Dawn and the Sun, and the downpour of the rain of heaven and of the seven rivers, physical or mystic, called in the Veda the Mighty Ones of heaven. Even this prosperity – cows, horses, gold, men, chariots, and offspring – is not a final end in itself. All this is a means towards the opening up of the other worlds, the winning of Swar, the ascent to the solar heavens, and the attainment by the path of the Truth to the Light and to the heavenly Bliss where the mortal arrives at Immortality.

Such is the substance of the Rig-veda. But it has had the ritual and the mythological sense since ancient times. This sense has promoted the performance of sacrificial worship as the chief duty of man with a view to the enjoyment of wealth here, and heaven hereafter.

Even in modern times, there is a view of the Veda that it is worship of the personified sun, moon, stars, dawn, wind, rain, fire, sky, rivers and other deities of nature, the propitiation of these gods by sacrifice, the winning and holding of wealth in this life, and after death man's attainment to the Paradise of the gods.

These ideas may look valid for the vulgar, but they are not the inner sense of the Veda to the seers, the illumined minds (*kavi, vipra*) of the Vedic age. For them, these material objects are symbols of the immaterial. The cows are the radiances or illuminations of a divine Dawn; the horses and chariots are symbols of force and movement; gold is light; the shining wealth of a divine Sun is the true light, *rtam jyotih*.

The wealth acquired by the sacrifice as well as the sacrifice itself, in all their details, symbolize man's effort and his means towards a greater end, the acquisition of immortality. The aspiration of the Vedic seer is the enrichment and expansion of man's being.

Man's being gets enriched and expanded with the birth and the formation of the godheads in his life-sacrifice, the increase of the Force, Truth, Light, Joy of which they are the powers, until the soul of man rises and enters into the supreme felicity of a divine existence beyond heaven and earth. This ascent is the parable of the Angirasa Rishis.

All the gods are conquerors and givers of the Cows, the Horse and the divine riches. But it is the great deity Indra who is the hero and fighter in this warfare, and who wins for man the Light and the Force. Therefore, Indra is constantly addressed as the Master of the herds, *gopati*. He is even imagined as himself being the cow and the horse; he is the good milker whom the Rishi wishes to milk, and what he yields are perfect forms and ultimate thoughts. He is Vrishabha, the Bull of the herds. His is the wealth of the cows and the horses which man covets.

It is even said in the verse thus. 'O people, these that are the cows, they are Indra; it is Indra I desire with my heart and my mind' (VI.28.5). This identification of the cows and Indra is important.

The general image is that the Rishis seek the acquisition of this wealth as a conquest effected against the Dasyus. The Dasyus are represented as unjustly possessing the coveted riches, which have to be recovered from them by violence, with the aid of gods. The Dasyus who withhold or steal the cows are called the Panis, a word, which seems originally to have meant doers, dealers or traffickers. But this significance is sometimes coloured by its extended sense of 'misers'.

Their chief is Vala whose name signifies the circumscriber or 'encloser', as Vritra means the opponent, obstructor or enfolding coverer. To suggest that the Panis are the Dravidians and Vala is their chief or god is incompatible with the actual words of the Rishi, and their images and figures.

Vala dwells in a lair, a hole (*bila*) in the mountains. Indra and the Angirasa Rishis have to pursue him there, and force him to give up his wealth, for he is *vala* of the cows, *valasya gomatah* (I.11.5). The Panis are also represented as concealing the stolen herds in a cave of the mountain, which is called their concealing prison, *vavra*, or the pen of the cows, *vraja*, or sometimes in a significant phrase, *gavyam uurvam*, literally the cowey wideness, or in the other sense of *go* 'the luminous wideness', the vast wealth of the shining herds.

To recover the lost wealth, the sacrifice has to be performed. The Angirases, or else Brhaspati and the Angirases have to chant the true Word, the *mantra*. *Sarama*, the heavenly hound, has to find out the cows in the cave of the Panis. Indra, strong with the Soma-wine and the Angirases, the seers, his companions, have to follow the track, enter the cave or violently break open the strong places of the hill, defeat the Panis and drive upward the delivered herds.

When we interpret this parable, certain features need attention. Though the legend is precise in its images, it is not a simple mythological tradition. There appears a certain freedom and fluidity betraying the significant image behind the sacred tradition. Often it is stripped of the mythological aspect, and applied to the personal aspiration of the singer. It is an action of which Indra is always

capable. Although he has done it by means of the Angirasas, yet he repeats the type continually even in the present. He is constantly the seeker of the cows, *gavesanaa*, and the restorer of the stolen wealth.

Sometimes, we have only the fact of the stolen cows, and their recovery by Indra without any reference to *Sarama* or the Angirasas or the Panis. Again, it is not always Indra who recovers the herds.

We have for instance a hymn to Agni (V.2), a hymn of the Atris, in which the Rishi applies the image of the stolen cows to himself in a language, which clearly betrays its symbolism. Agni's mother Earth holds and conceals him in her womb unwilling to give him to his father Heaven, so long as she is compressed into limited form (*pesi*). He comes to birth when she becomes great and vast (*mahisi*).

The birth of Agni is associated with a manifestation or vision of luminous herds. 'I beheld afar in a field one shaping his weapons who was golden-tusked and pure-bright of hue; I give to him the *Amrita* (the immortal essence, Soma) in separate parts; what shall they do to me who have not Indra and who have not the word? I beheld in the field as if it were a happy herd ranging continuously, many, shining; they seized them not, for he was born; even those (cows) that were old, become young again.'

If these Dasyus, who have not Indra or the Word, are at present powerless to seize the luminous herds, it is because of the birth of this bright and formidable godhead. 'Who were they that divorced my strength, (*maryakam*, my host of men, my heroes, *vira*) from the cows? For they (my men) have no warrior and protector of the kine. Let those who took them from me, release them; he knows and comes driving to us the cattle'.

What are these shining herds, these cows, which were old, and become young again? Certainly, they are not physical herds. It is not an earthly field that is the scene of this splendid vision of the golden-tusked warrior god and the herds of the shining cattle. They can only be the herds of the divine Dawn. This mystical vision is surely a figure of the divine illumination. They are radiances that were stolen by the powers of darkness, and are now divinely recovered not by the god of the physical fire, but by the flaming Force, which was concealed in the

littleness of the material existence, and is now liberated into the clarities of an illumined mental action.

Indra is not, then, the only god, who can break up the cave, and restore the lost herds – radiances. There are, therefore, other deities to whom various hymns attribute this great victory.

Usha is one of them, the divine Dawn, mother of these herds. 'True with the gods who are true, great with the gods who are great, sacrificial godhead with the gods sacrificial, she breaks open the strong places, she gives of the shining herds; the cows low towards the Dawn!' (VII.75.7).

Agni is another. Sometimes, he wars by himself; and sometimes he wars along with Indra. 'Ye two warred over the cows, O Indra, O Agni' (Vi.60.2). Sometimes he wars along with Soma. 'O Agni and Soma, that heroic might of yours was made conscient when ye robbed the Pani of the cows' (I.93.4).

Soma, in another passage, is associated with Indra in this victory. 'This god, born by force, stayed, with Indra as his comrade, the Pani' (VI.44.22).

The Ashwins are also credited with the same achievement. 'Ye two open the doors of the strong pen full of the kine' (VI.62.11). 'O Angiras (the twin Ashwins are sometimes unified in a single appellation), ye two take delight by the mind and enter first in the opening of the stream of the cows' (I.112.18). Here the sense is evidently the liberated, out-flowing stream or the sea of the Light.

Brhaspati is more frequently the hero of this victory. 'Brhaspati, coming first into birth from the great Light in the supreme ether, seven-mouthed, multiply-born, seven-rayed, dispelled the darkness; he with his host that possess the *stubbh* and the Rik broke Vala into pieces by his cry. Shouting Brhaspati drove upwards the bright herds that speed the offering and they lowed in reply' (IV.50.4-5).

'Brhaspati is the hill-breaker, the first-born, the Angirasa.... Brhaspati conquered the treasures (*vasuuni*), great pens this god won full of the kine' (VI.73.1&3).

The Maruts also, singers of the Rik like Brhaspati, are associated, though less directly, in this divine action. 'He whom ye foster, O Maruts, shall break open

the pen' (VI.66.8). Elsewhere, there is a reference to the cows of the Maruts (I.38.2).

Pushan, the Increaser, a form of the sun god is also invoked for the pursuit and recovery of the stolen cattle. 'Let Pushan follow after our kine, let him protect our war-steeds.... Pushan, go thou after the kine... Let him drive back to us that which was lost' (VI.54.5-6 & 10).

Even Sarasvati becomes a slayer of the Panis. The hymn of Madhuchchhandas has this striking image. 'O Lord of the thunderbolt, thou didst uncover the hole of Vala of the cows; the gods, un-fearing, entered speeding (or putting forth their force) into thee' (I.11.5).

Another question arises. Is there a definite sense in these variations binding them together into a single coherent idea? Or, is it, at random, that the Rishis invoke one or another deity in the search and war for their lost cattle?

If we decide to take the ideas of the Veda as a whole, we shall find a very simple and sufficient answer. The matter of the lost herds is only part of a whole system of connected symbols and images. The sacrifice recovers them; the fiery god Agni is the flame, the power and the priest of the sacrifice. The Word recovers them; Brhaspati is the father of the Word, the Maruts are its singers or *brahmas, brahmaano marutah*; and Sarasvati is its inspiration. The Wine recovers them; Soma is the god of the Wine; and the Ashwins are its seekers, finders, givers and drinkers. The herds are the herds of Light, and the Light comes by the Dawn and by the Sun of whom Pushan is a form.

Finally, Indra is the head of these gods, lord of the light, king of the luminous heaven called Swar. We may say that Indra is the luminous or divine Mind. All the gods enter into him and take part in his unveiling of the hidden light.

There is thus a perfect appropriateness in the attribution of one and the same victory to these different deities, and also in Madhuchchhandas' image of the gods entering into Indra for the stroke against Vala. There is no confusion in or fluidity of ideas. The Rig-veda is perfect and beautiful in its coherence and unity.

Further, the conquest of the Light is only part of the great action of the Vedic sacrifice. The gods have to win by it all the boons, *visvaa vaaryaa*, which are necessary for the conquest of immortality. The emergence of the hidden illumination is only one result.

Force, the Horse, is as necessary as Light, the Cow. Vala must necessarily be reached, and the light won from his hold. But Vritra must be slain and the waters released. The emergence of the shining herds means the rising of the Dawn and the Sun. But that is incomplete without the sacrifice, the fire and the wine. All these things are different parts of one action, sometimes mentioned separately, sometimes in groups, sometimes together as if in a single action, a grand total conquest. The result of their possession is the revelation of the vast Truth and the conquest of Swar, the luminous world, called frequently the wide Otherworld, *urum u lokam* or simply *u lokam*. We are to appreciate this unity before we try to understand the separate introduction of these symbols in the various passages of the Rig-veda.

One hymn of just three verses keeps the unity of its sense and its symbolism in a perfect way.

‘He who is the hill-breaker, first-born, possessed of the truth, Brhaspati, the Angirasa, the giver of the oblation, pervader of the two worlds, dweller in the heat and light (of the sun), our father, roars aloud as the Bull to the two firmaments.’

‘Brhaspati, who, for man, the voyager, has fashioned that otherworld in the calling of the gods, slaying the Vritra forces, breaks open the cities, conquering foes and over-powering un-friends in his battles.’

‘Brhaspati conquers for him the treasures, great pens; this god wins full of the kine, seeking the conquest of the world of Swar, un-assailable; Brhaspati slays the Foe by the hymns of illumination (*arkaih*)’ (VI.73.1-3).

There is another passage, more mystic in its language. It brings in the idea of the dawn, and the restoration or new-birth of light in the sun, which are not expressly mentioned in the hymn to Brhaspati. This is in praise of Soma, which reads thus.



'This god born by force, stayed, with Indra as his comrade, the Pani; he it was wrested from his own unblest father (the divided being), his weapons of war and his forms of knowledge (*maayah*), he it was made the Dawns glorious in their lord, he it was created in the Sun the Light within, he it was found the triple principle (of immortality) in heaven, in its regions of splendour (the three worlds of Swar) and in the tripartite worlds the hidden immortality; he it was supported widely heaven and earth, he it was fashioned the car with the seven rays; he it was held by his force the ripe yield (of the *madhu* or *ghrta*) in the cows, even the fountain of the ten movements' (VI.44.22-24). Hymns of this kind are the sacred poems of the symbolists and mystics.

There are other passages in which there is scattered collocation of these symbols. First, in the image of the cavern-pen, in the hill, as elsewhere, the Cow and the Horse go together. Pushan is called upon to seek for the cows and protect the horses. Always the Cow and the Horse represent a concealed and imprisoned wealth, which has to be uncovered and released by a divine puissance. The withholders of this wealth, the Panis, who do not use this wealth, preferring to slumber, avoiding the divine action (*vrata*), must perish or be conquered before the sacrificer can securely possess the wealth.

The following verses unfold the inherent symbolism.

'So in thy ecstasy of the Soma thou didst break open, O hero (Indra), the pen of the Cow and the Horse, like a city' (VIII.32.5).

'Break open for us the thousands of the Cow and the Horse' (VIII.34.14).

'That which thou holdest, O Indra, the Cow and the Horse and the imperishable enjoyment, confirm that in the sacrificer and not in the Pani; he who lies in the slumber, doing not the work and seeking not the gods, let him perish by his own impulsions; thereafter confirm perpetually (in us) the wealth that must increase' (VIII.97.2-3).

'With the conquest of the shining herds' is also associated the conquest or the birth or illumination of the Dawn and the Sun. Associated with the Herds, the Dawn and the Sun are the Waters. The slaying of Vritra with the release of the waters, and the defeat of Vala with the release of the herds are two companion, and not unconnected, myths.

In certain passages, as in I.32.4, the slaying of Vritra is represented as the preliminary to the birth of the Sun, the Dawn and Heaven, and in others, the opening of the Hill to the flowing of the Waters.

For the general connection of the two myths stated above, the following passages are relevant.

'The Dawns broke forth perfect in their shining and unhurt; meditating they (the Angirasas) found the wide Light; they who desire opened the wideness of the cows and the waters for them flowed forth from heaven' (VII.90.4).

'By right thought the seven Mighty Ones of heaven (the seven rivers) knew the truth and knew the doors of bliss; *Sarama* found the strong wideness of the cows and by that the human creature enjoys' (I.72.8).

Of Indra and the Maruts, 'He with his shining companions won the field, won the sun, won the waters' (I.100.18).

Of Agni, 'Agni, born, shone out slaying the *Dasyus*, by the Light the Darkness; he found the cows, the waters and Swar' (V.14.4).

Of Indra and Agni, 'Ye two warred over the cows, the waters, Swar, the dawns that were ravished; O Indra, O Agni, thou unitest (to us) the regions, Swar, the brilliant dawn, the waters and the cows' (VI.60.2).

Of Indra, 'O hero, thou didst conquer the cow, thou didst conquer the Soma; thou didst loose forth to their flowing the seven rivers' (I.32.12).

In the last passage, the Soma is coupled with the cows among the conquest of Indra. Usually, the Soma-intoxication is the strength in which Indra conquers the cows.

For example, the Soma is 'in the intoxication of which thou didst open up the cow-pens (III.43.7). 'He, hymned by the Angirasas, broke Vala and hurled apart the strong places of the hill; he severed their artificial obstructions; these things Indra did in the intoxication of Soma' (II.15.8).

Sometimes, however, the working is reversed, and it is the Light that brings the bliss of the Soma-wine, or they come together. 'Hymned by the Angirasas, O

achiever of works, thou didst open the dawns with (or by) the Sun and with (or by) the cows the Soma' (I.62.5).

Agni is also, like the Soma, an indispensable element of the sacrifice. Therefore, we find Agni, too, included in this formulae of association. 'Ye made that wide otherworld for (as the goal of) the sacrifice, bringing into being the Sun, the Dawn and Agni' (VII.99.4). The same formula is there in III.31.15 with the addition of the Path, and in VII.44.3 with the addition of the Cow.

The above examples clearly establish the close connection of the different symbols and parables of the Veda. We miss the true sense if we treat the legend of the Angirasas and the Panis as an isolated mythus, without careful regard to its setting in the general thought of the Veda, and the light that general thought casts upon the figured language in which the legend is recounted.

## 16

**The Lost Sun and the Lost Cows**

The conquest of the Sun and the Dawn is a frequent subject of allusion in the hymns of the Rig-veda. Sometimes it is the finding of Surya, sometimes the finding or conquest of Swar, the world of Surya. Sayana takes the word Swar as the synonym of Surya. But it is clear from several passages that Swar is the name of a world or supreme Heaven, above the ordinary heaven and earth. Sometimes the word Swar is used for the solar light proper, both to Surya and to the world formed by his illumination.

The waters, which descend from Heaven or which are conquered and enjoyed by Indra and the mortals befriended by him, are described as *svarvatih apah*. Sayana declares it to be moving waters. But the word does not admit of such meaning. On the other hand, the thunderbolt of Indra is called the heavenly stone, *svaryam asmaanam*; its light is the light from this world of the solar splendours. Indra himself is *svarpati*, the master of Swar, of the luminous world.

As the finding and recovery of the Cows is usually described as the work of Indra, often with the aid of the Angirasa Rishis, and by the instrumentality of the *mantra* and the sacrifice, of Agni and Soma, so also the finding and recovery of the Sun is attributed to the same agencies. Moreover the two actions are continually associated together. In the Veda itself, there is overwhelming evidence that all these things constitute really one great action of which these are parts.

The Cows are the hidden rays of the Dawn or of Surya. Their rescue out of the darkness leads to or is the sign of the uprising of the Sun that was hidden in the darkness. This again is the condition, always with the instrumentality of the sacrifice, its circumstances and its helping gods, of the conquest of Swar, the supreme world of Light.

The language of the Veda also lends to the view that this Sun is a symbol of the divine illumining Power, Swar, and the world of the divine Truth. And the conquest of divine Truth is the real aim of the Vedic Rishis, and the subject of their hymns.

We are, therefore, to bear in view that Swar and Surya are two different conceptions in the minds of the Vedic Rishis, but closely connected.

A verse in Bharadwaja's hymn to Soma and Indra reads thus. 'Ye found the Sun, ye found Swar, ye slew all darkness and limitations' (VI.72.1). In this passage, Swar and Surya are different from each other, and Swar is not merely another name for Surya. But, at the same time, the finding of Swar and the finding of Surya are represented as closely connected as one movement. The result is the slaying of all darkness and limitations.

A verse in the hymn of Vamadeva to Indra, celebrating the achievement of Indra and the Angirasas reads thus. 'When by the hymns of illumination (*arkaih*) Swar was found, entirely visible, when they (the Angirasas) made to shine the great light out of the night, he (Indra) made the darkness ill-assured (loosened their firm hold) so that men might have vision' (IV.16.4). In this passage, the finding and making visible of Swar is associated with the shining of a great light out of the darkness, which we find, from parallel passages, to be the recovery, by the Angirasas, of the Sun that was lying concealed in the darkness.

Surya is found by the Angirasas through the power of their hymns or true *mantras*. Swar also is found and made visible by the hymns of the Angirasas, *arkaih*. It is, therefore, that the substance of Swar is a great light, and that light is the light of Surya, the Sun.

Swar is frequently alluded to as a world beyond the *rodasi*, beyond heaven and earth, and is otherwise called the wide world, *uru loka*, or the wide otherworld, *uru u loka*, or simply that (other) world, *u loka*. This world is described as one of vast light, and of a wide freedom from fear where the cows, the rays of Surya disport themselves freely.

The following verses support this view.

'Thou, in thy knowledge leadest us on to the wide world, even Swar, the Light, which is freedom from fear, with happy being', *sva jyotir abhayam svasti* (VI.47.8).

'Agni Vaishwanara is described as filling the earth and heaven and the vast Swar', *aa rodasi aprnad aa svar mahat*. (III.2.7).

Also Vasishtha says in his hymn to Vishnu thus. 'Thou didst support firmly, O Vishnu, this earth and heaven, and uphold the earth all around by the rays (of Surya). Ye two created for the sacrifice (as its results) the wide otherworld (*urum u lokam*), bringing into being the Sun, the Dawn and Agni' (VII.99.3-4). We see here the close connection of Swar, the wide world, with the birth or appearance of the Sun and the Dawn. It is described as the result of the sacrifice, the end of our pilgrimage, the vast home to which we arrive, the otherworld to which those who do well the works of sacrifice attain, *sukrtaam u lokam*.

Agni goes as an envoy between the earth and heaven, and then encompasses with his being this vast home, *ksayam brhantam pari bhuusati* (III.3.2).

Swar is the world of bliss and the fullness of all the riches to which the Vedic Rishi aspires. 'He for whom, because he does well his works, O Agni *Jatavedas*, that wildest to make that otherworld of bliss, attains to a felicity full of the Horses, the Sons, the Heroes, the Cows, all happy being (V.4.11).

It is by the Light that this bliss is attained. It is by bringing to birth the Sun and the Dawn and the Days that the Angirases attain to it (bliss) for the desiring human race. 'Indra who winneth Swar, bringing to birth the days, has conquered by those who desire (*usigbhih*, a word applied like *nr* to express men and gods, but, like *nr* also, sometimes especially indicating the Angirases) the armies he attacks, and he has made to shine out for man the vision of the days (*ketum ahnaam*) and formed the Light for the great bliss', *avindaj jyotir brhate ranaaya* (III.34.4).

All the above is possible of interpretation as a kind of physical world beyond the sky and the earth, with all the trappings of life as on earth. On the contrary, this wide world, *brhad dyau* or Swar, which we have to attain by passing beyond heaven and earth, is the supra-celestial wideness. The illimitable light here is a supra-mental heaven, the heaven of the supra-mental Truth, of the immortal Beatitude. The light, which is its substance and constituent reality, is the light of Truth.

It is a heaven concealed from our vision by certain darkness. But it is to be found and made visible. This seeing and finding depends on the birth of the Dawn, the rising of the Sun, the up-surgings of the Solar Herds out of their secret

cave. The souls successful in sacrifice become *svardrs* and *svarvid*, seers of Swar and finders of Swar, or its knowers. For the rest, the question of the nature of Swar or the wide world is of supreme importance for the interpretation of the Veda.

The birth of the Sun and the Dawn must, therefore, be regarded as the condition of seeing or attaining to Swar. This explains the immense importance attached to this legend or image in the Veda, and to the conception of the illumining, finding, bringing to birth of the light out of the darkness by the true hymn, the *satya mantra*.

Indra and the Angirasas do this. Numerous passages in the Veda allude to it. Indra and the Angirasas are described as finding Swar or the Sun, *avidat*, illumining or making it to shine, *arocayat*, bringing it to birth, *ajanayat*, and winning and possessing it. Incidentally, we are to bear in mind that, in the Veda, the manifestation of the gods in the sacrifice is constantly described as their birth.

Often indeed, Indra alone is mentioned. It is he who makes light from the nights, and brings into birth the Sun, *ksapaam vastaa janitaa suuryasya* (III.49.4).

It is he who has brought to their birth the Sun and the Dawn (II.12.7).

It is he who brings to birth together the Sun and Heaven and Dawn (VI.30.5).

By his shining, he illumines the Dawn; by his shining he makes to blaze out the Sun, *haryan usasam aracyah suuryam haryan arocayah* (III.44.2).

These are his great achievements, *jajaana suuryam usasam sudamsaah* (III.32.8).

With his shining comrades, it is he who wins, for possession, the field, wins the sun, wins the waters, *sanat ksetram sakhibhih svitnyebhih sanat suuryam sanad apah suvajrah* (I.100.18).

It is he who winneth Swar, *svarsaah*, by brining to birth the days.

This birth of the Sun is his birth in conjunction with the Dawn, his birth out of the Night. It is by the sacrifice that this birth takes place, *indrah suyajna usasah svar janat*, 'Indra sacrificing well brought to birth the Dawns and Swar' (II.21.4).

It is by human aid that this is done. 'By our 'men' he wins the Sun,' *asmaakebhir nrbhih suuryam sanat*. (I.100.6). In many hymns, it is described that

this is the result of the work of the Angirasas, and is associated with the delivering of the cows or the breaking of the hill.

It is this circumstance, among others, that prevents us from taking the birth or finding of the Sun as simply a description of the sky (Indra) daily recovering the sun and the dawn. When it is said of him that he finds the light even in the blind darkness, *so andhe cit tamasi jyotir vidat* (I.100.8), the reference is to the same light, which Agni and Soma found, one light for all these many creatures, *avimdatam jyotir ekam bahubhyah*, when they stole the cows from the Panis (I.93.4), the wakeful light which they, who increase truth, brought into birth, a god for the god (VIII.89.1), the secret light, *guulham jyotih*, which the Fathers, the Angirasas, found when, by their true *mantras*, they brought to birth the Dawn (VII.76.4).

It is that which is referred to in the mystic hymn to all the gods attributed to Manu Vaivaswata or to Kashyapa. 'Certain of them singing the Rik thought out the mighty Saman and by that they made the Sun to shine' (VIII.29.10).

This is not represented as being done previous to the creation of man. 'The gods who increase by obeisance and were of old, without blame, they for man, beset (by the powers of darkness) made the Dawn to shine by the Sun' (VII.91.1).

This is the finding of the Sun that was dwelling in the darkness, by the Angirasas through their ten months' sacrifice. Whatever may have been the origin of the image or legend, it is an old one and widespread; and it supposes a long obscuration of the Sun during which man was beset by darkness.

We find this image or legend not only among the Aryans of India, but also among the Mayas of America whose civilization was a ruder and perhaps earlier than the Egyptian culture. There, too, it is the same legend of the Sun concealed for many months in the darkness, and recovered by the hymns and prayers of the wise men. In the Rig-veda, the recovery of the Light is first effected by the Angirasas, the seven sages, the ancient human Fathers, and is then constantly repeated in human experience by their agency.

It will appear from the above analysis that the legend of the lost Sun and its recovery by sacrifice and by the *mantra*, and the legend of the lost Cows and their recovery, also by the *mantra*, both carried out by Indra and the Angirasas, are not two different myths; they are one.



This identity has been stated while discussing the relations of the Cows and the Dawn. The Cows are the rays of the Dawn, the herds of the Sun, and not physical cattle. The lost Cows are the lost rays of the Sun. Their recovery is the forerunner of the recovery of the lost Sun. The Veda itself puts this identity beyond all possible doubt.

The Veda explicitly states that the Cows are the Light and the pen in which they are hidden is the darkness. The purely metaphorical character of the cows and the pen is indicated in this verse. 'Dawn uncovered the darkness like the pen of the cow' (I.92.4).

The connection of the image of the recovery of the cows with the finding of the light is repeated in several verses.

'Ye two stole the cows from the Panis.... Ye found the one light for many (I.93.4).

'That is the work to be done for the most divine of the gods; the firm places were cast down, the fortified places were made weak; up Brhaspati drove the cows (rays), by the hymn (*brahmanaa*) he broke Vala, he concealed the darkness, he made Swar visible' (II.24.3).

'He impelled forward the good milkers within the concealing pen, he opened up by the Light the all-concealing darkness' (V.31.3).

'Indra the Bull made the thunderbolt his ally' or perhaps 'made it applied (*yujam*), he, by the Light, milked the rays (cows) out of the darkness' (I.33.10). Here the thunderbolt of Indra is *svarya asmaa* and has the light of Swar in it.

'They (the Dawns), breaking into dawn, pure purifying, opened the doors of the pen, even of the darkness', *vrajasya tamaso dvaaraa* (IV.51.2).

From the above, it is evident that the supreme hidden wealth of the Panis, *nidhim paninaam paramam guhaahitam* (II.24.6), is not wealth of earthly herds. It is, as clearly stated by Puruchhhepa Daivodasi, 'the treasure of heaven hidden in the secret cavern like the young of the Bird, within the infinite rock, like a pen of the cows', *avindad divo nihitam guhaa nidhim verna garbham parivitam asmani anante antar asmani, vrajam vajri gavaam iva sisaasan* (I.130.3).

The passages, in which the connection of the two legends or their identity appears, are quite numerous.

‘O Indra, O Puissant, thou with the Dashagwas (the Angirasas) didst tear Vala with the cry; hymned by the Angirasa, thou didst open the Dawns with the Sun and with the Cows the Soma’ (I.62).

‘Hear the hymn and increase by the words; make manifest the Sun, slay the foe, cleave out the Cows, O Indra’ (VI.17.3).

‘All this wealth of cows that thou seest around thee by the eye of the Sun is thine, thou art the sole lord of the cows, O Indra’, *gavaam asi gopatir eka indra*’ (VII.98.6).

In a hymn of Sarama and the Cows, ‘the victorious (Dawns) clove to him and they knew a great light out of the darkness; knowing, the Dawns went upward to him, Indra became the sole lord of the Cows’, *patir gavaam abhavad eka indrah* (III.31). The hymn goes on to say how it was by the mind and by the discovery of the whole path of the Truth that the seven sages, the Angirasas, drove up the Cows out of their strong prison, and how Sarama, knowing, came to the cavern in the hill, and to the voice of the imperishable herds.

We have the same connection between the Dawns and the findings of the wide solar light of Swar. ‘The Dawns broke forth perfect in light and unhurt, they (the Angirasas) meditating found the wide Light, *uru jyotih*; they who desire opened the wideness of the Cows, the waters flowed on them from heaven’ (VII.90.4).

Similarly, we have the connection among the Days, the Sun and the Cows. ‘He brought to its birth the Sun, found the Cows, effecting out of the Night the manifestations of the Days’ (II.19.3).

The Dawns and the Cows are identified in this verse. ‘The good milkers, whose pen was the rock, the shining ones in their concealing prison, they drove upward, the Dawns answering their call’ (IV.1.13). It is possible that the verse may mean that the Dawns, called by the Angirasas ‘our human fathers’, mentioned in the preceding verse, drove up for them the Cows.

‘Thou didst make the Sun and the Dawn to shine, breaking the firm places; thou didst move from its foundation the great hill that enveloped the Cows’ (VI.17.5). This verse symbolizes the breaking of the pen as the means of the outshining of the Sun.

‘None is there among mortals who can blame (or, no mortal power that can confine or obstruct) these our fathers who fought for the Cows (of the Panis); Indra of the mightiness, Indra of the works released for them the strongly closed Cow-pens; when a friend with his friends the Navagwas, following on his knees the Cows, when with the ten, the Dashagwas, Indra found the true Sun (or, the Truth, the Sun), dwelling in the darkness’ (III.39.4-5).

The above passage is conclusive. The cows are the Cows of the Panis which the Angirasas pursued entering the cave on their hands and knees; the finders are Indra or the Angirasas who are spoken of in other hymns as Navagwas and Dashagwas; and that which is found by entering the cow-pens of the Panis in the cave of the hill is not the stolen wealth of the Aryans, but ‘the Sun dwelling in the darkness’.

It is, therefore, established beyond doubt that the cows of the Veda, the cows of the Panis, the cows which are stolen, fought for, pursued and recovered, the cows desired by the Rishis, the cows won by the hymn and the sacrifice, by the blazing fire and the god-increasing verse and the god-intoxicating Soma are symbolic cows. They are the cows of Light. The Vedic cows are, in the inner Vedic sense, of the words *go*, *usraa*, *usriyaa*, the shining ones, the radiances, the herds of the Sun and the luminous forms of the Dawn.

By this conclusion, the cornerstone of the Vedic interpretation is far above the gross materialism of a barbarous worship. The Veda reveals itself as a symbolic scripture, a sacred allegory whether of Sun worship and Dawn worship, or of the cult of a higher and inner Light, of the true Sun, *satyam suuryam*, that dwells concealed in the darkness of ignorance, hidden as the child of the Bird, the divine *Hamsa*, in the infinite rock of this material existence, *anante antar asmani* (I.130.3).

## 17

**The Angirasa Rishis**

The name Angirasa occurs in the Veda in two different forms, Angira and Angirasa. The latter is the more common of the two. We have the name Angirasa applied to Brhaspati more than once. In later times, Angirasa, like Bhrigu and other saints, was regarded as one of the progenitors of clans of Rishis who went by their names such as the Angirasas, Atris, Bhargavas, etc. In the Veda also there are these families of Rishis, the Atris, the Bhrigus, the Kanwas, etc.

In one of the hymns of the Atris, the discovery of Agni, the sacred fire, is attributed to the Angirasa Rishis (V.11.6). But in another hymn, it is attributed to the Bhrigus (X.46.9). It is possible that the Angirasa Rishis are the flame powers of Agni, and the Bhrigus are the solar powers of Surya.

Frequently, the seven original Angirasa Rishis are described as the human fathers, *pitaro manusyaah*, who discovered the Light, made the sun to shine and ascend to the heaven of the Truth. In the tenth Mandala, in some hymns, they are associated as the *Pitris* or Manes with Yama. Yama, as a deity, comes into prominence only in the later *Suktas*. The Angirasas, in these hymns, take their seats with the gods on the *barhis*, the sacred grass, and have their share in the sacrifice.

If that were all of them, they would be considered the ancestors, the founders of the Vedic religion, partially deified by their descendents and continually associated with the gods, because of their association with the Dawn and the Sun and the Cows. But this is not all.

The Vedic myth has profound aspects. First, the Angirasas are not merely the deified human fathers but are also brought before us as heavenly seers, sons of the gods, sons of heaven, and heroes or powers of the *Asura*, the mighty Lord, *divas putraaso asurasya viraah* (III.53.7).

Secondly, there are passages in which they seem to become purely symbolical, powers and sons of Agni the original Angirasa, forces of the symbolic Light and Flame. Thirdly, they even coalesce into a single seven-

mouthed Angirasa with his nine and ten rays of the Light, *navagve angire dasagve saptaasye*, on and by whom the Dawn breaks out with all her joy and opulence.

All these presentations seem to be of the same Angirasas, their characteristics and their action being otherwise identical.

Two entirely opposite explanations can be given of the double character of these seers, divine and human. They may have been originally human sages defied by their descendents and, in the process, given a divine parentage and a divine function. Or, they may have been originally demi-gods, powers of the Light and Flame, who became humanized as the fathers of the race, and the discoverers of its wisdom. Both of these processes are recognizable in the early mythology. In either case, there has been a farther development by which these gods or demi-gods have become invested with psychological functions.

In the Veda we find another tendency, the persistent and all-pervading habit of symbolism dominant in the minds of these ancient Mystics. Everything, their own names, the names of kings and sacrificers, the ordinary circumstances of their lives were turned into symbols and covers for their secret meaning.

As the word *go* has a double meaning of both ray and cow, they would use their own names, *gotama* 'most full of light', *gavisthira* 'the steadfast in light' to hide a general thought beneath a personal claim. Similarly, they used their experiences, external and internal, whether of themselves or of other Rishis. For instance, if there is any truth in the old legend Shunahshepa bound as a victim on the alter of sacrifice, it is quite certain that in the Rig-veda the occurrence or the legend is used as a symbol of the human soul bound by the triple cord of sin, and released from it by the divine power of Agni, Surya and Varuna.

So also, Rishis like Kutsa, Kanwa, Ushanas Kavya have become types and symbols of certain spiritual experiences and victories. They have been placed in that capacity side by side with the gods.

It is, therefore, not surprising, then, that in this mystic symbolism, the seven Angirasa Rishis should have become divine powers and living forces of the spiritual life without losing altogether their traditional or historic human character.

The word Angiras is used in the Rig-veda as an epithet, often in connection with the image of the Dawn and the Cows. It also occurs as a name of Agni, while Indra is said to become Angirasa, and Brhaspati is called *angiras* and *angirasa*. This reference is not a mere decorative or mythological appellation, but has a special significance and an allusion to the psychological or other sense attached to the word. Even the Ashwins are addressed collectively as Angirasa.

It is, therefore, clear that the word Angirasa is used in the Veda not merely as a name of a certain family of Rishis, but with a distinct meaning inherent in the word. It is probable that whenever the word is used as a name, it is with a clear recognition of the inherent meaning of the name. It is also probable that the names of gods, sages and kings are generally used with a certain stress on the significance.

For instance, the word Indra is generally used as a name, but it has such significant glimpses as the description of Usha *indratamaa angirastamaa*, 'most-Indra', 'most-Angirasa', and of the Panis as *anindraah*, 'not-Indra', etc. These expressions are evidently meant to convey the possession or absence of the qualities, powers or functioning represented by Indra and the Angirasa.

The word Angiras is akin to the name Agni. It is derived from the root *ang*, which is only a form of *ag*, the root of Agni. These roots seem to convey intrinsically the sense of pre-eminent or forceful state, feeling, movement, action and light. Light here is in the sense of a brilliant or burning light that gives us *agni*, fire, *angati*, fire, *angaara*, a burning coal and *angiras*, which must have meant flaming, glowing.

Both in the Veda, and the tradition of the Brahmanas, the Angirasas are, in their origin, closely connected with Agni. In the Brahmanas, it is said that Agni is the fire and the Angirasas the burning coals, *angaaraah*. But in the Veda itself, the indication seems rather to be that they are the flames or lustres of Agni.

In a hymn to the Angirasa Rishis (X.62), it is said of them that they are sons of Agni, and have been born about him in different forms all about heaven. It is further added, speaking of them collectively in the singular, *navagvo nu dasagvo angirastamah sacaa devesu mamhate*, nine-rayed, ten-rayed, most *angiras*. This Angirasa clan becomes together full of plenty with or in the gods. Aided by

Indra, they set free the pen of cows and horses; they give to the sacrificer the mystic eight-eared kine and thereby create in the gods, *sravas*, the divine hearing or inspiration of the Truth.

It is fairly evident that the Angirasa Rishis here are the radiant lustres of the divine Agni, which are born in heaven. As such they are the lustres of the divine Flame, and not of any physical fire. They become equipped with the nine rays of the light and the ten, and become most *angiras*. This is to say that they are most full of the blazing radiance of Agni, the divine Flame, and are, therefore, able to release the imprisoned Light and Force, and create the supra-mental knowledge.

Whether the above symbolism is accepted or not, that there is symbolism is to be admitted. These Angirasas are not human sacrificers, but sons of Agni born in heaven, although their action is precisely that of the human Angirasas, the fathers, *pitara manusyaah*. They are born with different forms, *viruupaash*. All this can only mean that they are the various forms of the power of Agni.

The question is of what Agni, the sacrificial flame, the element of fire generally, or that other sacred flame described as 'the priest with the seer-will' or 'who does the work of the seer, the true, the rich in varied light of inspiration', *agnir hotaa kavikratuh satyas citrasravastamah?* (I.1.5).

If it is the element of fire, then the blazing lustre they represent must be that of the Sun, the fire of Agni radiating out as the solar rays, and in association with Indra, the sky creating the Dawn. There can be no other physical interpretation consistent with the details and circumstances of the Angirasa myth. But this description does not at all account for the farther description of the Angirasa Rishis as seers, as singers of the hymn, powers of Brhaspati as well as the Sun and the Dawn.

A passage of the Veda clearly identifies the divine Angirasas with the flaming lustres of Agni thus.

'Wide everywhere, O pure-shining Agni, range driven by the wind thy pure shining lustres, *bhaamaasah*; forcefully overpowering the heavenly nine-rayed ones, *divyaa navagvaah* enjoy the woods, *vanaa vananti*' (significantly conveying the covert sense, 'enjoying the objects of enjoyment') breaking them up violently.

O thou of the pure light, they bright and pure assail (or, overcome) all the earth; they are the horses galloping in all directions. Then thy roaming shines widely vast directing their journey to the higher level of the various-coloured (the cow Prishni, mother of the Maruts).

Then doubly (in earth and heaven) thy tongue leaps forward like the lightning loosed of the Bull that wars for the cows.' (VI.6.3-5).

Sayana avoids the obvious identification of the Rishis with the flames. He gives *navagva* the sense of 'new-born rays'. But, obviously, *divyaa navagvaah* here, and the sons of Agni born in heaven (X.62) who are *Navagva* are the same, and cannot possibly be different. The statement that the tongue of Agni takes the appearance of the thunderbolt of Indra, loosed from his hand and leaping forward, confirms the identification. The leaping forward of the tongue of Agni to assail the powers of darkness in the hill of heaven for the march of Agni and the *Navagvas*, is described here as ascending the hill (*saanu prsneh*) after ranging over the earth.

We have evidently here a symbolism of the Flame and the Light, the divine flames devouring the earth and then becoming the lightning of heaven and the lustre of the solar Powers. For, Agni in the Veda is light of the Sun, and the lightning as well as the flame found in the Waters, and shining on the earth. The Angirasa Rishis, being powers of Agni, share this manifold function. The divine flame kindled by the sacrifice supplies also to Indra the material of the lightning, the weapon, and the heavenly stone, *svarya asmaa*, by which he destroys the powers of darkness and wins the Cows, the solar illuminations.

Agni, the father of the Angirases, is not only the fount and origin of these divine flames, but also the supreme and original Angirasa, *pratham angiraah*. What do the Vedic Rishis wish us to understand by the description?

First, the epithet, *pratham angiraah*, is twice associated with another fixed epithet of Agni, the Son of Force or of Energy, *sahasah suunuh*, *uurjo napaat*. In the verse VIII.60.2, he is addressed 'O Angirasa, Son of Force', *sahasah suuno angirah*. In the verse VIII.84.2, he is addressed 'O Agni Angirasa, Son of Energy', *agne angira uurjo napaat*. In the verse V.11.6, it is said 'Thee, O Agni, the Angirases found established the secret place, *guhaa hitam*, lying in wood and wood,



*vanevane'*. If we accept the indication of a covert sense, the verse may mean thus. 'In each object of enjoyment, so art thou born by being pressed, *mathyamaanah*, a mighty force; thee they call the Son of Force, O Angirasa, *sa jaayase mathyamaanah saho mahat tvaam aahuh sahasas putram angirah'*.

From the above it is evident that the idea of force is an essential element in the Vedic conception of the Angirasa, and it is part of the meaning of the word. Force in status, action, movement, light and feeling is the inherent quality of the roots *ag* and *ang* from which we have the words *agni* and *angirah*. These words also mean Light. Agni, the sacred flame, is the burning force of Light. The Angirasas are also burning powers of the Light.

But what is this light, physical or figurative? The obvious figure, common to all languages, is that the physical light is a figure of the mental and spiritual, of knowledge, of an inner illumination. The Veda speaks expressly of 'luminous sages', *dyumato vipraan*, and the word, *suuri*, a seer, is associated with Surya, the sun, by etymology, and must have originally meant luminous.

It is said of this god of the Flame thus. 'Thou, O Agni, wast the first Angirasa, the seer and auspicious friend, a god, of the gods; in the law of thy working, the Maruts with their shining spears were born, seers who do the work by the knowledge' (I.31.1).

Then, in the conception of Agni Angirasa there are clearly two ideas, knowledge and action. The luminous Agni and the luminous Maruts are, by their light, seers of the knowledge, *rsi*, *kavi*. By the light of knowledge, the forceful Maruts do the work because they are born or manifested in the characteristic working (*vrata*) of Agni. For, Agni himself has been described to us as having the seer-will, *kavikratuh*, the force of action, which works according to the inspired or supra-mental knowledge, *sravas*. It is that knowledge and not intellectuality that is meant by the word *kavi*.

What then is this great force, Agni Angirasa, *saho mahat*, but the flaming force of the divine consciousness with its two twin qualities of Light and Power working in perfect harmony? Even the Maruts are described, *kavayo vidmanaa apasah*, seers working by the knowledge.

We have had reason to conclude that Usha is the divine Dawn and not merely physical dawn. Her cows or rays of the Dawn and the Sun are the illuminations of the dawning divine consciousness. Therefore, the Sun is the Illuminer in the sense of the Lord of knowledge. Swar, the solar world beyond heaven and earth, is the world of the divine Truth and Bliss. Light, in the Veda, is the symbol of knowledge, of the illumination of the divine Truth. Therefore, there is reason to conclude that the Flame, another aspect of Light, is the Vedic symbol for the Force of the divine consciousness, of the supra-mental Truth.

Another passage in the Rig-veda mentions of the 'seer most illumined of the Angirasas', *vepistho angirasaam viprah* (VI.11.3). The collocation *vepistho vijprah* fixes the sense of *vepistha* as equivalent to most *vipra*, most a seer, most illumined. Sayana supposes that Bharadwaja, the traditional Rishi of the hymn, is here praising himself as the 'greatest praiser' of the gods. This is open to question.

Here it is Agni who is the *hotaa*, the priest. He is sacrificing to the gods, to his own embodiment, *tanvam tava svaam*, to the Maruts, Mitra, Varuna, Heaven and Earth. The hymn says thus. 'For in thee, the thought, even though full of riches, desires still the gods, the (divine) births, for the singer of the hymn that he may sacrifice to them, when the sage, the most luminous of the Angirasas, utters the rhythm of sweetness in the sacrifice' (VI.11.3). It would almost seem that Agni himself is the sage, the most luminous of the Angirasas. But the description seems to be more appropriate to Brhaspati.

For, Brhaspati is also an Angirasa and one who becomes the Angirasa. He is closely associated with the Angiras Rishis in the winning of the luminous cattle as Brahmanaspati, as the Master of the sacred or inspired word. It is by his cry that Vala is split into pieces, and the Cows answer lowing with desire to his call.

As powers of Agni, these Rishis are, like him, *kavikratu*. They possess the divine Light; they act by it with the divine Force; they are not only Rishis, but heroes of the Vedic war, *divas putraaso asurasya viraah*, sons of heaven, heroes of the Mighty Lord (III.53.7).

They are 'the Fathers who dwell in the sweetness (the world of bliss), who establish the wide berth, moving in the difficult places, possessed of force, profound, with their bright host and their strength of arrows, invincible, heroes

in their being, wide over-comers of the banded foes' (VI.75.9). They are also described as *braahmanaasah pitarah somyaasah*, meaning that they have the divine word and the inspired knowledge it carries with it (VI.75.10).

Incidentally, this seems to be the sense of the word Brahmana in the Veda. It certainly does not mean 'brahmanas' by caste or priests by profession. The Fathers here are warriors as well as sages. The four castes are mentioned in the Rig-veda only once, in that profound but late composition, the Purushasukta.

This divine Word is the *satya mantra*, it is the thought by whose truth the Angirasas bring the Dawn to birth and make the lost Sun to rise in the heavens. This Word is also called the *arka*. It is a vocable, which means both hymn and light, and is sometimes used of the Sun. It is, therefore, the word of illumination, the word, which expresses the truth of which the Sun is the lord.

Its emergence from the secret seat of the Truth is associated with the outpouring by the Sun of its herded radiances. 'Let the Word come forward from the seat of the Truth; the Sun has released wide by its rays the cows', *pra brahmaitu sadanaad rtasya, vi rasmibhih sasrje suuryo gaah* (VII.36.1).

The Word has, therefore, to be won possession of like the Sun itself, and the gods have to give their aid for that possession, *arkasya saatau*, as well as for the possession of the Sun, *suuryasya saatau*, and of Swar, *svarsaatau*.

The Angirasa, therefore, is not only an Agni-power, but also a Brhaspati-power. Brhaspati is called more than once the Angirasa.

'Brhaspati, breaker of the hill (the cave of the Panis), the first-born who has the Truth, the Angirasa, he of the oblation', *yo adribhit prathamajaa rtaava brhaspatir aangiraso havismaan* (VI.73.1).

'The thought goes towards Brhaspati, the seven-rayed, the truth-thinking, the perfect intelligence, who is the Angirasa, to be approached with obeisance', *pra saptagum rtadhitim sumedhaam brhaspatim matir acchaa jigaati, ya aangiraso namasaa upasadyah* (X.47.6). This is a very significant description of Brhaspati as the Angirasa.

'For the glory of thee, the hill parted asunder when thou didst release upward the pen of the cows; with Indra for ally, thou didst force out, O Brhaspati, the

flood of the waters which was environed by the darkness (II.23.18). Here Brhaspati is addressed as Angirasa in connection with the release of the cows and the waters.

We may note how closely the release of the waters, which is the subject of the Vritra legend, is associated with the release of the cows, which is the subject of the legend of the Angirasa Rishis and the Pani. Both Vritra and the Panis are powers of the darkness. The cows are the light of the Truth, the true illumining Sun, *satyam tat.... suuryam*. The waters released from the environing darkness of Vritra are sometimes called the streams of the Truth, *rtasya dhaaraah* and sometimes *svarvatir aapah*, the waters of Swar, the luminous solar world.

To sum up, first, the Angirasa is a power of Agni the seer-will. He is the seer who works by the light, by the knowledge. He is a flame of the puissance of Agni, the great force that is born into the world to be the priest of the sacrifice and the leader of the journey. He is a flame of the puissance which the gods are said by Vamadeva to establish here as the Immortal in mortals, the energy that does the great work, *arati*.

Secondly, the Angirasa is a power, or at least has the power of Brhaspati, the truth thinking and seven-rayed, whose seven rays of the light hold that truth which he thinks, *rtadhitim*. Brahspati is he whose seven mouths repeat the word that expresses the truth. 'Brhaspati coming first to birth out of the great Light in the highest heaven, born in many forms, seven-mouthed, seven-rayed, *saptaasyah saptarasmih*, by his cry dispelled the darkness; he by his host, with the Rik and the Stubh (the hymn of illumination and the hymn that affirms the gods) broke Vala by his cry' (IV.50.4-5). This host or troop of Brhaspati, *sustubhaa rkvataa ganena*, means the Angirasa Rishis who, by the *mantra*, help in the great victory.

Indra is also described as becoming an Angirasa or as becoming possessed of the Angirasa quality. 'May he become most Angirasa with the Angirasas, being the Bull with bulls, the Friend with friends, the possessor of the Rik with those who have the Rik, *rgmibhir rgmi*, with those who make the journey, *gaatubhih*, (the souls that advance on the path towards the Vast and True) the greatest; may Indra become associated with the Maruts, *marutvaan*, for our thriving' (I.100.4). The epithets here are all the proper epithets of the Angirasa Rishis, and Indra is

supposed to take upon himself the qualities or relations that constitute Angirasahood.

Most illumined in knowledge, *vipratamah*, becoming a friend, *sakhiyan*, (the Angirasas are friends or comrades in the great battle), he went, *agacchat*, (upon the path discovered by Sarama); the hill sped forth its pregnant content, *garbham*, for the doer of the good work; strong in manhood with the young, *maryo yuvabhih*, (the youth gives the idea of un-ageing, un-decaying force) he sought fullness of riches and won possession, *sasaana makhasyan*; so at once, chanting the hymn, *arcan*, he became an Angirasa' (III.31.7).

This Indra who assumes all the qualities of the Angirasa is the Lord of Swar, the wide world of the Sun or the Truth, and descends to us with his two shining horses, *hari*, also called *suuryasya ketu*, the sun's two powers of perception or of vision in knowledge, in order to war with the sons of darkness and aid the great journey.

If the esoteric sense of the Veda is what is stated above, Indra must be the Power of the divine Mind born in man, and there increasing by the Word and the Soma to his full divinity. This growth continues by the winning and growth of the Light, till Indra reveals himself fully as the Lord of all the luminous herds which he sees by the 'eyes of the Sun', the divine Mind, master of all the illuminations of knowledge.

In becoming the Angirasa, Indra becomes *marutvan*, possessed of or companioned by the Maruts. These Maruts are luminous and violent gods of the storm and lightning. They unite in themselves the vehement power of Vayu, the Wind, the Breath, the lord of Life and the force of Agni, the Seer-Will.

The Maruts are, therefore, seers who do the work by the knowledge, *kavayo vidmanaa apasah*, as well as battling forces. By the power of the heavenly Breath and the heavenly Lightning, they overthrow the established things, the artificial obstructions, *krtrimaani rodhaamsi*, in which the sons of Darkness have entrenched themselves. They aid Indra to overcome Vritra and *Dasyus*. They seem to be, in the esoteric Veda, the Life-Powers that support by their nervous or vital energies the action of the thought in the attempt of the mortal consciousness to grow or expand itself into the immortality of the Truth and Bliss.

In any case, they are also described as acting with the qualities of the Angirasa, *angirasvat*. 'O young and seers and powers of the sacrifice, Maruts, come uttering the word to the high place (or, desirable plane of earth or the hill, *adhi saanu prsneh* which is probably the sense of *varasyaam*), powers increasing, rightly moving (on the path, *gaatu*) like the Angirasa, give joy even to that which is not illumined (*acitram*, that which has not received the varied light of the dawn, the night of our ordinary darkness.)' (VI.49.11).

We see in the above passage the same characteristics of the Angirasa action, the eternal youth and force of Agni (*agne yavistha*), the possession and utterance of the Word, the seer-hood, the doing of the work of sacrifice, the right movement on the great path which leads to the world of the Truth, to the vast and luminous Bliss. The Maruts are said to be as it were 'Angirasas with their Sama hymns, they who take all forms', *visva ruupaa angiraso na saamabhih*. (X.78.5).

All this action and movement are made possible by the coming of Usha, the Dawn. Usha is also described as *angirastamaa* and, in addition, as *indratamaa*. The power of Agni, the Angirasa power, manifests itself also in the lightning of Indra, and in the rays of the Dawn.

Two passages throw light on this aspect of the Angirasa force.

The first passage is this. 'The Dawns make their rays to shine out in the extremities of heaven; they labour like men who are set to a work. The rays set fleeing the darkness, they extend the Light as if the sun were extending its two arms. Usha has become (or, come into being) most full of Indra power (*indratamaa*), opulent in riches and has given birth to the inspirations of knowledge for our happy going (or, for good and bliss), the goddess, daughter of Heaven, most full of Angirasa-hood (*angirastamaa*), orders her riches for the doer of good works' (VII.79.2-3).

The riches in which Usha is opulent cannot be anything else than the riches of the Light and the Power of the Truth. Full of Indra power, the power of the divine illumined mind, Usha gives the inspiration of that mind (*sravaamsi*) which leads us towards the Bliss. By the flaming radiant Angirasa-power in her, she

bestows and arranges her treasures for those who do aright the great work, and thus move rightly on the path, *itthaa naksanto angirasvat* (VI.49.11).

The second passage is this. 'Dawn, heaven-born, has opened up (the veil of darkness) by the truth and she comes making manifest the vastness (*mahimaanam*), she has drawn away the veil of harms and of darkness (*druhas tamah*) and all that is unloved; most full of Angirasa-hood, she manifests the paths (of the great journey) (VII.75.1).

Today, O Dawn, awake for us for the journey to the vast bliss, *mahe suvitaaya*, extend (thy riches) for a vast state of enjoyment, confirm in us a wealth of varied brightness, *citram*, full of inspired knowledge, *sravasyam*, in us mortals, O human and divine (VII.75.2)

These are the lustres of the visible Dawn which have come varied-bright, *citraah* and immortal; bringing to birth the divine workings they diffuse themselves, filling those of the mid region', *janayanto daivyaani vrataani, aaprnanto antariksa vyasthuh* (VII.75.3)

Again we have the Angirasa power associated with the journey, the revelation of its paths by the removal of the darkness, and the bringing of the radiances of the Dawn. The Panis represent harms (hurts or those who hurt) done to man by the evil powers; the darkness is their cave. The journey is that which leads to the divine happiness and the state of immortal bliss by means of our growing wealth of light and power and knowledge. The immortal lustres of the Dawn which give birth to man to the heavenly workings, and fill them the workings of mid-regions between earth and heaven, that is, the functioning of those vital planes governed by *vayu* which link our physical and pure mental being, may well be the Angirasa powers.

For, they, too, gain and maintain the truth by maintaining unhurt the divine workings (*amardhanto daivyaa vrataani*). To bring the divine Dawn into moral nature is indeed their function. This is to ensure that the visible goddess pours out her riches, at once divine and human, *devi martesu maanusi*, the goddess human in mortals.

## 18

### The Seven-Headed Thought, Swar and the Dashagwas

The language of the hymns establishes a double aspect for the Angirasa Rishis. One belongs to the external garb of the Veda. It weaves together its naturalistic imagery of the Sun, the Flame, the Dawn, the Cow, the Horse, the Wine, and the sacrificial Hymn.

The other relates to the internal sense from the external imagery. The Angirases are sons of the Flame, lustres of the Dawn, givers and drinkers of the Wine, singers of the Hymn, eternal youths and heroes who wrest for us the Sun, the Cows, the Horses and all treasures from the grasp of the sons of Darkness.

But they are also seers of the Truth, finders and speakers of the word of the Truth. By the power of the Truth, they win for us the wide world of Light and Immortality which is described in the Veda as the Vast, the True, the Right, and as the own home of this Flame of which they are the children.

The physical imagery and the psychological indications are closely interwoven, and they cannot be separated from each other. We may, therefore, conclude, by commonsense, that the Flame of which the Right and the Truth is the own home, is itself a Flame of that Right and Truth. The Light, which is won by the Truth, and by the force of true thought, is not merely a physical light. Similarly, the Cows, which Sarama finds on the path of the Truth, are not merely physical herds; and the Horses are not merely the wealth of the Dravidians conquered by the Aryan tribes. So is the case with the Dawn.

The Angirasa Rishis are at once divine and human seers. This double character is not in itself an extraordinary feature or peculiar in the Veda to these sages. The Vedic gods also have a double action. They are divine and pre-existent in themselves on one hand. They are human in their working upon the mortal plane when they grow in man to the great ascension, on the other. This has been strikingly expressed in regard to Usha, the Dawn, 'goddess human in mortals', *devi martesu maanusi* (VII.75.2). But in the imagery of the Angirasa



Rishis, this double character is complicated by the tradition, which makes them the human fathers, discoverers of the Light, the Path and the Goal.

The Angirasa Rishis are originally described as seven in number. They are *sapta vipraah*, the seven sages who have come down to us in the Puranic tradition, and are enthroned by Indian Astronomy in the constellation of the Great Bear. But they are also described as *Navagwas* and *Dashagwas*.

In the verse VI.22.2, there is mention of the ancient fathers, the seven seers, the *Nawagwas*, *puurve pitaro navagvaah sapta vipraasah*. But in the verse III.39.5, there is mention of two classes, *Navagwas* and *Dashagwas*, the latter ten in number. Though there is no specific mention of the number of the former class, it is presumed to be nine. 'Where, a friend with his friends the *Navagwas*, following the cows, Indra, with the ten *Dashagwas*, found that truth, even the Sun dwelling in the darkness', *sakhaa ha yatra sakhibhir navagvair abhijnvaa satvabhir gaa anugman; satyam tadindro dasabhir dasagvaih suuryam viveda tamasi ksiyantam*.

On the other hand, there is a collective description of the Angirasa seven-faced or seven-mouthed, nine-rayed, ten-rayed, *navagve angire dasagve saptaasye* (IV.51.4).

We have another Rishi Ayasya associated with the Navagwa Angirasas (X.108.8). This Ayasya is described as our father who found the vast seven-headed Thought that was born out of the Truth, and as singing the hymn to Indra (X.67.1). According as the Navagwas are seven or nine, Ayasya will be the eighth or the tenth Rishi.

Tradition asserts the separate existence of two classes of Angirasa Rishis. The first category relates to the Navagwas who sacrificed for nine months. The second category relates to the Dashagwas that sacrificed for ten months. According to this interpretation, we must take Navagwa and Dashagwa as 'nine-cowed' and 'ten-cowed', each cow representing collectively the thirty dawns, which constitute one month of the sacrificial year.

But one verse in the Rig-veda is in direct conflict with the traditional interpretation.

'Here cried (or, moved) the stone impelled by the hand, whereby the Navagwas chanted for ten months the hymn; Sarama travelling to the Truth, found the cows; all things the Angiras made truth', *anuunod atra hastayato adrir aarcan yena dasa maaso navagvaah; rtam yati saramaa gaa avindad, visvaani satyaa angiraascakaara* (V.45.7).

'I hold for you in the waters (the seven rivers) the thought that wins possession of heaven (this is once more the seven-headed thought born from the Truth and found by Ayasya), by which the Navagwas passed through the ten months; by this thought may we have the gods for protectors, by this thought may we pass through beyond the evil', *dhiyam vo apsu dadhise svarsam, yayaataran dasa maaso navagvaah; ayaa dhiyaa syaama devagopaah, ayaa dhiyaa tuturyaama ati amhah* (V.45.11). The assertion in the earlier verse is repeated here. The statement is explicit.

We can never suppose that the Rishi of this hymn had forgotten the tradition and was confusing the Dashagwas and the Navagwas. The difficulty arises for us if we suppose the Navagwas and the Dashagwas to have been in the minds of the Vedic Rishis as two different classes of Angirasa Rishis. But these seem to have been two different powers of Angirasa-hood. In that case, the Navagwas themselves might well become Dashagwas by extending the period of the sacrifice to ten months instead of nine months.

The expression in the hymn, *dasa maaso ataran*, indicates that there was some difficulty in getting the sacrifice through the full period of ten months. It is during this period, apparently, that the sons of Darkness had the power to assail the sacrifice. For, it is indicated that it is only by the confirming of the thought, which conquers Swar, the solar world that the Rishis are able to get through the ten months. But this thought once found, they become assured of the protection of the gods, and pass beyond the assault of the evil, the harms of the Panis and Vritras.

This Swar-conquering thought is certainly the same as that seven-headed thought which was born in the Truth and discovered by Ayasya, the companion of the Navagwas. For, by it, we are told, Ayasya became universal and embraced the birth in all the worlds. He brought into being a fourth world, or fourfold

world, which must be the supra mental beyond the three lower sessions, *dyau*, *antariksa* and *prthivi*. It is that wide world which, according to Kanwa, son of Ghora, men reach or create by crossing beyond the two, *rodasi*, after killing Vritra. This fourth world must, therefore, be Swar.

The seven-headed thought of Ayasya enables him to become *visvajanya*, which means probably that he occupies or possesses all the worlds or births of the soul. Or else, he becomes universal, identifying himself with all beings born, and to manifest or give being to a certain fourth world (Swar), *turiyam svij janayad visvajanyah* (X.67.1).

The thought established in the waters, which enables the Navagwa Rishis to pass through the ten months of sacrifice, is also *svarsah*, that which brings about the possession of Swar. The waters are clearly the Seven Rivers, and the two thoughts are evidently the same.

Are we then to conclude that it is the addition of Ayasya to the Navagwas, which raises the nine Navagwas to ten, and enables them, by his discovery of the seven-headed Swar-conquering thought to prolong their nine months' sacrifice through the tenth month? Thus they become the ten Dashagwas. This conclusion is entirely confirmed by the passage in III.39.5 where it is said that, with the help of the Navagwas, Indra pursues the trace of the lost kine, but it is only with the aid of the ten Dashagwas that he is able to bring the pursuit to a successful end and find that Truth, *satyam tat*, namely that the Sun that was lying in the darkness.

In other words, it is when the nine months' sacrifice is prolonged through the tenth, it is when the Navagwas become the ten Dashagwas with the addition of Ayasya, the tenth Rishi, that the Sun is found, and the luminous world of Swar in which we possess the Truth or the one universal Deva is disclosed and conquered.

In this connection, we may note that the intoxication of the Soma by which Indra manifests or increases the might of Swar or the Swar-purusha (*svarnara*) is described as ten-rayed and illuminating, *dasagvam vepayantam* (VIII.12.2).

The conquest of Swar is the aim of the sacrifice, and the great work accomplished by the Angirasa Rishis.

But what is meant by the figure of the months? It is clear that it is a figure, a parable. The year is symbolic and the months are symbolic. For instance, in the Puranas, the yugas, moments, months, etc are all symbolic. It is stated that the body of man is the year.

There is an explicit statement that it is in the revolution of the year that the recovery of the lost Sun and the lost Cows is effected. 'By the truth, in the revolution of the year, they broke Vala', *rtenaabhindan parivatsare valam* (X.62.2). But this idea of Time, of the months and years used as a symbol, seems to be clear from other passages of the Veda, notably from Gritsamada's hymn to Brhaspati (II.24).

Brhaspati is described driving up the cows, breaking Vala by the divine Word, *brahmanaa*, concealing the darkness and making Swar visible (II.24.3). The first result is the breaking open, by force, of the well which has the rock for its space and whose streams are of the honey, *madhu*, the Soma sweetness (II.24.4).

This well of honey covered by the rock must be the Ananda or divine Beatitude of the supreme threefold world of bliss, the Satya, Tapas and Jana worlds of the Puranic system based on the three supreme principles, *sat*, *cit-tapas*, and *ananda*. Their base is Swar of the Veda, Mahar of the Upanisads and Puranas, the world of Truth. These four together make the fourfold world and are described in the Rig-veda as the four supreme and secret seats, the source of the 'four upper rivers'.

Sometimes, however, this upper world seems to be divided into two, Swar the base, Mayas or the divine Beatitude the summit, so that there are five worlds or births of the ascending soul. The three other rivers are the three lower powers of being and supply the principles of the three lower worlds.

All those, who are able to see Swar, drink of the secret well of honey. They pour out its sweetness in manifold streams together, *tam eva visve papire swardrso bahu saakam sisicur utsam udrinam* (II.24.4).

In the Upanisads and Puranas, there is no distinction between Swar and Dyau. Therefore, a fourth name had to be found for the world of Truth. This is the Mahar discovered, according to the Taittiriya Upanisad, by the Rishi

Mahachamasya as a fourth Vyahriti, the other three being Swar, Bhuvar and Bhur. They correspond to Dyau, Antariksha and Prithivi of the Veda.

These many streams, poured out together, are the Seven Rivers poured down the hill by Indra after slaying Vritra, the rivers or streams of the Truth, *rtasya dhaaraah*. They represent the seven principles of conscious being in their divine fulfillment in the Truth and Bliss. This is why the seven-headed thought, the knowledge of the divine existence with its seven heads or powers, the seven-rayed knowledge of Brhaspati, *saptagum*, has to be confirmed or held in thought in the waters, the seven rivers. This is to say that the seven forms of divine consciousness are to be held in the seven forms or movements of the divine being, *dhiyam vo apsu dadhise svarasaam*, 'I hold the Swar-conquering thought in the waters'.

The making visible of Swar to the eyes of the Swar-seers, *svardrsah*, their drinking of the honeyed well and the outpouring of the divine waters amounts to the revelation to man of new worlds, or new states of existence. 'Certain eternal worlds (states of existence) are these which have to come into being, their doors are shut to you (or, opened) by the months and the years; without effort one (world) moves in the other, and it is these that Brahmanaspati has made manifest to knowledge', *sanaa taa kaa cid bhuvanaa bhavitvaa, maadbhih saradbhih duro varanta vah; ayatantaa carato anyad anyad id, yaa cakaara vayunaa brahmanaspatih* (II.24.5). *Vayunaa* here means knowledge, and the two forms are the divinised earth and heaven, which Brahmanaspati created.

These are the four eternal worlds hidden in the *guhaa*, the secret, un-manifest or super-conscious parts of being which, although in themselves eternally present states of existence, *sanaa bhuvanaa*, are for us non-existent and in the future. For us, they have to be brought into being, *bhavitvaa*; they are yet to be created.

Therefore, the Veda sometimes speaks of Swar being made visible as here, *vyacaksayat svah* (II.24.3), or discovered and taken possession of, *avidat, asanat*, sometimes of its being created or made, *bhuu, kr*.

The Rishi says that these secret eternal worlds have been closed to us by the movement of Time, by the months and years. Therefore, naturally, they have to

be discovered, revealed, conquered and created in us by the movement of Time, yet in a sense against it.

This development in an inner or psychological Time is, according to Sri Aurobindo, that which is symbolized by the sacrificial year and by the ten months that have to be spent before the revealing hymn of the soul (*brahma*) is able to discover the seven-headed, heaven-conquering thought which finally carries us beyond the harms of Vritra and the Panis.

We get the connection of the rivers and the worlds very clearly in the verse I.62.4 where Indra is described as breaking the hill by the aid of the Navagwas, and breaking Vala by the aid of the Dashagwas. Hymned by the Angirasa Rishis, Indra opens up the darkness by the Dawn and the Sun and the Cows; he spreads out the high plateau of the earthly hill into wideness, and upholds the higher world of heaven.

For, the result of the opening up of the higher planes of consciousness is to increase the wideness of the physical, and to raise the height of the mental. Rishi Nodha says thus. 'This indeed is his mightiest work, the fairest achievement of the achiever', *dasmasya caarutamam asti damsah*, 'that the four upper rivers streaming honey nourish the two worlds of the crookedness', *upahvare yad uparaa apinvan madhvarnaso nadyas catasrah* (I.62.6).

This is again the honey streaming well pouring down its many streams together. This is the four higher rivers of the divine being, divine conscious force, divine delight, divine truth nourishing the two worlds of the mind and the body into which they descend with their floods of sweetness.

These two, the *rodasi*, the earth and heaven, are normally worlds of crookedness, that is, of the falsehood. This is for the reason that they are exposed to the harms of the un-divine powers, Vritras and Panis, sons of darkness and division.

They now become forms of the truth, the knowledge, *vayunaa*, agreeing with outer action. This is evidently Gritsamada's *carato anyad anyad* and his *yaa cakaara vayunaa brahmanaspatih*.

The Rishi then proceeds to define the result of the work of Ayasya, which is to reveal the true eternal and unified form of earth and heaven. 'In their twofold (divine and human), Avasya uncovered by his hymns the two, eternal and in one nest; perfectly achieving he upheld earth and heaven in the highest ether (of the revealed super-conscious, *parama vyoman*), as the Enjoyer of his two wives' (I.62.7).

'The souls' enjoyment of its divinised mental and bodily existence uplifted in the eternal joy of the spiritual being could not be more clearly and beautifully imaged', in the words of Sri Aurobindo.

It is worth unravelling the knot of this Vedic imagery. Brhaspati is the seven-rayed Thinker, *saptaguh*, *saptarasmih*. He is the seven-faced or seven-mouthed Angirasa, born in many forms, *saptaasyah tuvijaatah*, nine-rayed, ten-rayed. The seven mouths are the seven Angirasas who repeat the divine word, *brahma*, which comes from the seat of the Truth, Swar, and of which he is the Lord, *Brahmanaspati*. Each of the Angirasas also corresponds to one of the seven rays of Brhaspati. Therefore, they are the seven seers, *sapta vipraah*, *sapta rsayah*, who severally personify these seven rays of the knowledge.

These rays are, again, the seven brilliant horses of the sun, *sapta haritah*, and their full union constitutes the seven-headed Thought of Ayasya by which the lost sun of Truth is recovered. That Thought again is established in the seven rivers, in the seven principles of being, divine and human. This is the foundation of the totality of the perfect spiritual existence.

The winning of these seven rivers of our being withheld by Vritra and these seven rays withheld by Vala, and the possession of our complete divine consciousness delivered from all falsehood by the free descent of Truth give us the secure possession of the world of Swar. It also gives us the enjoyment of mental and physical being, lifted into the godhead above darkness, falsehood and death by the in-streaming of our divine elements.

This victory is won in twelve periods of the upward journey, represented by the revolution of the twelve months of the sacrificial year. The periods correspond to the successive dawns of a wider and wider truth, until the tenth

secures the victory. What may be the precise significance of the nine rays and the ten is a more difficult question, yet to find a solution.

The symbolism of the Veda depends upon the image of the life of man as sacrifice, a journey and a battle. The ancient Mystics took, for their theme, the spiritual life of man. But with a view to veil its secrets from the undeserved, they expressed it in poetical images drawn from the outward life of their age. That life was largely an existence of herdsmen and tillers of the soil for the mass of the people, varied by the wars and migrations of the clans under their kings.

In all this activity, the worship of the gods by sacrifice had become the most solemn and magnificent element, the knot of all the rest. It was by the sacrifice that rains poured in and fertilized the soil. By the sacrifice were won the herds of cattle, the horses, the wealth of gold, land, *ksetra*, retainers, fighting-men, the victory in the battles, safety in the journey by land and water, etc. That was a loosely organized inter-tribal existence.

The mystic Rishis took into account all the principal features of that outward life and turned them into significant images of the inner life. The life of man is represented as a sacrifice to the gods, a journey sometimes figured as a crossing of dangerous waters, sometimes as an ascent from level to level of the hill of being, and as a battle against hostile nations.

But these three images are not kept separate. The sacrifice is also considered a journey. Indeed, the sacrifice itself is described as travelling, as journeying to a divine goal. And the journey and the sacrifice are both continually spoken of as a battle against the dark-powers.

The legend of the Angirasas combines all these three essential features of the Vedic imagery. The Angirasas are pilgrims of the light. The phrase *naksantah* or *abhinaksantah* is constantly used to describe their characteristic action. They are those who travel towards the goal and attain to the highest, *abhnaksanto abhi ye tam aanasur nidhim paramam*, 'they who travel to and attain that supreme treasure' (II.24.6).

Their action is invoked for carrying forward the life of man farther towards its goal, *sahasrasaave pra tiranta aayuh* (III.53.7).



This journey is principally of the nature of a quest of the hidden light. But by the opposition of the powers of darkness, it becomes an expedition and a battle. The Angirasas are heroes and fighters of that battle, *gosu yodhaah*, 'fighters for the cows or rays'. Indra marches with them *saranyubhih*, as travellers on the path, *sakhibhih*, comrades, *rgmibhih* and *kavibhih*, seers and singers of the sacred chant, but also *satvabhih*, fighters in the battle. They are frequently spoken of by the appellation *nr* or *vira*, as when Indra is said to win the luminous herds *asmaakebhih nrbhih*, 'by our men'.

Strengthened by them, Indra conquers in the journey and reaches the goal, *naksaddaabham taturim*. This journey or march proceeds along the path discovered by Sarama, the hound of heaven. The path of the Truth, *rtasya panthaah*, the great path, *mahas pathah*, leads to the realms of the Truth. It is also the sacrificial journey. Its stages correspond to the periods of the sacrifice of the Navagwas. The force of the Soma-wine and the sacred Word effects it.

The drinking of the Soma-wine as the means of strength, victory and attainment is one of the pervading figures of the Veda. Indra and the Ashwins are the great Soma-drinkers. Indeed, all the gods have their share of the immortalizing draught. The Angirasas also conquer in the strength of Soma.

Sarama threatens the Panis with the coming of Ayasya and the Navagwa Angirasas in the intensity of their Soma-rapture, *eha gaman rsayah somasitaa ayaasyo angiraso navagvaah* (X.108.8). It is the great force by which men have the power to follow the path of the Truth. 'That rapture of the Soma we desire by which thou, O Indra, didst make to thrive the Might of Swar (or, the Swar-soul, *svarnaram*), that rapture ten-rayed and making a light of knowledge or shaking the whole being with its force, *dasagvam vepayantam*, by which thou didst foster the ocean; that Soma-intoxication by which thou didst drive forward the great waters (the seven rivers) like chariots to their sea, that we desire that we may travel on the path of the truth', *panthaam rtasya yaatave tam imahe* (VIII.12.2-3).

It is in the power of the Soma that the hill is broken open and the sons of Darkness overthrown. This Soma-wine is the sweetness that comes flowing from the streams of the upper-hidden world. It is that which flows in the seven waters. It is that with which the *ghrta*, the clarified butter of the mystic sacrifice,

is instinct. It is the honeyed wave, which rises out of the ocean of life. Such images can have only one meaning. It is the divine delight hidden in all existence. Once manifest, it supports all life's crowning activities. It is the force that finally immortalizes the mortal, the *amrtam*, ambrosia of the gods.

But it is especially the Word that the Angirasas possess. Their most distinguishing characteristic is their seer-hood. They are the fathers who are full of the Soma and have the word and are, therefore, increasers of the Truth, *braahmanaasaah pitarah somyaasah.... rtaavrdhah*. (VI.75.10).

In order to impel them on the path, Indra joins himself to the chanted expressions of their thought, and gives fullness and force to the words of their soul, *angirasaam ucathaa jujusvaan brahma tuutod gaatum isnam* (II.20.5).

Indra completes his victorious journey and reaches the goal on the mountain only when he is enriched in light and force of thought by the Angirasas. 'In him our primal fathers, the seven seers, the Navagwas, increase their plenty, him victorious on his march and breaking through (to the goal), standing on the mountain, inviolate in speech, most luminous-forceful by his thinking', *naksaddabham taturim parvatesthaam, adroghavaacam matibhih savistham* (VI.22.2).

It is by singing the hymn of illumination that they find the solar illuminations in the cave of our being or *arcanto gaa avindan* (I.62.2). It is by the *stubh*, the all-supporting rhythm of the hymn of the seven seers, by the vibrating voice of the Navagwas, that Indra becomes full of the power of Swar, *svarena svaryah*, and by the cry of the Dashagwas that he rends Vala in pieces (I.62.4).

This cry is the voice of the higher heaven, the thunder that cries in the lightning flash of Indra. The advance of the Angirasas on their path is the forward movement of this cry of the heavens, *pra brahmaano angiraso naksanta, pra krandanur nabhanyasya vetu* (VII.42.1).

The voice of Brhaspati, the Angirasa that discovers the Sun, the Dawn, the Cow and the light of the Word is the thunder of Heaven, *brhaspatir usasam suuryam gaam arkam viveda stanayan iva dyauh* (X.67.5). It is by *satya mantra*, the true thought expressed in the rhythm of the Truth, that the hidden light is found and the Dawn brought to birth, *guulham jyotih pitaro anvavindan, satyamantraa ajanayan usaasam* (VII.76.4).

The Angirasas speak aright, *itthaa vadadbhih angirobhih* (VI.18.5); they are masters of the Rik who place perfectly their thought, *svaadhibhir rkvabhih* (VI.32.2); they are the sons of heaven, heroes of the Mighty Lord who speak the truth, and think the straightness. Therefore, they are able to hold the seat of illumined knowledge, to mentalise the supreme abode of the sacrifice, *rtam samsanta rju didhyaanaa divasputraaso asurasya viraah; vipram padam angiraso dadhaanaa yajnasya dhaama prathamam mananta* (X.67.2).

Thus, there is a fixed system of symbols, which does not admit of any important variations, and the inner sense of the Veda everywhere remains consistent, coherent and does not vary.

## 19

**The Human Fathers**

The characteristics of the Angirasa Rishis seem, at first sight, to indicate that they are, in the Vedic system, a class of demi-gods. In their outward aspect, they appear personifications or rather personalities of the Light, the Voice and the Flame. In their inner aspect, they appear to be powers of the Truth who second the gods in their battles.

But even as divine seers, even as sons of Heaven, even as heroes of the Lord, these sages represent aspiring humanity. It is true that they are originally the sons of the gods, *deveputraah*, children of Agni, forms of the manifold-born Brhaspati. In their ascent to the world of the Truth, they are described as ascending back to the place whence they came.

Even in these characteristics, they may well be representative of the human soul, which has itself descended from that world, and has to re-ascend. For, the human soul is, in its origin, a mental being, son of immortality, *amrtasya putraah*, a child of Heaven born in Heaven, and mortal only in the bodies that it assumes.

The part of the Angirasa Rishis in the sacrifice is the human part, to find the word; to sing the hymn to the soul of the gods; to sustain and increase the divine Powers by the praise, the sacred food and the Soma-wine; to bring to birth, by their aid, the divine Dawn; to win the luminous form of the all-radiating Truth and to ascend to its secret, far and high-seated home.

In this work of the sacrifice, they appear in a double form. One is the form of the divine Angirasas, *rsayo divyaah*, who symbolize and preside over certain psychological powers and working like the gods. The other is the form of human fathers, *pitro manusyaah*, who have attained the goal and are invoked to assist a later mortal race in the same divine achievement. In this form they are described as human beings, or at least human powers that have conquered immortality by the work. In the later Yama hymns of the tenth Mandala, the Angirasas are spoken of as Barhishad Pitris along with the Bhrigus and Atharvans, and receive their own peculiar share in the sacrifice.

But in the bulk of the Rig-veda, they are invoked for the great human journey, the human journey from the mortality to the immortality, from the falsehood to the truth that the Ancestors accomplished, opening the way to their descendents.

This characteristic of their working is evident in the hymns of Vasishtha in which the gods are invoked precisely for this great journey, *adhvara yajna*, the sacrifice that travels, or is a travel to the home of the godheads and, at the same time, a battle.

‘Easy of travelling for thee is the path, O Agni, and known to thee from of old. Yoke in the Soma-offering thy ruddy (or, actively moving) mares which bear the hero. Seated, I call the births divine’ (VII.42.2).

What is this path? It is the path between the home of the gods and our earthly mortality, down which the gods descend through the *antariksa*, the vital regions, to the earthly sacrifice; and man, by the sacrifice, ascends to the home of the gods.

Agni yokes his mares, his variously coloured energies or flames of the divine Force he represents, which bear the Hero, the battling power within us that performs the journey. The births divine are at once the gods themselves, and those manifestations of the divine life in man, the Vedic meaning of the godheads.

That this is the sense is evident in the Rik. ‘When the Guest that lodges in the bliss has become conscious in knowledge in the gated house of the hero rich (in felicity), when Agni is perfectly satisfied and firmly lodged in the house, then he gives the desirable good to the creature that makes the journey’ (VII.42.4).

The hymn is, therefore, an invocation to Agni for the journey to the supreme good, the divine birth, and the bliss. The opening verse is a prayer for the necessary conditions of the journey, and the things that are said here to constitute the form of the pilgrim sacrifice, *adhvarasya pesah*.

Among these comes first the forward movement of the Angirasas. ‘Forward let the Angirasas travel, priests of the Word, forward go the cry of heaven (or, of the heavenly thing, cloud or lightning), forward move the fostering Cows that diffuse their waters, and let the two pressing stones be yoked (to their work) –

the form of the pilgrim sacrifice', *pra brahmaano angiraso naksanta, pra krandanur nabhanyasya vetu; pra dhenava udapruto navanta, yujyaataam adri adhvarasya pesah* (VII.42.1).

What constitute the form, *pesah*, of the *adhvara yajna* are stated in this hymn. They are the Angirasas with the divine Word, the cry of Heaven which is the voice of Swar, the luminous heaven, its lightnings thundering out from the Word, the divine waters or Seven Rivers that are set free to their flowing by that heavenly lightning of Indra the master of Swar, and with the out-flowing of the divine waters the out-pressing of the immortal agent Soma. The general characteristic of the *yajna* is the forward movement, the advance of all to the divine goal. This is emphasized by the three verbs of motion, *naksanta, vetu, navanta* and the emphatic *pra*, forward, which opens and sets the key to each clause.

The hymn VII.52 is still more significant and suggestive.

'O Sons of the infinite Mother, *aadityaasah*, may we become infinite beings, *aditayah syaama*, may the Vasus protect in the godhead and the mortality, *devatraa martyatraa*; possessing may we possess you, O Mitra and Varuna, becoming may we become you, O Heaven and Earth', *sanema mitraavarunaa sanantah, bhavema dyaavaaprthivi bhavantah* (VII.52.1).

This is evidently the sense that we are to possess. We are to become the children of Aditi, the godheads, *aditayah, aadityaasah*. Incidentally, Mitra and Varuna are powers of Surya Savitri, the Lord of the Light and the Truth.

'May the Angirasas who hasten through to the goal move in their travelling to the bliss of the divine Savitri; and that (bliss) may our great Father, he of the sacrifice, and all the gods becoming of one mind accept in heart', *turanyavo naksanta ratnak devasya savitur iyaanaah* (VII.52.3).

This verse establishes that the Angirasas are travellers to the light and truth of the solar deity. Of this deity are born the luminous cows the Angirasas wrest from the Panis. They are travellers to the bliss, too, which is founded on that light and truth. This journey is a growing into the godhead, into the infinite being, *aditayah syaama*. This is said to come by the growth of peace and bliss,

through the action in us, of Mitra, Varuna and the Vasus who protect us in the godhead and the mortality.

In these two hymns, the Angiras Rishis are generally mentioned. But in others we have positive references to the human Fathers who first discovered the Light, and possessed the Thought and the Word, and travelled to the secret worlds of the luminous Bliss.

The journey stated above is the victory, the ancient, primal achievement set as a type of the luminous Ancestors for the mortality that was to come after them. It is the conquest of the powers of the circumscribing Night, *raatri paritakmyaa* (V.30.14), Vritras, Sambaras and Valas. They are the sub-conscious powers that hold the light and the force in themselves in their arena of darkness and illusion. They can neither use it aright nor give it up to man, the mental being. Their ignorance, evil and limitation have to be cut away from us and broken up, and made to yield the secret of light and good and infinity. Out of this death, the immortality is to be conquered.

Pent up behind this ignorance are a secret knowledge and a great light of truth. Imprisoned by this evil is an infinite content of good. In this limiting death is the seed of boundless immortality.

For example, Vala is of the radiances, *valasya gomatah* (I.11.5); his body is made of the light, *govapuso valasya* (X.68.9); and his hole or cave is full of treasures. That body is to be broken up, that cave rent open and the treasures seized. This is the work set for the humanity. The Ancestors have done it for the human race so that the way may be known and the goal reached by the same means and through the same companionship with the gods of Light.

‘Let there be that ancient friendship between you gods and us as when with the Angirasas who spoke aright the word, thou didst make to fall that which was fixed and slewest Vala as he rushed against thee, O achiever of works and thou didst make to swing open all the doors of his city’ (VI.18.5).

At the beginning of all human traditions, there is this ancient memory. It is Indra and the serpent Vritra; it is Apollo and the Python; it is Thor and Giants; it is Sigurd and Fafnir; it is the mutually opposing gods of all mythology. But it is

only in the Veda that we find the key to this imagery, which conceals the wisdom of a prehistoric humanity.

The first hymn that can take us to the secret knowledge and the great light of Truth is the one by the great Rishi Vishwamitra (III.39). It takes us straight to the heart of the subject. It sets out with a description of the ancestral Thought, *pitryaa dhiih*, the Thought of the Fathers. It is no other than the Swar-possessing Thought hymned by the Atris, the seven-headed Thought discovered by Ayasya for the Navagwas.

In this hymn also it is spoken of the Fathers in connection with the Angirasas. 'The thought expressing itself from the heart, formed into the Stoma, goes towards Indra, its lord (III.39.1). Indra is the Power of luminous Mind, master of the world of Light and its lightning. The words or the thoughts are constantly imaged as cows or women, Indra as the Bull or husband. The words desire him, and are even spoken of as casting themselves upwards to seek him, *girah prati tvaam ud ahaasata....vrsabham patim* (I.9.4).

The luminous Mind of Swar is the goal of the Vedic thought and the speech, which express the herd of the illuminations pressing upward from the soul, from the cave of the sub-conscious in which they were penned; Indra, master of Swar is the Bull, the lord of these herds, *gopatih*.

The Rishi Vishwamitra describes the thought. It is 'the thought that when it is being expressed, remains wakeful in the knowledge'. It does not lend itself to the slumber of the Panis, *yaa jaagrviir vidathe sasyamaanaa*. It is 'that (thought) which is born of thee (or, for thee), O Indra, of that, take knowledge'.

This is a constant formula in the Veda. The god, the divine, has to take cognizance of what rises up to him in man, to become awake to it in the knowledge within us, *viddhi, cetathah*, etc. Otherwise man remains a human thing and does not 'go to the gods', *devesu gacchati*.

The Rishi continues. 'It is ancient (or, eternal), it is born from heaven; when it is being expressed, it remains wakeful in the knowledge; wearing white and happy robes, this in us is the ancient thought of the Fathers', *seyam asme sanajaa pitryaa dhiih* (III.39.2).



The Rishi then speaks of this Thought. 'The mother of twins, who here gives birth to the twins; on the tip of the tongue, it descends and stands; the twin bodies when they are born cleave to each other and are slayers of darkness, and move in the foundation of the burning force' (III.39.3).

The twins are spoken of in connection with the Angirasas and their establishment of the supreme birth (the plane of the Truth). They are said to be the twins in whom Indra places the word of the expression (I.83.3). The burning force in whose foundation they move is evidently that of the sun, the slayer of darkness. This foundation is, therefore, identical with the supreme plane, the foundation of the Truth, *rtasya budhne*. Further, the twins may be considered connected with the twin children of Surya, Yama and Yami. And Yama in the tenth Mandala is associated with the Angirasa Rishis.

It is in the light of these facts that we must understand the colloquy of Yama and Yami in the tenth Mandala in which the sister is seeking union with the her brother and is put off to later generations, meaning really symbolic periods of time. The word 'later' signifies rather higher, *uttara*.

The Rishi Vishwamitra now proceeds to speak of the ancient Fathers who first formed the ancestral Thought and of the great victory by which they discovered 'that Truth, the sun lying in the darkness'.

'None is there among mortals who can blame (or, no power of mortality that can confine or bind) our ancient Fathers, they who were fighters for the cows; Indra of the mightiness, Indra of the achievement released upward for them the fortified pens, there where, a comrade with his comrades, the fighters, the Navagwas, following on his knees the cows, Indra with the ten Dashagwas found that Truth, *satyam tat*, even the sun dwelling in the darkness (III.39.4-5).

This is the usual image of the conquest of the luminous cattle and the discovery of the hidden sun. But in the next verse, this image is associated with two other related images, which also occur frequently in the Veda. One is the pasture or field of the cow and the other is the honey found in the cow. 'Indra found the honey in the Shining One, the footed and hoofed (wealth) in the pasture of the Cow (III.39.6).

The 'shining one', *usriyaa*, is another word, which, like *go*, means both ray and cow. It is used as a synonym of *go* in the Veda. There is constant reference to the *ghrta* or clarified butter stored in the cow, hidden there by the Panis, in three portions according to Vamadeva. But it is sometimes the honeyed *ghrta*, and sometimes simply the honey, *madhumad ghrta* (IX.86.37) and *madhu*

*Ghrta* also means shining; it is the shining yield of the shining cow. It is the formed light of conscious knowledge in the mentality, which is stored in the illumined consciousness. It is liberated by the liberation of the Cow. On the other hand, Soma is the delight, beatitude, Ananda inseparable from the illumined state of the being.

According to the Veda, there are three planes of mentality in us. So there are three portions of the *ghrta* dependent on the three gods Surya, Indra and Soma. The Soma is also offered in three parts, on the three levels of the hill, *trisu saanusu*.

Having regard to the nature of the three gods, it is possible to conjecture that Soma releases the divine light from the sense mentality, Indra from the dynamic mentality and Surya from the pure reflective mentality. As for the pasture of the cow, it is the field, *ksetra*, which Indra wins for his shining comrades from the Daysu. It is where Atri beheld the warrior Agni and the luminous cows, those of whom even the old became young again. The field, *ksetra*, is only another image for the luminous home (*ksaya*) to which the gods by the sacrifice lead the human soul.

Vishwamitra now indicates the real mystic sense of all this imagery. 'He having Dakshina with him held in his right hand, *daksine daksinaavaan*, the secret thing that is placed in the secret cave and concealed in the waters. May he, knowing perfectly, separate the light from the darkness, *jyotir vrnita tamaso vijnaana*, may we be far from the presence of the evil' (III.39.6-7).

There is a clue here to the sense of the goddess Dakshina. She seems to be a form or epithet of the Dawn in some passages, or that, which distributes the offerings in the sacrifice in some other passages. Usha is the divine illumination and Dakshina is the discerning knowledge that comes with the Dawn. This discerning knowledge enables the Power in the mind, Indra, to know aright and

separate the light from the darkness, the truth from the falsehood, the straight from the crooked, *vrnita vijnaan*.

The right and left hand of Indra are his two Powers of action in knowledge. His two arms are called *gabhasti*, a word, which means ordinarily a ray of the sun but also forearm. His two arms correspond to his two perceptive powers, his two bright horses, *hari*, which are described as sun-eyed, *suuracaksasah*, and as vision powers of the Sun, *suuryasya ketuu*.

Dakshina presides over the right-hand power, *daksinaa*, and, therefore, we have the collocation *daksine daksinaavaan*. It is this discernment, which presides over the right action of the sacrifice and the right distribution of the offerings. It is this that enables Indra to hold the herded wealth of the Panis securely in his right-hand.

What is the secret thing that is placed for us in the cave, and is concealed in the waters of being, the waters in which the Thought of the Fathers is to be set, *apsu dhiyam dadhise*? It is the hidden Sun, the secret of Light of our divine existence which has to be found and taken out by knowledge from the darkness in which it is concealed. That this light is not physical is clear from the word *vijnaan*. It is through right knowledge and by moral action that it has to be found. In other words, we are to go away from evil, *duritaad*, and the wrong action to which we are subjected in the night or darkness of our being before the Sun is found, before the divine Dawn arises.

The next hymn that is relevant to the Thought of the Fathers is the hymn of Vasishtha (VII.76). Superficially, it would seem to be an ecstatic picture of the physical Dawn. But there is a constant suggestion of a profounder meaning.

The hymn commences with a description of the rising of the Sun into the light of the supreme Dawn, brought about by the gods and Angirasas. 'Savitri, the god, the universal Male, has ascended into the Light that is immortal and of all the births, *jyotir amrtam visvajanyam*; by the work (of sacrifice) the eye of the gods has been born (or, by the will-power of the gods, vision has been born); Dawn has manifested the whole world (or, all that comes into being, all existences, *visvam bhuvanam*)' (VII.76.1).

This immortal light into which the Sun rises is elsewhere called the true light, *rtam jyotih*, Truth and Immortality being constantly associated in the Veda. It is the light of the knowledge of the seven-headed Thought, which Ayasya discovered when he became *visvajanya*, universal in his being. Therefore, this light is also called *visvajanya* as it belongs to the fourth plane. It is the *turiyam svid* of Ayasya, from which all the rest are born. It is by its truth that all the rest are manifested in their large universality, and no longer in the limited terms of the falsehood and crookedness. Therefore, it is also called the eye of the gods and the divine Dawn that makes manifest the whole of existence.

The result of this birth of divine vision is that man's path manifests itself to him, and the journeying of the gods or to the gods, *devayaanaah*, which leads to the infinite wideness of the divine existence.

'Before me, the paths of the journeying of the gods have become visible, journeying that violates not, and whose movement was formed by the Vasus. The eye of Dawn has come into being in front, and she has come towards us (arriving) over our houses' (VII.76.2).

The house in the Veda is the constant image for the bodies that are dwelling places of the soul, just as the field or habitation means the planes to which it mounts and in which it rests. The path of man is that of his journey to the supreme plane. It does not violate the journeying of the gods, that is, the working of the gods, the divine law of life into which the soul has to grow.

This leads to a curious image, which supports the Arctic theory of the origin of the Vedic Rishis. 'Many were those days which were before the rising of the Sun (or, which were of old by the rising of the Sun), in which thou, O Dawn, wert seen as if moving about thy lover and not coming again' (VII.76.3). This is certainly a picture of continual dawns, not interrupted by Night, such as are visible in the Arctic region.

The psychological sense, which, however, arises out of this verse, is obvious. These dawns are those created by the actions of the Fathers, the ancient Angirasas.

'They indeed had the joy (of the Soma) along with the gods, the ancient seers who possessed the Truth; the Fathers found the hidden Light; they, having the

true thought, *satyamantraah* (the true thought expressed in the inspired word), brought into being the Dawn' (VII.76.4).

Where did the Dawn, the path, the divine journeying lead the Fathers? It was to the level wideness, *samaane uurve*, the unobstructed vast, *urau anibaadhe*. This is evidently the same as that wide being or world, which, according to Kanva, men create when they slay Vritra and pass beyond heaven and earth. It is the vast Truth and the infinite Being of Aditi.

'In the level wideness they meet together and unite their knowledge (or, know perfectly), and strive not together; they diminish not (limit not or hurt not) the workings of the gods, not violating them they move (to their goal) by (the strength of) the Vasus' (VII.76.5).

It is evident that the seven Angirasas, whether human or divine, represent different principles of the Knowledge, Thought or Word, the seven-headed Thought, the seven-mouthed Word of Brhaspati. In the level wideness, these are harmonized in a universal knowledge. The error, crookedness and falsehood by which men violate the working of the gods, and by which different principles of their being, consciousness and knowledge enter into confused conflict with each other have been removed by the eye or vision of the divine Dawn.

The hymn (VII.76) closes with the aspiration of the Vasishthas towards the divine and blissful Dawn as leader of the herds and mistress of plenty, and again as leader of the felicity and the truth, *suunrtaanaam*. They desire to arrive at the same achievement as the ancestral Fathers. It follows that these are human and not divine Angirasas.

However, the sense of the Angirasas' legend is fixed in all its details, except the exact identity of the Panis and the hound Sarama. The hymns of Vamadeva in the fourth Mandala explicitly mention the human Fathers and their achievement.

## 20

**The Victory of the Fathers**

The hymns addressed by the great Rishi Vamadeva to the divine Flame, to the Seer-Will, Agni are among the most mystic in expression in the Rig-veda. They are quite plain in their sense if only we bear in mind the system of significant figures employed by the Rishis. Otherwise, they seem a haze of images, baffling our comprehension. We are to apply the fixed notation if we are to understand the true sense of the hymns.

To understand what Vamadeva says of the great achievement of the human forefathers, it is worth knowing, at the outset, what Parasara Shaktya says of them. 'Our fathers broke open the firm and strong places by their words, yea, the Angirasas broke open the hill by their cry; they made in us the path to the great heaven; they found the Day and Swar and vision and the luminous Cows', *cakrur divo brhato gaatum asme, ahah svar vividuh ketum usraah* (I.71.2).

This path is the path, which leads to immortality. Parasara Shaktya continues. 'They who entered into all things that bear right fruit formed a path towards the immortality; earth stood wide for them by the greatness and by the Great Ones, the mother Aditi with her sons came (or, manifested herself) for the upholding', *aa ye visvaa svapatyaani tasthuh krnvaanaaso amrtatvaaya gaatum; mahnaa mahadbhih prthvi vi tasthe maataa putrair adtir dhaayase veh* (I.72.9).

This verse explains the Vedic immortality. The greatness of the infinite planes above and the great godheads that reign on those planes break the limits of the physical being. It (the physical being) then opens out to the Light and is upheld in its new wideness by the infinite Consciousness, mother Aditi, and her sons, the divine powers of the Supreme Deity.

Parasara states clearly and impressively, in his mystic style, the means of this finding and expanding. 'They held the truth, they enriched its thought; then indeed, aspiring souls, *aryah*, they, holding it in thought, bore it diffused in all its being', *dadhan rtam dhanayan asya dhitim, aad id aryo didhisvo vibhrtraah* (I.71.3).

The image in *vibhrtraah* suggests the upholding of the thought of the Truth in all the principles of our being. In the Vedic image, it is the same as the Seven-

Headed Thought in all the seven waters, *apsu dhiyam dadhise*, expressed elsewhere in almost identical language. This is evident in the image that immediately follows. 'The doers of the work go towards the un-thirsting (waters), which increase the divine births by the satisfaction of delight', *atrsyantir apaso yanti acchaa, devaan janma prayasaa vardhayantih* (I.71.4).

This is the sevenfold Truth-Consciousness in the satisfied sevenfold Truth-being, increasing the divine births in us by the satisfaction of the soul's hunger for the Beatitude. This is the growth of immortality. It is the manifestation of the Trinity of Divine-being, Light and Bliss which the Vedantins, later, called *Sachchidananda*.

Parasara makes further clear the sense of the universal diffusion of Truth, and the birth and the activity of all the godheads in us assuring a universal and immortal life in the place of our present limited mortality.

Agni, the divine Seer-Will, is described as ascending to heaven and unrolling the veil of the nights from all that is stable and mobile 'when he becomes the one God encompassing all these godheads with the greatness of his being. Then indeed all accept and cleave to the Will (or, the Work) when, O godhead, thou art born a living soul from the dryness (the material being, the desert, un-watered by the streams of the Truth); all enjoy godhead attaining to the truth and the immortality by their movements, *bhajanta visve devatvam naama, rtam sapanto amrtam evaih*. The impulse of the Truth, the thinking of the Truth becomes a universal life (or, pervades all the life), and in it all fulfill their workings', *rtasya presaa rtasya dhitir visvaayur visve apaamsi cakruh* (I.68.1-3).

Parasara says about the Seven Rivers in a clear and illuminating fashion. 'The fostering cows of the Truth, *dhenavah* (an image applied to the rivers, while *gaavah* or *usraah* expresses the luminous cows of the Sun) nourished him, lowing, with happy udders, enjoyed in heaven; obtaining right thinking as a boon from the supreme (plane), the rivers flowed wide and evenly over the hill', *rtasya hi dhenavo vaavasaanaah, smaduudhni pipayanta dyubhaktaah; paraavatah sumatim bhiksamaanaah, vi sindhavah samayaa sasrur adrim* (I.73.6).

He also speaks of them in a phrase applied to the rivers in other hymns. 'The seven mighty ones of heaven, placing aright the thought, knowing the Truth,

discerned in knowledge the doors of felicity; Sarama found the fastness, the wideness of the luminous cows; thereby the human creature enjoys the bliss', *svaadhyā diva ā sapta yāhvih, raāyo duro vi rtajnaa ajaanan; vidad gavyam saramāa drlham uurvam, yēnaa nu kam maanusi bhojate vit* (I.72.8).

These are evidently not the physical waters, but the rivers of Heaven, the streams of the Truth, and goddesses like Saraswati, who possess the Truth in knowledge, and open by it the doors of the beatitude to the human creature.

The above establishes that there is a close connection between the finding of the Cows and the out-flowing of the Rivers. They are parts of one action, the achievement of the Truth and Immortality by men, *rtam sapanto amrtam evaih*.

It becomes now clear that the achievement of the Angirasas is the conquest of the Truth and the Immortality. Swar, also called the great heaven, *brhat dyauh*, is the plane of the Truth above the ordinary heaven and earth which are no other than the ordinary mental and physical being. The path of the great heaven, the path of the Truth created by the Angirasas and followed by the hound Sarama is the path to the Immortality, *amrtatvaaya gaatum* (I.72.9).

The vision, *ketu*, of the Dawn, the Day won by the Angirasas, is the vision proper to the Truth-Consciousness. The luminous cows of the Sun and the Dawn wrested from the Panis are the illuminations of this Truth-Consciousness which help to form the thought of the Truth, *rtasya dhitiḥ*, complete in the Seven-headed Thought of Ayasya.

The Night of the Veda is the obscured consciousness of the mortal being in which the Truth is sub-conscious, hidden in the cave of the hill. The recovery of the lost Sun lying in this darkness of Night is the recovery of the Sun of the Truth out of the darkened sub-conscious condition. The down flowing earthward of the Seven Rivers must be the out streaming action of the sevenfold principle of our being as it is formulated in the Truth of the divine or immortal existence.

The Panis are the powers that prevent the Truth from emerging out of the sub-conscious condition. They constantly strive to steal its illuminations from man, and throw him back into the Night. Vritra is the power that obstructs and prevents the free movement of the illumined rivers of the Truth, obstructs the



impulsion of the Truth in us, *rtasya presaa*, the luminous impulsion, *dyumatim isam* (VII.5.8), which carries us beyond the Night to the Immortality.

On the other hand, the gods, the sons of Aditi, are the luminous divine powers, born of the infinite consciousness Aditi. Their formation and activity in our human and mortal being are necessary for our growth into the godhead, into the being of the Deva, *devatvam*, which is the Immortality.

Agni, the truth-conscious seer-will, is the principal godhead who enables us to effect the sacrifice. He leads it on the path of the Truth. He is the warrior of the battle, the doer of the work. His unity and universality in us, comprehending in it all the other godheads, is the basis of the Immortality. The plane of the Truth to which we arrive is his own home, and the own home of the other gods, and the final home also of the soul of man.

This immortality is described as beatitude, a state of infinite spiritual wealth and plenitude, *ratna*, *rayi*, *vaaja*, *raadhas*, etc. The opening doors of our divine home are the doors of the felicity, *raayo durah*, the divine doors which swing wide open to those who increase the Truth, *rtavrdhah*. Saraswati and her sisters, the Seven Rivers, which are discovered by Sarama, discover these divine doors for us. Brhaspati and Indra lead upward the shining Herds to the Seven Rivers and to the wide pasture, *ksetra*, in the unobstructed infinities of the vast Truth.

With these conceptions in mind, it becomes possible to understand the hymns of Vamadeva. They only repeat, in symbolic language, the substance of the thought expressed more openly by Parasara.

Vamadeva addresses his opening hymns to Agni, the Seer-Will. He hymns Agni as the friend or builder of man's sacrifice who awakes him to the vision, the knowledge (*ketu*), *sa cetayan manuso yajnabandhuh* (IV.1.9).

So doing, Agni 'dwells in the gated homes of this being, accomplishing; he, a god, has come to be the means of accomplishment of the mortal', *sa kseti asya duryaasu saadhan, devo martasya sadhanitvam aapa* (IV.1.9)

What is it that he accomplishes? 'May this Agni lead us in his knowledge towards that bliss of him which is enjoyed by the gods, that which by the thought all the immortals created, and Dyauspita, the Father out-pouring the

Truth', *sa no agnir nayatu prajaanan, acchaa ratnam devabhaktam yad asya; dhiyaa yad visve amrtaa akrnvan, dyauspitaa janitaa satyam uksan* (IV.1.10).

This is Parasara's beatitude of the Immortality created by all the powers of the immortal godhead doing their work in the thought of the Truth and in its impulsion. The out-pouring of the Truth is evidently the out-pouring of the waters as is indicated by the word *uksan*. This reflects Parasara's equal diffusion of the Seven Rivers of the Truth over the hill.

Vamadeva then says of the birth of this great, supreme force, Agni, in the Truth, in its waters, in its original home. 'He was born, the first, in the waters, in the foundation of the vast world, Swar, in its womb (its seat and birth place, its original home); without head and feet, concealing his two extremities, setting himself to his work in the lair of the Bull (IV.1.11).

The Bull is the Deva or Purusa; his lair is the plane of the Truth; and Agni, the Seer-Will, working in the Truth-Consciousness, creates the worlds. But he conceals his two extremities, his head and feet. In other words, his workings act between the super-conscious and the sub-conscious in which his highest and his lowest states are respectively concealed. One is concealed in an upper light and the other in an utter darkness. From that state, he goes forth as the first and supreme force and is born to the Bull or the Lord by the action of the seven powers of the Bliss, the seven Beloved.

'He went forward by illumined knowledge as the first force, in the seat of the Truth, in the lair of the Bull, desirable, young, full in body, shining wide; the seven Beloved bore him to the Lord' (IV.1.12).

Vamadeva then comes to the achievement of the human fathers. 'Here our human fathers seeking possession of the Truth went forward to it; the bright cows in their covering prison, the good milkers whose pen is in the rock they drove upward (to the Truth), the Dawns answered their call. They rent the hill asunder and made them bright; others all around them declared wide this (Truth) of theirs; drivers of the herds they sang the hymn to the doer of works (Agni), they found the light; they shone in their thoughts (or, they accomplished their work by their thoughts). They with the mind that seeks the light (the cows, *gavyataa manasaa*) rent the firm and compact hill that environed the luminous

cows; the souls that desire opened by the divine word, *vacasaa daivyaena*, the firm pen full of the kine', *asmaakam atra pitaro manusyaah, abhi pra sedur rtam aasusaanaah* (IV.1.13-15). These are the ordinary images of the Angirasa legend.

Now in mystic language, the Rishi explains the concept. 'They conceived in mind the first name of the fostering cows, they found the thrice seven supreme (seats) of the Mother; the females of the herd knew that and they followed after it; the ruddy one was manifested by the victorious attainment (or, the splendour) of the cow of Light', *te manvata prathamam naama dhenos trih sapta maatuh paramaani vindan; taj jaanatir abhyanuusata vraa, aavirbhuvad arunir yasasaa goh* (IV.1.16).

The Mother here is Aditi, the infinite consciousness, who is the *dhenuh* or fostering Cow with the seven rivers of her seven-fold streaming. The Mother is *gauh*, as well, the Cow of Light with the Dawns for her children. The Ruddy One is the divine Dawn. The herd or rays are her dawning illuminations.

The first name of the Mother with her thrice seven supreme seats, which the dawns or mental illuminations know and move towards, must be the name or deity of the supreme Deva. The supreme Deva is Infinite Being, Infinite Consciousness and Infinite Bliss. The seats of the three divine worlds, called earlier in the hymn, the three supreme births of Agni, Satya, Tapas and Jana of the Puranas. These births of Agni correspond to the three infinities of the Deva, and each fulfills in its own way the sevenfold principles of our existence.

Thus we get the series of thrice seven seats of Aditi manifested in all her glory by the opening out of the Dawn of Truth. Medhatithi Kanwa expresses the same idea as the thrice seven ecstasies of the Beatitude, *ratnaani trih saaptaani* (I.20.7). More literally, it may mean the ecstasies in their three series of seven, each of which the Ribhus bring out in their separate and complete expression, *ekam ekam susastibhih*.

Thus we see that the achievement of the Light and Truth by the human fathers is also an ascent to the Immortality of the supreme and divine status, to the first name of the all-creating infinite Mother, to her thrice seven supreme degrees of this ascending existence, to the highest levels of the eternal hill, *saanu, adri*.

Vamadeva says that Agni is to accomplish, by the sacrifice, the supreme bliss, the immortality with its thrice seven ecstasies (I.20.7). This immortality is the beatitude enjoyed by the gods. Vamadeva explains the concept thus.

‘Vanished the darkness, shaken in its foundation; Heaven shone out, *rocata dyauh* (implying the manifestation of the three luminous worlds of Swar, *divo rocanaani*); upward rose the light of the divine Dawn; the Sun entered the vast fields (of the Truth) beholding the straight things and the crooked in mortals. Thereafter, indeed, they awoke and saw utterly (by the sun’s separation of the straight from the crooked, the truth from the falsehood); then indeed they held in them the bliss that is enjoyed in heaven, *ratnam dhaarayanta dyubhaktam*. Let all the gods be in all our homes, let there be the truth for our thought, O Mitra, O Varuna’ *visve visvaasu duryaasu devaa mitra dhiye varuna satyam astu* (IV.1.17-18).

This is evidently the same idea expressed, though differently, by Parasara Shaktya. It is the pervasion of the whole existence by the thought and impulse of the Truth, and the working of all the godheads in that thought and impulsion to create in every part of our existence the bliss and the immortality.

Vamadeva further continues. ‘May I speak the word towards Agni shining pure, the priest of the offering, greatest in sacrifice who brings to us the all; may he press out both the pure udder of the Cows of Light and the purified food of the plant of delight (the Soma) poured out everywhere. He is the infinite being of all the lords of sacrifice (the gods) and the guest of all human beings; may Agni, accepting into himself the increasing manifestation of the gods, knower of the births, be a giver of happiness’ (IV.1.19-20).

In the second hymn of the fourth Mandala, Vamadeva suggestively mentions the parallelism of the seven Rishis who are the divine Angirasas and human fathers. Before doing so, he explains the idea of the human seeking after the Truth and the Bliss.

‘May he the knower discern perfectly the Knowledge and the Ignorance, the wide levels and the crooked that shut in mortals; and, O God, for a bliss fruitful in offspring, lavish on us Diti and protect Aditi’ (IV.2.11).

The above verse is very striking in its significance. We have the opposition of the knowledge and the ignorance familiar to Vedanta. Here the knowledge is

likened to the wide-open levels, which are frequently referred to in the Veda. They are the large levels to which those, labouring in the sacrifice, ascend. They find there Agni seated self-blissful (V.7.5). They are the wide- being, which he makes for his own body (V.4.6), the level wideness, the unobstructed vast. It is, therefore, the infinite being of the Deva to which we arrive on the plane of the Truth. It is this infinite being of the Deva that contains the thrice seven supreme seats of Aditi the Mother, the three supreme births of Agni within the infinite, *anante antah* (IV.1.7).

The ignorance on the other hand is identified with the crooked or uneven level, which shuts in mortals. It is, therefore, the limited, divided mortal existence. Moreover, it is evident that the ignorance is the Diti of the next half-verse, *ditim ca raasva aditim urusya*. And the knowledge is the Aditi.

Diti, also called Danu, means division. The obstructing powers or Vritras are her children, Danus, Danavas, Daityas. On the other hand, Aditi is existence in its infinity, and the mother of the gods.

The Rishi desires bliss fruitful in offspring, that is, in divine works and their results. This is to be secured through the conquest of all the treasure held in itself by our divided mortal being, but kept away from us by the Vritras and Panis, and through the holding of them in the infinite Divine Being. The Divine Being in us is to be protected from the ordinary tendencies of our human existence, that is, from subjection to the sons of Danu or Diti.

This idea is evidently identical with that of the Isa Upanisad, which declares that the possession of the knowledge and the ignorance, the unity and multiplicity in the one Brahman is the condition for the attainment of Immortality.

We then come to the seven divine seers. 'The seers unconquered declared the Seer (the Deva, Agni) holding him within, in the homes of the human being; thence (from this embodied human being) mayst thou, O Agni, aspiring by the work, *aryah*, behold by thy advancing movements these of whom thou must have the vision, the transcendent ones (the godheads of the Deva)', *kavim sasaasuh kavayo adabdhaah, nidhaarayanto duryaasu aayoh; atas tvam drsyaan agna etaan, padbhih pasyer adbhutaan arya evaih* (IV.2.12).

This is, indeed, the journey to the vision of the Godhead. 'Thou, O Agni, youngest power, art the perfect guide (on that journey) to him who sings the word and offers the Soma and orders the sacrifice; bring to the illumined who accomplishes the work the bliss with its vast delight for his increasing, satisfying the doer of the work (or, the man, *carsanipraah*). Now, O Agni, of all that we have done with our hands and our feet and our bodies, the right thinkers (the Angirasas) make as it were thy chariot by the work of the two arms (Heaven and Earth, *bhurijoh*); seeking to possess the Truth they have worked their way to it (or, won control of it)', *rtam yemuh sudhya aasusaanaah* (IV.2.13-14).

'Now as the seven seers of Dawn, the Mother, the supreme disposers (of the sacrifice), may we beget for ourselves the gods; may we become the Angirasas, sons of Heaven, breaking open the wealth-filled hill, shining in purity' (IV.2.15).

Very clearly the seven divine Seers are the supreme ordainers of the world-sacrifice. There also arises the idea of the human being 'becoming' these seven Seers, that is, creating them in himself. In so doing, he becomes the Heaven and Earth and other gods. In other words, he begets, *jan*, or creates, *kr*, or forms, *tan*, the divine births in his own being.

Next, the example of the human fathers is given as the original type of this great becoming and achievement. 'Now also, even as our supreme ancient fathers, O Agni, seeking to possess the Truth, expressing the Word, travelled to the purity and the light; breaking open the earth (the material being) they uncovered the ruddy ones (the Dawns, the Cows); perfected in works and in light, seeking the godheads, gods, forging the births like iron (or, forging the divine births like iron), making Agni a pure flame, increasing Indra, they attained and reached the wideness and the Light (of the Cows, *gavyam uurvam*). As if herds of the Cow in the field of riches, that was manifested to vision which is the births of the Gods within, O puissant One; they both accomplished the wide enjoyments (or, longings) of mortals and worked as aspirers for the increase of the higher being', *a yuutheva ksumati pasvo akhyad devaanaam yaj janima anti ugra; martaanaam cid urvasir akrpran vrdhe cid arya uparasya aayoh* (IV.2.16-18). Evidently, this is a repetition, said in other words, of the double idea of possessing the riches of Diti, while safeguarding Aditi.

‘We have done the work for thee, we have become perfect in works, the wide-shining Dawns have taken up their home in the Truth (or, have robed themselves with the Truth), in the fullness of Agni and his manifold delight, in the shining eye of the god in all his brightness (IV.2.19).

The next hymn opens with a call to men to create Agni who sacrifices in the Truth, to create him in his form of golden light, *hiranyaruupam* (the gold being always the symbol of the solar light of the Truth, *rtam jyotih*) before the ignorance can form itself, *puraa tanayitnor acittaata* (IV.3.1).

The god is asked to awaken to the work of man and the truth in him, as being himself ‘the Truth-conscious who places aright the thought’, *rtasya bodhi rtacit svaadhih* (IV.3.4). It is so as all falsehood is merely a wrong placing of the Truth.

The god is to refer all fault and sin and defect in man to the various godheads or divine powers of the Divine Being so that it may be removed, and the man declared finally blameless before the Infinite Mother, *aditaye anaagasah* (I.24.15), or for the infinite existence, as elsewhere stated.

The hymn later presents the idea, in various formulae, of the united human and divine existence, Diti and Aditi, the latter founding, controlling and flooding with itself the former.

‘The Truth controlled by the Truth I desire (that is, the human by the divine), together the unripe things of the Cow and her ripe and honeyed yield (again the imperfect human, and the perfect and blissful divine fruits of the universal consciousness and existence); she (the cow) being black (the dark and divided existence, Diti) is nourished by the shining water of the foundation, the water of the companion streams, *jaamaryena payasaa*. By the Truth, Agni the Bull, the Male, sprinkled with the water of its levels, ranges un-quivering, establishing wideness (wide space or manifestation); the dappled Bull milks the pure shining teat’ (IV.3.9-10).

The symbolic opposition between the shining white purity of the One, the Source and the varied colouring of the Light manifested in the triple world is frequent in the Veda. The image of the dappled Bull and the pure-bright udder, the source of the waters, therefore, repeats the idea of the multiple

manifestations of the human life purified, tranquilized in its activities and fed by the waters of the Truth and the Infinity.

Finally, Vamadeva proceeds to the coupling of the luminous Cows and the Waters. 'By the Truth, the Angirasas broke open and hurled asunder the hill and came to union with the Cows; human souls, they took up their dwelling in the blissful Dawn, Swar became manifest when Agni was born. By Truth, the divine immortal waters, un-oppressed, with their honeyed floods, O Agni, like a horse breasting forward in its galloping ran in an eternal flowing' (IV.3.11-12).

These four verses (9-12) are, in fact, meant to give the preliminary conditions for the great achievement of the Immortality. They are the symbols of the grand Mythos, the mythos of the Mystics in which they hid their supreme spiritual experience from the profane and, effectively enough, from their posterity.

Vamadeva himself says in the most plain and emphatic language in the last verse of this hymn that they were secret symbols, images meant to reveal the truth, which they protected, only to the initiated, to the knower and to the seer.

'All these are secret words that I have uttered to thee who knowest, O Agni, O Disposer, words of leading, words of seer-knowledge that express their meaning to the seer – I have spoken them illumined in my words and my thinking', *etaa visvaa viduse tubhyam vedho nithaani agne ninyaa vacaamsi; nivacanaa kavaye kaavyaani, asamsisam matibhir vipra ukthaih* (IV.3.16).

They are secret words that have kept their secret to the priest, the ritualist, the grammarian, the pandit, the historian and the mythologist. To all of them, they have been words of darkness or seals of confusion, but not to the supreme ancient forefathers and their illumined posterity, *ninyaa vacaamsi nithaani nivacanaa kaavyaani*.





## 21

**The Hound of Heaven**

To master the Vedic conception of the Truth and the discovery of the illuminations of the Dawn by the primeval Fathers, there is need to fix the identity of Sarama and the exact function of Panis, the two issues closely related to each other.

That Sarama is some power of the Light and probably of the Dawn is clear. Sarama leads in the search for the radiant herds and discovers both the path and their secret hold in the mountain. It must, therefore, be a forerunner of the dawn of Truth in the human mind.

If we introspect to know what power among the truth-finding faculties it is that discovers, out of the darkness of the unknown, in our being, the truth that is hidden in it, we realize that it is 'intuition'.

Sarama is not Saraswati; she is not the inspiration, even though the names are similar. Saraswati gives the full flood of the knowledge; she awakens the great stream, *maho arnah*, and illumines with plenitude all the thoughts, *visvaa dhiyo vi raajati*. Saraswati possesses, and is the flood of, the Truth.

On the other hand, Sarama is the traveller and seeker on its path who does not herself possess, but rather finds that which is lost. She is not either the plenary word of the revelation like the goddess Ila. This is for the reason that when what she seeks is found, she does not take possession, but only gives the message to the seers and their divine helpers who are still to fight for the possession of the Light that has been discovered.

The following verse accurately describes the part attributed to Sarama in the Veda. 'When this guide became visible, she went, knowing, towards the seat that is as if the home of the Dasyu', *prati yat syaa nithaa adarsi dasyor oko na acchaa sadanam jaanati gaat* (I.104.5).

Sarama has two essential characteristics. One is that the knowledge comes to her beforehand, before vision springs up instinctively at the least indication. The second is that, with that knowledge, she guides the rest of the faculties, and divine powers that seek.

She leads to that seat, *sadanam*, the home of the Destroyers, which is at the opposite end of the seat of the Truth, *sadanam rtasya*, in the cave or secret place of darkness, *guhaayaam*, just as the home of the gods is in the cave or secrecy of light. In other words, she is a power descended from the super- conscient Truth, which leads us to the light that is hidden in us, in the sub-conscient. All these characteristics apply exactly to 'intuition'.

Sarama is mentioned by name only in a few hymns of the Veda. It is invariably in connection with the achievement of the Angirasas, or the winning of the highest planes of existence. The most important of the hymns is the Sukta of the Atris. The first three verses summarize the great achievement.

'Severing the hill of heaven by the words he found them, yea, the radiant ones of the arriving Dawn went abroad; he uncovered those that were in the pen, Swar rose up; a god opened the human doors.

The Sun attained widely to strength and glory; the Mother of the Cows (the Dawn), knowing, came from the wideness; the rivers became rushing floods, floods that cleft (their channel), heaven was made firm like a well-shaped pillar.

To this word the contents of the pregnant hill (came forth) for the supreme birth of the Great Ones (the rivers or, less probably, the dawns); the hill parted asunder, heaven was perfected (or, accomplished itself); they lodged (upon earth) and distributed the largeness' (V.45.1-3).

It is of Indra and the Angirasas that the Rishi is speaking, as is evident from the expressions used, and the rest of the hymn. These are the usual formulae of the Angirasa mythus, and repeat the exact expressions that are constantly used in the hymns of the delivery of the Dawn, the Cows and the Sun.

What they mean is clear. Our already formed triple existence is the hill that rises into the heaven. Its summit is rent asunder by Indra, and the hidden illuminations go abroad. The upward streaming of the brilliant herds manifests Swar, the higher heaven of the super-conscient. The sun of Truth diffuses all the strength and glory of its light. The inner Dawn comes from the luminous wideness instinct with knowledge, *jaanati gaat*.

The rivers of the Truth, representing the outflow of its being and its movement, *rtasya presaa*, descend in their rushing streams, and make a channel here for their waters. Heaven, the mental being, is perfected and made firm like a well-shaped pillar to support the vast Truth of the immortal life that is now made manifest. The largeness of that Truth is lodged here in all the physical being.

The delivery of the pregnant contents of the hill, *parvatasya garbhah*, the illuminations constituting the Seven-headed thought, *rtasya dhiti*, comes forth in answer to the inspired word. It leads to the supreme birth of the seven great rivers that constitute the substance of the Truth put into active movement, *rtasya presaa*.

Then Vamadeva invokes Indra and Agni by the 'words of perfect speech that are loved of the gods – by those words the Maruts perform the sacrifices as seers who, by their seer-knowledge do well the sacrificial work', *ukthebhir hi smaa kavayah suyajnaah.....maruto yajanti* (V.45.4).

The Rishi then puts into the mouth of men an exhortation and mutual encouragement to do even as the Fathers do, and attain the same divine results.

'Come now, today let us become perfected in thought, let us destroy suffering and unease, let us embrace the higher good', *eto nu adya sudhyo bhavaama, pra ducchuna minavaamaa variyah*. 'Far from us let us put always all hostile things (all the things that attack the divide, *dvesaamsi*); let us go forward towards the master of the sacrifice. Come, let us create the Thought, O friends (obviously, the seven-headed Angirasa thought), which is the Mother (Aditi or the Dawn) and removes the screening pen of the Cow' (V.45.5-6).

The significance of the above verses is clear. It is in such passages that the inner sense of the Veda considerably disengages itself from the veil of the symbol.

Then Vamadeva speaks of the great and ancient example of the Angirasas and the achievement of Sarama, which men are called upon to repeat.

'Here the stone was set in motion whereby the Navagwas chanted the hymn for the ten months, Sarama going to the Truth found the cows, the Angirasa

made all things true. When in the dawning of this vast One (Usha representing the infinite Aditi, *maataa devaanaam aditer anikam*) all the Angirasas came together with the Cows (or, rather, perhaps by the illuminations represented in the symbol of the cows, Rays); there was the fountain of these (illuminations) in the supreme world; by the path of the Truth Sarama found the cows' (V.45.7-8).

It is evident here that it is through the movement of Sarama going straight to the Truth by the path of the Truth, that the seven Seers, representing the Seven-headed or Seven-rayed thought of Ayasya and Brhaspati, find all the concealed illuminations. By force of these illuminations, they all come together in the level of wideness, *samaane uurve*, from which the Dawn has descended with the knowledge, *uurvaad jaanati gaat* (V.45.2). Or, it may also mean that by force of these illuminations they all come together in the dawning of this vast One, that is, the infinite consciousness.

There, as Vasishtha has said, they, united, agree in knowledge and do not strive together, *sangataasah sam jaanate na yatante mithas te* (VII.76.5). This is to say that the seven become one, as indicated in another hymn. They become the one seven-mouthed Angirasa, an image corresponding to that of the Seven-headed thought. It is this single unified Angirasa who makes all things true as the result of Sarama's discovery (VII.76.7).

The harmonized, united, perfected Seer-Will corrects all falsehood and crookedness. It turns all thought, life and action into terms of the Truth. In this hymn also, the action of Sarama is precisely that of Intuition, which goes straight to the Truth, and not through the crooked paths of doubt and error. It is this Intuition, which delivers the Truth out of the veil of darkness and false appearances. It is through the illuminations discovered by Sarama that the Seer-mind can attain to the complete revelation of the Truth.

The rest of the hymn speaks of the rising of the seven-horsed Sun towards his 'field which spreads wide for him at the end of the long journey', the attainment of the swift Bird to the Soma and the young Seer to that field of the luminous Cows, the Sun's ascent to the 'luminous Ocean', its crossing over it 'like a ship guided by the thinkers', and the descent upon man of the water of that ocean in response to their call.

In those waters, the human seer establishes the sevenfold thought of the Angirasa. If we remember that the Sun represents the light of the super-conscious or truth-conscious knowledge, and the luminous ocean the realms of the super-conscious with their thrice seven seats of the Mother Aditi, the sense of these symbolic expressions become clear. It is the highest attainment of the supreme goal, which follows upon the complete achievement of the Angirasas, their united ascent to the plane of the Truth, just as that achievement follows upon the discovery of the herds by Sarama.

The hymn by Vishwamitra (III.31) is of great importance in this connection.

‘Agni (the Divine Force) is born quivering with his flame of the offering for sacrifice to the great Sons of the Shining One (the Deva, Rudra); great is the child of them, a vast birth; there is a great movement of the Driver of the shining steeds (Indra, the Divine Mind) by the sacrifices.

The conquering (dawns) cleave to him in his struggle, they deliver by knowledge a great light out of the darkness; knowing the Dawns rise up to him, Indra has become the one lord of the luminous cows.

The cows who were in the strong place (of the Panis) the thinkers clove out; by the mind the seven seers set them moving forward (or, upwards towards the supreme), they found the entire path (goal or field of travel) of the Truth; knowing those (supreme seats of the Truth) Indra by the obeisance entered into them’, *vilau satir abhi dhiraa atrndan, praacaa ahinvan manasaa sapta vipraah; visvaam avindan pathyaam rtasya, prajaanan it taa namasaa vivesa* (III.31.3-5).

This is, as usual, the great birth, the great light, the great divine movement of the Truth-knowledge with the finding of the goal, and the entry of the gods and the seers into the supreme planes above.

Next, the hymn records the part of Sarama in this work. ‘When Sarama found the broken place of the hill, he (or, perhaps she, Sarama) made continuous the great and supreme goal. She, the fair-footed, led him to the front of the imperishable ones (the un-slayable cows of the Dawn); first she went, knowing, towards their cry’ (III.31.6).

It is again the Intuition that leads; knowing, she speeds at once, and in front of all, towards the voice of the concealed illuminations, towards the place where the hill, so firmly formed and impervious in appearance (*vilu, drlha*), is broken, and can admit the seekers.

The rest of the hymn describes the achievement of the Angirasas and Indra.

‘He went, the greatest seer of them all, doing them friendship; the pregnant hill sent forth its contents for the doer of perfect works; in the strength of manhood he with the young (Angirasas) seeking plenitude of riches attained possession, then singing the hymn of light he became at once the Angirasa. Becoming in our front the form and measure of each existing thing, he knows all the births, he slays Shushna’.

The import of the above is that the Divine Mind assumes a form answering to each existing thing in the world. It reveals its true divine image and meaning, and slays the false force that distorts knowledge and action.

The hymn continues. ‘Seeker of the cows, traveller to the seat of heaven, singing the hymns, he, the Friend, delivers his friends out of all defect (of right self-expression). With a mind that sought the Light (the cows) they entered their seats by the illumining words, making the path towards Immortality’, *ni gavyataa manasaa sedur arkaih krnvaanaaso amrtatvaaya gaatum*.

This is that large seat of theirs, the Truth by which they took possession of the months – the ten months of the Dashagwas. Harmonized in vision (or, perfectly seeing) they rejoiced in their own (abode, Swar) milking out the milk of the ancient seed (of things). Their cry (of the word) heated all the earth and heaven (created the burning clarity, *gharma, taptam ghrtam*, which is the yield of the solar cows); they established in that which was born a firm abiding and in the cows the heroes (that is, the battling force was established in the light of the knowledge).

‘Indra, the Vritra-slayer, by those who were born (the sons of the sacrifice), by the offerings, by the hymns of illumination released upward the shining ones; the wide and delightful Cow (the cow Aditi, the vast and blissful higher consciousness) bringing for him the sweet food, the honey mixed with the *ghrta*, yielded it as her milk. For this Father also (for Heaven) they fashioned the vast

and shining abode; doers of perfect works, they had the entire vision of it. Wide-upholding by their support the Parents (Heaven and Earth) they sat in that high world and embraced all its ecstasy. When for the cleaving away (of evil and falsehood) the vast Thought holds him immediately increasing in his pervasion of earth and heaven, then for Indra in whom are the equal and faultless words, there are all irresistible energies. He has found the great, manifold and blissful Field (the wide field of the cows, Swar); and he has sent forth together the entire moving herd for his friends. Indra shining out by the human souls (the Angirasas) has brought into being, together, the Sun, the Dawn, the Path and the Flame' (III.31.7-15).

In the remaining verses, the same figures continue. Only the famous image of the rain, which has been very much misunderstood, is interwoven.

'The Ancient-born I make new that I may conquer. Do thou remove our many un-divine hurters and set Swar for our possessing! The purifying rains are extended before us (in the shape of the waters); take us over to the state of bliss that is the other shore of them. Warring in thy chariot protect us from the foe; soon, soon make us conquerors of the Cows. The Vritra-slayer, the Master of the Cows, showed (to men) the cows; he has entered with his shining laws (or lustres) within those who are black (void of light, like the Panis); showing the truths (the cows of truth) by the Truth he has opened all his own doors', *pra suunrtaa disamaana rtena duras ca visvaa avrnod apa svah* (III.31.19-21).

This is to say that the Vritra-slayer opens the doors of his own world, Swar, after breaking open by his entry into our darkness, *antah krsnaan gaat*, the human doors kept closed by the Panis.

All the above brings into striking relief the mystic and entirely psychological character of the Vedic poetry. By so doing, it sets out vividly the nature of the imagery in which Sarama figures. The other references to Sarama in the Rig-veda do not add anything essential to the conception.

However, there is a brief allusion to Sarama. 'When thou didst tear the waters out of the hill, Sarama became manifest before thee; so do thou as our leader tear out much wealth for us, breaking the pens, hymned by the Angirasas' (IV.16.8).



It is the Intuition manifesting before the Divine Mind as its forerunner when there is the emergence of the waters, the streaming movements of the Truth that break out of the hill in which they were confined by Vritra (IV.16.7). It is by means of the Intuition that this godhead becomes our leader to rescue the Light, the conquest of the much wealth hidden within the rock behind the fortress gate of the Panis.

There is another allusion to Sarama in a hymn by Parasara Shaktya.

'He has created, within, the seer-knowing of the eternal Disposer of things, holding in his hand many powers (powers of the Divine Purusas, *naryaa puruuni*); Agni creating together all immortalities becomes the master of the (divine) riches.

All the immortals, they who are not limited (by ignorance), desiring, found him in us as if the Calf (of the cow Aditi) existing everywhere; labouring, travelling to the Seat, holding the Thought they attained in the supreme seat to the shining (glory) of Agni.

O Agni, when through the three years (three symbolic seasons or periods corresponding perhaps to the passage through the three mental heavens) they, pure, had served thee, the pure one, with the *ghrta*, they held the sacrificial names and set moving (to the supreme heaven) forms well born.

They had knowledge of the vast heaven and the earth, and bore them forward, they, the sons of Rudra, the lords of the sacrifice; the mortal awoke to vision and found Agni standing in the seat supreme.

Knowing perfectly (or, in harmony) they kneeled down to him; they with their wives (the female energies of the gods) bowed down to him who is worthy of obeisance; purifying themselves (or, perhaps, exceeding the limits of heaven and earth) they created their own (their proper or divine) forms, guarded in the gaze, each friend, of the Friend.

In thee, the gods of the sacrifice found the thrice seven secret seats hidden within; they, being one of heart, protect by them the immortality. Guard thou the herds that stand and that which moves.

O Agni, having knowledge of all manifestations (or, births) in the worlds (or, knowing all the knowledge of the peoples) establish thy forces, continuous, for life. Knowing, within, the paths of the journeying of the gods thou becamest their sleepless messenger and the bearer of the offerings.

The seven mighty ones of heaven (the rivers) placing aright the thought, knowing the Truth, discerned the doors of the felicity; Sarama found the fastness, the wideness of the cows whereby now the human creature enjoys (the supreme riches).

They who entered upon all things that bear right issue, made the path to Immortality; by the great ones and by the greatness earth stood wide; the mother Aditi with her sons came for the upholding.

The Immortals planted in him the shining glory, when they made the two eyes of heaven (identical probably with the two vision-powers of the Sun, the two horses of Indra); rivers, as it were, flow down released; the shining ones (the cows) who were here below knew, O Agni' (I.72).

The above hymn is throughout a hymn of knowledge, of the Truth, of a divine Flame which is no other than the supreme Deity, of Immortality, of the ascent of the gods, the divine powers, by the sacrifice to their godhead, to their supreme names, to their proper forms, to the shining glory of the supreme state with its thrice seven seats of the Godhead.

Such an ascent can have no other meaning than the ascent of the divine powers *in man* out of their ordinary cosmic appearances to the shining Truth beyond. What Parasara says here is that by this action of the gods, mortal man awakens to the knowledge and finds Agni standing in the supreme seat and goal, *vidan marto nemadhita cikitvaan, agnim pade parame tashivaamsam*.

What is the role of Sarama in such a hymn if she is not the power of the Truth, and if her cows are not the rays of a divine dawn of illumination? What are these rivers if they do not know the Truth and discover the hidden doors? Can this Dawn be ever physical? This is one of the Suktas, which most clearly reveal the sense of the Vedic imagery.

In one hymn in the tenth Mandala, there is a colloquy of Sarama and Panis. In this hymn and several others, we do not have even the least indication of the figure of the divine hound attributed to Sarama. It could possibly be a later development of the Vedic imagery. Sarama is surely, in these hymns, the shining fair-footed goddess by whom the Panis are attracted and whom they desire as their sister. They do not consider Sarama a dog to guard their cattle, but one who will share in the possession of their riches.

The image of the hound of heaven is, however, exceedingly apt and striking, and was bound to develop out of the legend. There is a reference of a son for her. 'In the seeking of Indra and the Angirases (for the cows), Sarama discovered a foundation for the son', *vidat saramaa tanayaaya dhaasim* (I.62.3). The son here is, in all probability, the son born of the sacrifice, a constant element in the Vedic imagery, and not the dog-race born of Sarama.

There is another similar reference. 'Matarishwan (the Life-god, Vayu) increasing the many desirable things (the higher objects of life) discovered the path for the son, discovered Swar', *maatarisvaa puruvaarapustir vidad gaatum tanayaaya svarvit* (I.96.4). The subject is evidently the same as the earlier one. But the 'son' has nothing to do with any dog-race born of Sarama.

In the famous Funeral hymn (X.14), there is a mention of two Saramaya dogs, messengers of Yama. But they have no relation to Sarama as their mother. In the Rig-veda, Yama seems to have been originally a form of the Sun, and then one of the twin children of the wide-shining Lord of Truth. Even in the late Isa Upanisad, the name Yama is used as an appellation of the Sun. He is the guardian of Dharma, the law of the Truth, *satyadharma*, which is the condition of immortality. He is, therefore, considered the guardian of Immortality.

His world is Swar, the world of Immortality, *amrte like aksite*, where the indestructible Light is and where the Swar is established, *yatra jyotir ajasram, yasmin loke svar hitam* (IX.113.7). Only in the later period, Yama is considered the god of Death with his own special world.

The Funeral hymn (X.14) is not a hymn of Death so much as a hymn of Life and Immortality. Yama and the ancient Fathers have discovered the path to that world, which is a pasture of the Cows whence the enemy cannot bear away the

radiant herds, *yamo no gaatum prathamō viveda, naisaa gavyuutir apabhartavaa u, yatraa nah puurve pitarah pareyuh* (X.14.2).

The soul of the heaven ascending is bidden to ‘overrun the two four-eyed multi-coloured Sarameya dogs on the good (or, effective) path’ (X.14.10). Of that path to heaven, they are the four-eyed guardians, protecting man on the road by their divine vision, *yau te svaanau yama raksitaarau caturaksau pathiraksi nrcaksasau* (X.14.11). And Yama is asked to give them, as an escort to the soul on its way.

These dogs are ‘wide-moving and not easily satisfied’. They range as the messengers of the Lord of the Law among men. ‘May they (the dogs) give us back bliss here in the unhappy (world) so that we may look upon the Sun (X.14.12).

We are still in the order of the old Vedic ideas, the Light and the Bliss and the Immortality. These Sarameya dogs have the essential characteristics of Sarama such as the vision, the wide-ranging movement, and the power to travel on the path to reach the goal.

Sarama leads to the wideness of the cows; these dogs protect the soul on its journey to the inviolable pasture, the field, *ksetra*, of the luminous and imperishable herds. Sarama brings us to the truth, to the sun-vision, which is the way to the bliss; these dogs bring the weal to man in this world of suffering so that he shall have the vision of the Sun.

Whether Sarama figures as the fair-footed goddess speeding on the path, or the heavenly hound or mother of the wide-ranging guardians of the path, it is the same idea, the idea of the Truth that seeks and discovers, that finds by a divine faculty of insight the hidden Light, and the denied Immortality. It is to this seeking and finding that her function is limited.



## 22

**The Sons of Darkness**

In the Rig-veda, the story of the Angirasas, Indra and Sarama, the cave of the Panis and the conquest of the Dawn, the Sun and the Cows is a struggle between the seekers of Light and the powers of Darkness. The cows are the illuminations of the Sun and the Dawn; they cannot be physical cows. The wide fear-free field of the Cows won by Indra for the Aryans is the wide world of Swar, the world of the solar Illumination, the threefold luminous regions of Heaven.

Similarly, the Panis must be taken as powers of the cave of Darkness. It is quite true that the Panis are *Dasyus* or *Daasas*. They are spoken of constantly by that name. They are described as the *Daasa varna* as opposed to *Arya varna*. *Varna*, colour, is the word used for caste or class in the Brahmanas and later writings. It does not appear to have the same sense in the Rig-veda.

The *Daasyus* are the haters of the sacred Word. They are those who do not give to the gods the gift or the holy wine. They keep their wealth of cows and horses, and other treasure, for themselves, and do not give them to the seers. They are those who do not perform the sacrifice.

It may be that there was a struggle between two different cults in India, and that the Rishis took their images from the physical struggle between the human representatives of these cults, and applied them to the spiritual conflict. But it is perfectly certain that, in the Rig-veda, it is the spiritual conflict and victory, not the physical battle and plunder of which they are speaking.

We have to take as a whole all the references in the Rig-veda to the Panis, their wealth, their characteristics, the victory of the gods, the seers and the Aryans over them. We have to adopt uniformly that conclusion which arises from all the passages thus taken together.

When we follow this method, we find that, in many of these passages, the idea of the Panis as human beings is absolutely impossible, and they appear to be as powers either of physical or of spiritual darkness. In several other passages, they appear to be not at all powers of physical darkness, but may well be either human enemies of the god-seekers and sacrificers, or else enemies of the spiritual

Light. In yet others, they appear to be neither human enemies nor enemies of the physical Light, but are certainly the enemies of the spiritual Light, the Truth and the Thought. From all this data, there can be only one conclusion, that they are always and only enemies of the spiritual Light.

The following Rik serves as the master-clue to the general character of these *Dasyus*. 'Agni born shone out slaying the *Dasyus*, the darkness by the Light; he found the Cows, the Waters, Swar', *agnir jaato arocata, ghnana dasyuun jyotisaa tamah, avindad gaa apah svah* (V.14.4).

There are two great divisions of the *Dasyus*. One division relates to the Panis who intercept both the cows and the waters but are especially associated with the refusal of the cows. The second division relates to the Vritras who intercept the waters and the light, but are especially associated with the withholding of the waters. But all *Dasyus*, without exception, stand in the way of the ascent to Swar and oppose the acquisition of the wealth by the Aryan seers.

The refusal of the light is their opposition to the vision of Swar, *svardrs*, and the vision of the Sun, to the supreme vision of knowledge, *upamaa ketuh* (V.34.9). The refusal of the waters is their opposition to the abundant movement of Swar, *svarvatir apah*, the movement of the Truth, *rtasya presaa, rtasya dhaaraah*. The opposition to the wealth-acquisition is their refusal of the abundant substance of Swar, *vasu, dhana, vaaja, hiranya*, that great wealth, which is found in the sun and the waters, *apsu suurye mahad dhanam* (VIII.68.9).

As the whole struggle is between the Light and the Darkness, the Truth and the Falsehood, the divine Maya and the un-divine, all the *Dasyus* alike are identified with the Darkness. It is by the birth and shining of Agni that the Light is created with which he slays the *Dasyus* and the Darkness.

The opposition between the Aryans and the Panis or *Dasyus* is brought out in another hymn (V.34). In the hymn (III.34), we have the expression *aaryam varnam*. As the *Dasyus* have been identified with the Darkness, the Aryans must be connected with the Light. In fact, in the Rig-veda, the light of the Sun is called the Aryan Light in contradistinction to the *Daasa* Darkness.

Vasishta also speaks of the three Aryan peoples who are *jyotiragraah*, led by the light, having the light in their front (VII.33.7). Also in the Rig-veda, we have

the expressions, *rtam jyotih*, *hiranyam jyotih*, the true light, and the golden light. The three epithets of the solar light, *aarya*, *rta* and *hiranya* are mutually illuminative and almost equivalent.

The Sun is the Lord of Truth; therefore its light is the *rtam jyotih*. This light of Truth is that which the Aryan, god or mortal, possesses, and which constitutes its Arya-hood. Again, the epithet 'golden' is constantly applied to the Sun. Gold is, in the Rig-veda, probably the symbol of the substance of the Truth. For its substance is the light which is the golden wealth found in Surya and in the waters of Swar, *apsu suurye*. Therefore, we have the epithet *hiranyam jyotih*.

This golden or shining light is the hue, *varna*, of the Truth. It is also the hue of the thoughts full of that illumination won by the Aryan, the cows who are bright in colour, *sukra*, *sveta*, the colour of Light. The *Dasyu*, on the other hand, being a power of darkness, is black in hue.

It is, therefore, suggested that the brightness of the light of the Truth, *jyotih aaryam* (X.43.4) is the Arya *varna*, the hue of these Aryans who are *jyotiragraah*. The darkness of the night of ignorance is the hue of the Panis, the *Daasa varna*. In this way, *varna* would come to mean almost the nature, the colour being the symbol of the nature. It appears that this idea was a current notion among the ancient Aryans, which view is substantiated by the later use of different colours to distinguish the four castes, white, red, yellow and black.

'He (Indra) desires not to ascend by the five and by the ten; he cleaves not to him who gives not the Soma even though he grows and increases; he overcomes him or else he slays in his impetuous movement; he gives to the god-seeker for his enjoyment the pen full of the cows.

Cleaver (of the foe) in the battle-shock, firm holder of the discus (or, the wheel), averse from him who gives not the Soma but increaser of the Soma-giver, terrible is Indra and the tamer of all; Aryan, he brings into utter subjection the *Daasa*.

He comes driving this enjoyment of the Panis, robbing him of it and he apportions entirely to the giver for his enjoyment the wealth rich in hero-powers; that man who makes wroth the strength of Indra is held back manifold in a difficult journeying, *durge cana dhriyate aa puru*.



When Maghavan has known, in the shining cows, the Two who are rich in wealth and have all forces, he, growing in knowledge, makes a third his helper and rushing impetuously looses upward the multitude of the cows, *gavyam*, by the help of the fighters' (V.34.5-8).

The last Rik of the Sukta speaks of the Aryan (god or man) arriving at the highest knowledge-vision, *upamaam ketum aryah*, the waters in their meeting nourishing him, and his housing a strong and brilliant force of battle *ksatram amavat tvesam* (V.34.9).

The inner sense of the above hymn may be considered to be as follows. Indra, the Divine Mind-Power, takes the secret wealth from the powers of Ignorance with whom he refuses to ally even when they are rich and prosperous. He gives the imprisoned herds of the illumined Dawn to the man of the sacrifice who desires the godheads. He is himself the Aryan who brings the life of the ignorance into complete subjection to the higher life so that it yields up to it all the wealth it holds.

The use of the words *aarya* and *arya* to signify the gods, not only in this passage but in others, too, tends to show in itself that the opposition of the Arya and the Dasyu is not at all a national or tribal or merely human distinction. It has a deeper significance. The fighters are certainly the seven Angirasas. They are the helpers of Indra in the release of the cows.

But the three persons whom Indra finds, or comes to know, by entering among the bright cows, by possessing the trooping illuminations of the Thought, are more difficult to fix. In all probability, it is these three by whom the seven rays of the Angirasa-knowledge are raised to ten so that they pass successfully through the ten months and release the sun and the cows. It is after finding or knowing the two, and getting help of the third that Indra releases the cows of the Panis.

They may also be connected with the symbolism of the three Aryan peoples led by the Light and the three luminous worlds of Swar. This is for the reason that the attainment of the supreme knowledge-vision, *upama ketuh*, is the final result of their action, and this supreme knowledge is that which has the vision of Swar and stands in its three luminous worlds, *rocanaani*, *svardrsam ketum divo*

*rocanasthaam usarbudham*, the knowledge-vision that sees Swar, that stands in the shining Worlds, and that awakes in the Dawn' (III.2.14).

In the hymn III.34, Vishwamitra gives the expression *aarya varna*. He also gives the key to its psychological significance.

'(They hymn) the supremely desirable, the ever overcoming, the giver of strength who wins possession of Swar and the divine waters; the thinkers have joy in the wake of Indra who takes possession of the earth and the heaven.

Indra wins possession of the Steeds, wins the Sun, wins the Cow of the many enjoyments; he wins the golden enjoyment, having slain the *Dasyus* he fosters (or, protects) the Aryan *varna*;

Indra wins the herbs and the days, the trees and the mid-world; he pierces Vala and impels forward the speaker of the words; so he becomes the tamer of those who set against him their will in works, *abhikratuunaam*' (III.34.8-10).

We have in the above hymn the symbolic elements of all the wealth won by Indra for the Aryan. It includes the sun, the days, the earth, the heavens, the middle world, the horses, and the growths of earth, herbs and trees. The word *vanaspatin* has a double sense meaning lords of the forest or lords of enjoyment. Finally, as against Vala and his *Dasyus*, we have the Aryan *varna*.

But, in the same hymn, in the preceding Riks, we have already the word *varna* meaning the hue of the Aryan thoughts, the thoughts that are true and full of life.

'Indra, Swar-conquering, bringing to birth the days assailed and conquered by the desires (the Angirasas) these armies (of the *Dasyus*); he made to shine for man the knowledge-vision of the days, *ketum ahnaam*, he found the Light for the vast enjoyment;

He made conscious in knowledge these thoughts for his adorer; he carried forward (beyond the obstruction of the *Dasyus*) this bright *varna* of these (thoughts), *acetayad dhiya imaa jaritre, pra imam varnam atiracchukram aasaam*.

They (the true Aryan thoughts) set in action (or, praise) many great and perfect works of the great Indra; by his strength he crushes, in his overwhelming energy, by his working of knowledge, *maayaabhih*, the crooked *Dasyus*'

(III.34.4-6).

We find here the Vedic phrase *ketum ahnaam*, the knowledge-vision of the days. It means the light of the Sun of Truth that leads to the vast beatitude. The 'days' are those produced through Indra's conquest of Swar for man following upon his destruction of the Pani armies with the help of the Angirasas, and the ascent of the Sun and the shining Cows.

It is for man, and as powers of man, that all this is done by the gods, not on their own account since they already possess. For man as the *nr*, the divine Man or Purusa, Indra holds much strength of that manhood, *nrvad*, *naryaa puruuni*. Indra awakes him to the knowledge of these thoughts, which are symbolized as the shining Cows released from the Panis. The shining hue of these thoughts, *sukram varnam aasaam*, is evidently the same as that *sukra* or *sveta* Aryan hue which is mentioned in Rik 9.

Indra carries forward or increases the colour of these thoughts beyond the opposition of the Panis, *pra varnam atiracchukram*. In so doing, Indra slays the *Dasyus* and protects or fosters and increases the Aryan colour, *hatvi dasyuun pra aaryam varnam aavat*.

Moreover these *Dasyus* are the crooked ones, *vrjinaan*. Indra's works or forms of knowledge, his '*maayaas*' by which he overcomes the opposing '*maayaas*' of the *Dasyus*, Vritra or Vala, conquer them.

In the Rig-veda, the straight and the crooked are constantly synonymous with the truth and the falsehood. It is, therefore, clear that these Pani *Dasyus* are crooked powers of the falsehood and ignorance. They set their false knowledge, false strength, will and works against the true knowledge, the true strength, will and works of the gods and the Aryans.

The triumph of the Light is the triumph of the divine knowledge of the Truth against the darkness of this false demonic knowledge. That victory is the ascent of the Sun, the birth of the Days, the advent of the Dawn, the release of the herds of the shining Rays and their mounting to the world of Light.

That the cows are the thoughts of the Truth is explicit in the hymn to Soma.

‘By this brilliant light he, purifying himself, breaks through all hostile powers by his self-yoked horses, as if by the self-yoked horses of the Sun.

He shines, a stream of the out-pressed Soma, purifying himself, luminous, the brilliant One, when he encompasses all forms (of things) with the speakers of the Rik, with the seven-mouthed speakers of the Rik (the Angirasa powers).

Thou, O Soma, findest that wealth of the Panis; thou by the Mothers (the cows of the Panis, frequently so designed in other hymns) makest thyself bright in thy own home, Swar, by the thoughts of the Truth in thy home, *sam maatrbbhih marjayasi sva aa dame rtasya dhitibhir dame*.

As if the Sama (equal fulfillment, *samaane uurve*, in the level wideness) of the higher world, *paraavatah*, is that (Swar) where the thoughts (of the Truth) take their delight.

By those shining ones of the triple world (or triple elemental nature) he holds the wide manifestation (of knowledge), shining he holds the wide manifestation’ (IX.111).

We notice that by these cows of the Panis, Soma becomes clear and bright in the home of Agni and other gods, which is the vast Truth of Swar, *rtam brhat*. These shining cows, which have in them the triple nature of the supreme world, *tridhaatubhir arusibhih*, and by whom Soma holds the birth or wide manifestation of that Truth are the thoughts, which realize the Truth.

This Swar with its three shining worlds in whose wideness there is the equal fulfillment of the *tridhaatu* is elsewhere described as the wide and fear-free pasture in which the cows range at will and take their delight, *rananti*. In other words, this Swar is that region where the thoughts of the Truth take their delight, *yatra rananti dhitayah*.

In the next verse it is said that the divine chariot of Soma follows, getting knowledge, the supreme direction and labours forward, having vision, by the rays, *puurvaam anu pradisam yaati cekitat, sam rasmibhir yatate darsato ratho daivyo darsato rathah*. This supreme direction is evidently that of the divine or vast Truth. These rays are evidently the rays of the Dawn or Sun of Truth. They are

the cows concealed by the Panis, the illumined thoughts, *dhiyah*, of the bright hue, *rtasya dhitayah*.

All the internal evidence of the Rig-veda, wherever this image of the Panis, the Cows, the Angirasas, etc occurs establishes invariably the same conclusion.

The Panis are the withholders of the thoughts of the Truth, dwellers in the darkness without knowledge, *tamah avayunam*. Indra and the Angirasas replace the darkness by the Word, by the Sun with Light to manifest in its stead the wideness of the Truth. It is not with physical weapons but with words that Indra fights the Panis, *panin vacobhir abhi yodhad indrah* (VI.39.2).

This symbolism becomes evident in the full hymn.

‘Of this divine and rapturous seer (Soma), bearer of the sacrifice, this honeyed speaker with the illumined thought, O God, join to us, to the speaker of the word the impulsions that are led by the cows of light, *iso goagraah*.

He it was who desired the shining ones (the cows, *usraah*) all about the hill, truth-yoked, yoking his car with the thoughts of the Truth, *rtadhitibhir rtayug yujaanah*; (then) Indra broke the unbroken hill level of Vala, by the words he fought against the Panis.

He it was (Soma) who as the Moon-Power (Indu) day and night and through the years made the lightless nights to shine out, and they held the vision of the days; he created the dawns pure in their birth.

He it was becoming luminous who made full of light the lightless ones; he made the many (dawns) shine by the Truth, he went with horses yoked by the Truth, with the wheel that finds Swar, satisfying (with the wealth) the doer of works’ (VI.39.1-4).

It is always the thought, the Truth, the word that is associated with the cows of the Panis. By the words of Indra, the divine Mind-Power, those who withhold the cows are conquered. That which was dark becomes light. The chariot drawn by the horses yoked by the Truth finds the luminous vastnesses of being, consciousness and delight now concealed from our vision.

This is made more explicit. 'By the *brahma*, Indra pierces Vala, conceals the darkness, makes Swar visible', *ud gaa aajad abhinad brahmana valam aguuhata tamo vyacaksayat svah* (II.24.3).

The whole Rig-veda is thus a chant of the powers of Light, and their ascent by the force and vision of the Truth to its possession in its source and seat where it is free from the attack of the falsehood.

'By Truth, the cows (illuminated thoughts) enter into the Truth; labouring towards the Truth the Truth one conquers; the aggressive force of the Truth seeks the cows of Light and goes breaking through (the enemy); for Truth the two wide ones (Heaven and Earth) become multitudinous and deep, for Truth the two supreme Mothers give their yield', *rtena gaava rtam aa vivesuh; rtam yemaana rtam id vanoti, rtasya susmasturayaa u gavyuh; rtaaya prthvi bahule gabhire, rtaaya dhenuu parame duhaate* (IV.23.9-10).



## 23

**The Conquest over the Dasyus**

The *Dasyus* stand in opposition to both the Aryan gods and the Aryan seers. The gods are born of Aditi in the Supreme Truth of things. The *Dasyus* are born of Diti in the nether Darkness. The gods are the lords of Light. The *Dasyus* are the lords of Night. They front each other across the triple world of earth, heaven and mid-air which are no other than body, mind and the connecting breath of life.

Sarama descends from the supreme realm, *paraakaat* (X.108). She has to cross the waters of the *rasaa*. She meets the night, which gives place to her for fear of her overleaping it, *atiskado bhiyasaa*. She arrives at the home of the *Dasyus*, *dasyor oko na sadanam*. The *Dasyus* themselves describe their home as the world of falsehood beyond the bound of things, *reku padam alakam*.

The supreme world also surpasses the bound of things by exceeding or transcending itself. It is *reku padam*, but *satyam* not *alakam*. It is the world of the Truth, and not the world of the Falsehood. The latter is the darkness without knowledge, *tamah avayunam tatanvat*.

Indra, when his largeness exceeds, *ririce*, heaven, earth and mid-world, creates for the Aryan the opposite world of truth and knowledge, *vayunavat*, which exceeds these three domains. It is, therefore, *reku padam*.

This darkness, this lower world of Night and the Inconscient in the formed existence of things, symbolizes in the image of the mountain, which rises from the bowels of earth to the back of heaven. This is represented by the secret cave at the base of the hill, the cave of the darkness.

But the cave is only the home of the Panis. Their field of action is earth, heaven and the mid-world. They are the sons of the Inconscience. But they are not precisely inconscient in their action. They have forms of apparent knowledge, *maayaaah*. But these are forms of ignorance the truth of which is concealed in the darkness of the Inconscient. Their surface or front is falsehood, not truth.



The world has come out of the darkness concealed in darkness, the deep and abysmal flood that covered all things, the Inconscient Ocean, *appraketam salilam* (X.129.3).

In that non-existence, the seers have found by desire in the heart, and thought in the mind that which builds up the true existence. This non-existence of the truth of things, *asat*, is the first aspect of them that emerges from the inconscient ocean. Its great darkness is the Vedic Night, *raatrim jagato nivesanim* (I.35.1). This great darkness holds the world and all its unrevealed potentialities in her obscure bosom.

Night extends her realm over this triple world of ours. Out of the triple world, in heaven, in the mental being, Dawn is born who delivers the Sun out of the darkness where it was lying concealed and eclipsed. This creates the vision of the supreme Day in the non-existence, in the Night, *asati pra ketuh* (I.124.11).

It is, therefore, in these three realms that the battle between the lords of the Light and the lords of the Ignorance is carried on through its continual vicissitudes.

The word *pani* means dealer, trafficker. Action seems to be its sense in most passages in the Rig-veda. From *pan* in the sense of action, we have the names of the organs of action such as *paani*, hand, foot or hoof. From this angle it is possible to regard the Panis as the powers that preside over those ordinary un-illuminated sense-activities of life, whose immediate root is in the dark sub-conscient physical being and not in the divine mind.

The whole struggle of man is to replace the un-illuminated sense activities of life by the luminous working of mind and life, which comes from above, through the mental existence. Whoever thus aspires, labours, battles, travels, and ascends the hill of being is the Aryan. *Aarya, arya, ari* mean, with the various senses, to toil, to fight, to climb or rise, to travel, and to prepare the sacrifice. The work of the Aryan is a sacrifice, which is at once a battle, an ascent and a journey. It is a battle against the powers of darkness, an ascent to the highest peaks of the mountain beyond earth and heaven into Swar, and a journey to the other shore of the rivers and the ocean into the farthest infinity of things.

The Aryan has the will to the work; he is the doer of the work, *kaaruu, kiri*, etc. The gods who put their force into his work are *sukratu*, perfect in power for the sacrifice. The *Dasyu* or Pani is the opposite of both; he is *akratu*. The Aryan is the sacrificer, *yajamaana, yajyu*; the gods who receive, uphold, impel his sacrifice are *yajata, yajatra*, powers of the sacrifice; and the *Dasyu* is the opposite of both, *ayajyu*.

The Aryan in the sacrifice finds the divine word, *gih, mantra, brahma, uktha*; he is the *brahmaa* or singer of the Word. The gods delight and uphold the Word, *girvaahasah, girvanasah*. The *Dasyus* are haters and destroyers of the Word, *brahmadvisah*, spoilers of speech, *mrdhravacasah*. They have no force of the divine breath, or no mouth to speak it; they are *anaasah*. They have no power to think and mentalize the Word, and the truth it contains; they are *amanyamaanaah*.

On the other hand, the Aryans are the thinkers of the Word, *manyamaanaah*, holders of the thought, the thought-mind and the seer-knowledge, *dhira, manisi, kavi*. The gods are also the supreme thinkers of the Thought, *prathamamano dhiyah, kavayah*. The Aryans are desirers of the godheads, *devayavah, usijah*. They seek to increase their own being and the godheads in them by the sacrifice, the Word, and the thought. The *Dasyus* are god-haters, *devadvisah*, and obstructers of the godhead, *devanidah*, and desire no increase, *avrdhah*.

The gods lavish wealth on the Aryan, and the Aryan gives his wealth to the gods. The *Dasyu* withholds his wealth from the Aryan until it is taken from him by force. He does not press out the immortal Soma-wine for the deities who seek its rapture in man. Although he is *revaan*, although his cave is packed with cows and horses and treasures, *gobhir asvebhir vasubhir nyrstah*, still he is the miser of existence, *araadhas*, because his wealth gives no prosperity or felicity to man or himself (X.108.7).

In the struggle between the Aryan and the *Dasyu*, the latter always seeks to plunder and destroy, to steal the luminous cows of the former and hide them again in the darkness of the cave. 'Slay the devourer, the Pani; for he is the wolf (the tearer, *vrkash*)' (VI.51.14).

It is possible that these descriptions could easily be applied to human enemies who hate the cult and the gods of the Aryan. But such an interpretation

is entirely impossible because, in the hymn of Hiranyastupa Angirasa (I.33) in which these distinctions are most clearly drawn and the battle of Indra and his human allies with the *Dasyus* most elaborately described, these *Dasyus*, Panis and Vritras cannot possibly be human fighters, tribes or robbers.

In this hymn of Hiranyastupa Angirasa, the first ten verses clearly refer to the battle for the cows and, therefore, to the Panis.

‘Come, let us go seeking the cows to Indra; for it is he that increases the thought in us; invincible is he and complete are his felicities, he releases for us (separates from the darkness) the supreme knowledge-vision of the luminous cows, *gavaam ketam param aavarjate nah*.

I fly to the unassailable giver of riches like a bird to its beloved nest bowing down to Indra with the supreme words of light, to him to whom his affirmers must call in their journey. He comes with all his armies and has fastened firmly his quivers; he is the fighter (the Aryan) who brings the cows to whomsoever he desires.

O Indra who hast increased (by our word), hold not back for thyself thy much delight, become not in us the Pani, *coskuuyamaanah indra bhuuri vaamam maapanir bhuur asmad adhi pravrdha*’.

The last phrase is a striking one. Its sense is this. ‘Having thy much wealth of the delight, do not be a Pani, one who holds his possessions only for himself and keeps them from man; do not hold the delight away from us in thy super-conscious as the Panis do in their sub-conscious secrecy’.

The hymn then describes the Pani, the *Dasyu* and Indra’s battle with him for the possession of earth and heaven.

‘Nay, thou slayest with thy weapon the wealthy *Dasyu*, ranging alone with thy powers that serve thee, O Indra; they on thy bow (the powers as arrows) sped diversely in all directions and they who keep possession and sacrifice not went unto their death.

Their heads were scattered far from them, they who do not sacrifice yet strove with the sacrificers, when, O lord of the shining steeds, O strong stander in

heaven, thou didst cast out from Heaven and Earth those who observe not the law of thy working, *avrataan*.

They fought against the army of the blameless one; the Navagwas set him on his march; like bullocks, who fight against the bull they were cast out, they came to know what was Indra and fled from him down the slopes.

O Indra, thou foughtest them who laughed and wept on the other side of the mid-world, *rajasah paare* (on the borders of heaven); thou didst burn down the *Dasyu* out of heaven from on high, thou didst foster the expression of him who affirms thee and gives the Soma.

Making the circle of the earth, they shone in the light of the golden gem (an image for the Sun); but for all their rushing they could not pass beyond Indra, for he set spies all around by the Sun.

When thou possessedest earth and heaven all around with thy vastness; O Indra, by the speakers of the word, *brahmabhiih*, thou didst cast out the *Dasyu*, attacking those who can think not (the Truth) by those who think, *amanyamaanaan abhi manyamaanaih*.

They attained not to the end of heaven and earth; Indra, the Bull, made the lightning his helper, by the Light he milked the shining cows out of the darkness. (I.33.1-10)

The battle takes place not on earth, but on the other shore of the *Antariksha*. The *Dasyus* are driven out of heaven by the flames of the thunderbolt. They circle round the earth and are cast out of both heaven and earth. They can find no place in either heaven or earth, for all is now full of the greatness of Indra. They cannot conceal themselves anywhere from his lightning because the sun with his rays gives him spies. Indra sets them all round. In the brightness of those rays, the Panis are discovered.

This can be no description of an earthly battle between the Aryan and the Dravidian tribes. The lightning cannot be the physical lightning, as it has nothing to do with the destruction of the powers of Night, and milking of the cows of the Dawn out of the darkness.

It becomes clear then that these non-sacrificers, these haters of the Word who are incompetent even to think it are not any human enemies of the Aryan cult. They are the powers that strive for possession of heaven and earth in man himself. They are demons, dark forces, and not Dravidians.

It is important to note that the *Dasyus* strive, but fail to attain the 'limit of earth and heaven'. This may mean that these powers seek without the Word or the sacrifice to attain to the higher world beyond earth and heaven, which can be conquered only by the Word and the sacrifice. They seek to possess the Truth under the law of the Ignorance. But they are unable to attain to the limit of earth and heaven. Only Indra and the gods can so exceed the formula of mind, life and body after filling all three with their greatness.

Sarama seems to hint at this ambition of the Panis. 'May your words be unable to attain, may your embodiments be evil and inauspicious; may you not violate the path to travel upon it; may Brhaspati not give you happiness of the two worlds (divine and human)' (X.108.6).

The Panis offer rather insolently to be friendly with Indra if he will stay in their cave and be the keeper of their cows, to which Sarama answers that Indra is the over-comer of all and cannot himself be over-come and oppressed. Again they offer brotherhood to Sarama if she will dwell with them, and not return to the far world whence she has come by the force of the gods against all obstacles, *prabaadhitaa sahasaa daivyena*.

Sarama replies, 'I know not brotherhood and sisterhood, Indra knows and they the dread Angirasas; desiring the cows they protected me so that I came; depart hence, O Panis, to a better place. Depart hence, O Panis, to a better place, let the cows ye confine go upward by the Truth, the hidden cows whom Brhaspati finds and Soma and the pressing-stones and the illumined seers'.

There is also the idea of a voluntary yielding of their store by the Panis in the hymn addressed to the Sun as the Increaser Pushan.

'O Pushan, Lord of the Path, we yoke thee like a chariot for the winning of the plenitude, for the Thought. O shining Pushan, impel to giving the Pani, even him who giveth not; soften the mind even of the Pani. Distinguish the paths that lead to the winning of the plenitude, slay the aggressors, let our thoughts be

perfected. Smite the hearts of the Panis with thy goad, O seer; so make them subject to us. Smite them, O Pushan, with thy goad and desire in the heart of the Pani our delight; so make him subject to us.... Thy goad thou bearest that impels the word to rise, O shining seer, with that write thy line on the hearts of all and sever them, (so make them subject to us). Thy goad of which thy ray is the point and which perfects the herds (of thought-vision, *pasusaadhani*) the delight of that we desire. Create for us the thought that wins the cow, that wins the horse, that wins the plenitude of the wealth' (VI.53).

The Vedic idea in the above hymns is that the sub-conscious darkness and the ordinary life of ignorance held concealed in it, all belongs to the divine life. These secret riches of the divine life must be recovered first by destroying the impenitent powers of ignorance, and then by possessing the lower life subjected to the higher. As for Indra, he conquers or slays the *Dasyu* and transfers his wealth to the Aryan. So also Sarama refuses peace by alliance with the Panis, but suggests their submission to the gods and the Aryans by the surrender and ascent of the imprisoned cows, and their own departure from the darkness to a better place, *variyah* (X.108.10-11).

It is the goad of the luminous seer, Pushan, lord of the Truth that drives open the closed heart and makes the sacred word to arise from its depths. It is this goad, which perfects the radiant cows, accomplishes the luminous thoughts and effects the conversion of the Pani. Then the Truth-god, Pushan, in his darkened heart also desires that which the Aryan desires. Therefore, by this penetrating action of the Light and the Truth, the powers of the ordinary ignorant sense-activity become subject to the Aryan.

But, normally, they are his enemies, not *daasa*, in the sense of submission and service, but in the sense of destruction and injury. The Pani is the robber who snatches away the cows of light, the horses of the swiftness and the treasures of the divine plenitude. He is the wolf, the eater, *atri*, *vrka*. He is the obstructor, *nid*, and spoiler of the word. He is the enemy, the thief, the false or evil thinker who makes difficult the path by his robberies and obstructions.

‘Cast away utterly far from us the enemy, the thief, the crooked one who places falsely the thought; O Master of existence, make our path easy to travel. Slay the Pani for he is the wolf that devours (VI.51.13-14).

The gods must check his rising to the attack. ‘This god (Soma) in his birth with Indra for helper held back by force the Pani’ (VI.44.22), and won Swar and the sun and all the riches.

The Panis have to be slain or routed so that their riches may be ravished from them and devoted to the higher life. This is related in several hymns.

‘Thou who didst sever the Pani in his continuous ranks, thine are these strong givings, O Saraswati. O Saraswati, crush the obstructers of the gods’ (VI.61.1 & 3).

‘O Agni and Soma, then was your strength awakened when you robbed the Pani of the cows and found the one Light for many’ (I.93.4).

When the gods awake in the Dawn for the sacrifice, the Panis must not also awake to interfere with its successful progress. They are, therefore, to sleep in their cavern darkness.

‘O Dawn, queen of the plenitudes, awaken those who fill us (the gods), but let the Panis sleep un-awakening. Richly dawn for the lords of the plenitude, O queen of the plenitude, richly for him who affirms thee, O Dawn that art Truth. Young she shines out before us, she has created her host of the ruddy cows; in the non-existent vision has dawned out wide’ (I.124.10-11).

‘Lo, in front of us that supreme light full of the knowledge has arisen out of the darkness; daughters of heaven shining wide, the Dawns have created the path for the human being. The Dawns stand in front of us like pillars in the sacrifices; breaking out pure and purifying, they have opened the doors of the pen, the darkness. Breaking forth today the dawns awaken to knowledge the enjoyers for the giving of the rich felicity; within where there is no play of light let the Panis sleep un-waking in the heart of the darkness’ (IV.51.1-3).

Into this nether darkness the Panis have to be cast down from the higher planes, while the dawns imprisoned by them in that night have to be lifted to the highest planes.

‘Panis who made the knot of the crookedness, who have not the will to works, spoilers of speech, who have not faith, who increase not, who do not sacrifice, them has Agni driven farther and farther; supreme, he has made them nethermost who will not sacrifice. And (the Cows, the Dawns) who rejoiced in the nether darkness, by his power he has made to move to the highest.... He has broken down by his blows the walls that limit, he has given the Dawns to be possessed by the Aryan’, *aryapatnir usasas cakaara* (VII.6.3-5).

The lords of the ignorance have to be slain or enslaved to the Truth and its seekers. But their wealth is indispensable to the human fulfillment. It is as if ‘on the most wealth-abounding head of the Panis’ that Indra takes his stand, *paninaam varsisthe muurdhan asthaat* (VI.45.31).

Indra becomes himself the Cow of Light and the Horse of Swiftmess, and lavishes an ever increasing thousand-fold wealth. The fullness of that luminous wealth of the Panis and its ascent heavenward is the Path, and the birth of the Immortality.

‘The Angirasas held the supreme manifestation (of the Truth), they who had lit the fire, by perfect accomplishment of the work; they gained the whole enjoyment of the Pani, its herds of the cows and the horses.

Atharvan first formed the Path; thereafter Surya was born as the protector of the Law and the Blissful One, *tatah suuryo vrapataa vena aajani*. Ushanas Kavya drove upward the Cows. With them we may win by the sacrifice the immortality that is born as a child to the Lord of the Law, *yamasya jaatam amrtam yajaamahe*’ (I.83.4-5).

Angirasa is the Rishi who represents the Seer-Will. Atharvan is the Rishi of the journeying on the Path. Ushanas Kavya is the Rishi of the heavenward desire that is born from the seer-knowledge. The Angirasas win the wealth of illuminations and powers of the Truth concealed behind the lower life and its crookedness. Atharvan forms, in their strength, the path. Surya, the lord of Light, is then born as the guardian of the divine Law and the Yama-power. Ushanas Kavya drives the herded illuminations of our thought up that path of the Truth to the Bliss, which Surya possesses. From the law of the Truth is thus born the Immortality to which the Aryan soul by its sacrifice aspires.





## 24

**Symbolism in Retrospect**

The Angirasa legend and the Vritra my-thus are the two principal parables of the Rig-veda. They occur and recur everywhere. They run through the hymns as two closely connected threads of symbolic imagery. Around them all the rest of the Vedic symbolism is woven. It is not that they are its central ideas, but they are two main pillars of this ancient structure. This is a symbolism of the struggle between spiritual powers of Light and Darkness, Truth and Falsehood, Knowledge and Ignorance, Death and Immortality. This is the real sense of the whole Rig-veda.

The Angirasa Rishis are bringers of the Dawn and rescuers of the Sun out of the darkness. But this Dawn, Sun, Darkness are figures used with a spiritual significance. The central conception of the Rig-veda is the conquest of the Truth out of the darkness of Ignorance. By the conquest of the Truth is also meant the conquest of the Immortality.

The Vedic *rtam* is a spiritual as well as a psychological conception. It is the true being, the true consciousness, and the true delight of existence beyond this earth of body, this mid-region of vital force, this ordinary sky or heaven of mind. We have to cross beyond all these planes to arrive at the higher plane of the super-conscious Truth, which is the own home of the gods and, therefore, the foundation of Immortality. This is the world of Swar, to which the Angirasas have found the path for their posterity.

The Angirasas are at once the divine seers who assist in the cosmic and human working of the gods, and their earthly representatives, the ancient Fathers. The ancient Fathers first found the wisdom of which the Vedic hymns are a chant, memory and renewal in experience.

The seven divine Angirasas are sons or powers of Agni, powers of the Seer-Will, the flame of divine Force instinct with divine-knowledge, which is kindled for their victory. The Bhrigus have found this Flame secret in the growths of the early existence. But the Angirasas kindle it on the altar of sacrifice. They maintain the sacrifice through the periods of the sacrificial year, symbolizing the

periods of the divine labour by which the Sun of Truth is recovered out of the darkness.

Those who sacrifice for nine months of this year are the Navagwas, seers of the nine cows or nine rays. They institute the search for the herds of the Sun, and the march of Indra to battle with the Panis. Those who sacrifice for ten months are the Dashagwas, seers of the ten rays who enter with Indra into the cave of the Panis, and recover the lost herds.

The sacrifice is the giving by man of what he possesses in his being to the divine or the higher nature. Its fruit is the farther enrichment of his manhood by the lavish bounty of the gods. The wealth thus gained constitutes a state of spiritual riches, prosperity and felicity. This state is itself a power for the journey, and a force of battle. The sacrifice is thus a journey, a progression. The sacrifice itself travels, led by Agni, up the divine path to the gods. The ascent of the Angirasa Fathers to the divine world of Swar is the type of this journey.

Their journey of the sacrifice is also a battle, as Panis, Vritras and other powers of evil and falsehood oppose it. Of this warfare, the conflict of Indra and the Angirases with the Panis is a principal episode.

The principal features of sacrifice are the kindling of the divine flame, the offering of the *ghrta* and the Soma-wine, and the chanting of the sacred word. The hymn and the offering increase the gods. They are said to be born, created and manifested in man. By their increase and greatness here, they increase the earth and heaven, that is, the physical and mental existence to their utmost capacity. The gods so created, in their turn, create the higher worlds or planes.

The higher existence is the divine, the infinite of which the shining Cow, the infinite Mother Aditi is the symbol. The lower existence is the human existence sourced from Diti. The object of the sacrifice is to win the higher or divine being. It is to possess, with it, and make subject to its law and truth, the lower or human existence.

The *ghrta* of the sacrifice is the yield of the shining cow. It is the clarity or brightness of the solar light in the human mentality. The Soma is the immortal delight of existence, secret in the waters and the plant, and pressed out for drinking by gods and men.

The word is the inspired speech expressing the thought-illumination of the Truth, which rises out of the soul, formed in the heart, and shaped by the mind. Agni, growing by the *ghṛta*, and Indra, forceful in the luminous strength and joy of the Soma and increased by the word, aids the Angirasas to recover the herds of the Sun.

Brhaspati is the Master of the creative word. While Agni is the supreme Angirasa, the flame from whom the Angirasas are born, Brhaspati is the one Angirasa with the seven mouths, the seven rays of the illuminative thought and the seven words, which express it. The Angirasa seers are the powers of such utterance. Brhaspati is thus the complete thought of the Truth, the seven-headed, which wins the fourth or divine world for man by winning for him the complete spiritual wealth, the object of the sacrifice.

Therefore, Agni, Indra, Brhaspati, Soma are all described as winners of the herds of the Sun and destroyers of the *Dasyus* who conceal and withhold them from man. Saraswati is the stream of the Word or inspiration of the Truth. She is also a *Dasyu* slayer, and winner of the shining herds. Sarama, the forerunner of Indra discovers them. Sarama is a solar or dawn-goddess and seems to symbolize the intuitive power of the Truth. Usha, the Dawn, is at once herself a participant in the great victory and, in her full advent, its luminous result.

Usha is the divine Dawn. The sun that arises by her coming is the Sun of the super-conscious Truth. The day he brings is the day of the true life in the true knowledge. The night he dispels is the night of the ignorance, which yet conceals the dawn in its bosom. Usha herself is the Truth, *suunṛta*, and the mother of truths. These truths of the divine Dawn are called her cows, her shining herds. The forces of the Truth that accompany them (the shining herds) and occupy the life are called her horses.

Much of the Vedic symbolism turns around this symbol of the cows and horses. These are the chief elements of the riches sought by man from the gods. The cows of the Dawn have been stolen and concealed by the demons, the lords of Darkness, in their nether cave of the secret sub-conscious. They are the illuminations of knowledge, the thoughts of the Truth, *gaavo matayah*, which have

to be delivered out of their imprisonment. Their release is the up surging of the powers of the divine Dawn.

It is also the recovery of the Sun that was lying in the darkness. It is said that the Sun, 'that Truth', was the thing found by Indra and the Angirasas in the cave of the Panis. By the rending of that cave, the herds of the divine Dawn, which are the rays of the Sun of Truth, ascend the hill of being. The Sun itself ascends to the luminous upper ocean of the divine existence, led over it by the thinkers like a ship over the waters, till it reaches its farther shore.

The Panis who conceal the herds are the masters of the nether cavern. They are a class of *Dasyus*. In the Vedic symbolism, they are set in opposition to the Aryan gods, Aryan seers and workers.

The Aryan is he who does the work of sacrifice, finds the sacred word of illumination and desires the gods. He increases them and is increased by them into the largeness of the true existence. He is the warrior of the light and the traveller to the Truth.

The *Dasyu*, on the other hand, is the un-divine being that does no sacrifice, amasses wealth, which he cannot rightly use. This is because he cannot speak the word or mentalize the super-conscious Truth, hates the Word, the gods and the sacrifice. He gives nothing of himself to the higher existences, but robs, and withholds his wealth from the Aryan. He is the thief, the enemy, the wolf, the devourer, the divider, the obstructor and the confiner. The *Dasyus* are powers of darkness and ignorance, which oppose the seeker of truth and immortality.

The gods are the powers of Light, the children of Infinity, forms and personalities of the one Godhead who, by their help, by their growth and human working in man, raise him to the Truth and the Immortality.

Thus, the interpretation of the Angirasa myth gives the key to the whole secret of the Rig-veda. When the cow of which the *ghrta* is the yield is not a physical cow, but the shining Mother, then the *ghrta* itself, which is found in the waters and is said to be triply secreted by the Panis in the cow is no physical offering. So is the honey-wine of Soma which is also said to exist in the rivers and to rise in a honeyed wave from the ocean, and to flow streaming up to the gods.

Then the other offerings of the sacrifice must also be symbolic. The outer sacrifice itself can be nothing but the symbol of an inner giving. Similarly, if the Angirasa Rishis are also in part symbolic or are, like the gods, semi-divine workers and helpers in the sacrifice, so also must be the Bhrigus, Atharvans, Ushana, Kutsa and others who are associated with them in their work.

If the Angirasa legend and the story of the struggle with the *Dasyus* is a parable, so also should be the other legendary stories we have in the Rig-veda such as the help given by the gods to the Rishis against the demons. This is for the reason that all the legendary stories are related in similar terms and constantly classed by the Vedic Rishis along with the Angirasa story, on the same footing.

Similarly, these *Dasyus* with who the Aryans are constantly at war, these Vritras, Panis and others are not human enemies, but powers of darkness, falsehood and evil. Then the whole idea of the Aryan wars and kings and nations begins to take upon itself the aspect of spiritual symbol and apologue. Whether they are entirely so or only in part is a matter for detailed examination.

The other legend in the Rig-veda is that of Vritra and Waters, which is closely connected with that of the Angirasas and the Light.

First Indra, the Vritra-slayer, is, along with Agni, one of the two chief gods of the Vedic Pantheon. If his character and functions can be properly established, we shall have the general type of the Aryan gods fixed firmly.

Secondly, the Maruts, his companions, singers of the sacred chant, are the strongest point of the naturalistic theory of Vedic worship. They are, undoubtedly, storm-gods. None of the greater Vedic deities such as Agni, the Aswins, Varuna, Mitra, Twashtri, the goddesses, or even Surya the Sun, or Usha the Dawn has such a pronounced physical character.

If these storm-gods can be shown to have a psychological character and symbolism, then there can be no more doubt about the profound sense of the Vedic religion and ritual.

Finally, Vritra and his associated demons, Shushna, Namuchi and the rest appear, when closely scrutinized, to be *Dasyus* in the spiritual sense, if the

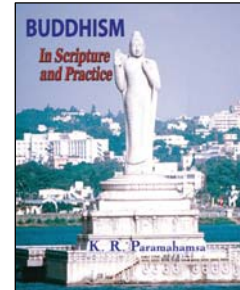
meaning of the heavenly waters Vritra obstructs is more thoroughly investigated. Then the consideration of the stories of the Rishis and the gods and the demons as parables can be proceeded with from a sure starting point. This brings the symbolism of the Vedic worlds to a satisfactory interpretation.

The Vedic symbolism, as worked out in the hymns, is too complex in its details and too numerous in its standpoints. It presents too many obscurities and difficulties to the interpreter in its shades and side allusions. Above all, it has been too much obscured by ages of oblivion and misunderstanding. The leading clues can only lay the right foundations for the broad understanding of the core thought of the hymns that their sense is only spiritual and psychological.

The above establishes that, *prima facie*, the Vedic hymns are the symbolic gospel of the ancient Indian mystics. Their sense is wholly spiritual and psychological. The interpretation of the Veda is to be from this standpoint.

## Buddhism in Scripture and Practice

Buddhism arose more than 2500 years ago in India in an atmosphere of great philosophical ferment. It was the atmosphere in which the sacrificial religion was systematized in the *Mimamsa*, the philosophical ideas of the Upanisads were crystallized, and the ideas of independent thinkers, not owing allegiance to either, were trying to gain their foothold in the Indian thought. All these philosophies were philosophies of life according to the reality as understood by their proponent. All the philosophical sects at that time, except the *Charvaka*s, were indeed ascetic.



Buddhism arose out of the sects independent of the *Mimamsa* and the *Vedanta*. It incorporated what it considered to be the best from all, both the orthodox and the heterodox. It became one of the world's greatest religions, and contributed one of the highest of philosophies.

The founder of Buddhism, Gautama, known to the world as the Buddha, the Enlightened, participated in a critical and creative movement to synthesize ancient, traditional worldviews, which vied for the collective heart of India in his time. Interestingly, some of the most influential thinkers the world has ever known such as Confucius and Lao-tzu in China, Zoroaster and Socrates in Persia and in Greece, Jeremiah and Deutero Isaiah in Israel also belonged to the same period with a variation of a few decades on either side. The Buddha was the most influential individual to emerge from the then intellectually and religiously stimulating period in India.

The Buddha evoked the admiration of even the orthodox *Mimamsakas* and *Vedantins* by the gentleness and nobility of his character, and also by the clarity and simplicity of his teachings. He was accordingly absorbed into the Hindu pantheon. His philosophy, in its latest stages, looked so similar to the *Vedanta* that it was eventually assimilated to it. As such, Buddhism gradually lost justification for separate existence and disappeared from India, except for a few border areas.

Title: Buddhism in Scripture and Practice

Author: K.R. Paramahansa

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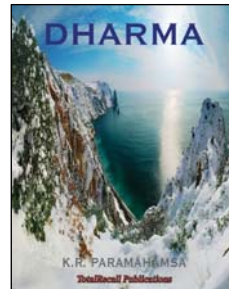
ISBN: 9781590958926



Other books by K.R. Paramahansa

## DHARMA

*DHARMA*, a Sanskrit word, has two principal meanings. The *dharmā* of an individual is his essential nature, the intrinsic law of his 'being' and development. It also signifies the law of righteousness and piety. The implications of this double meaning are significant. Man's duty, how he ought to live, what he ought to believe, and what he ought to do about his beliefs are, among others, conditioned by his essential nature, his constitution and temperament.



The principles of *Dharma* including ethics enunciated in the book, except those specifically attributed to other sages, philosophers and thinkers, are the essence of the teachings of **Sri Sathya Sai** spread over the last six decades. The teachings of the sages and philosophers in all ages and all parts of the world are essentially the essence of *Sanatana-dharma* – the philosophy of eternity, the religion of humanity – mainly spiritual in content and character. The principles of *dharmā* including ethics enunciated by Sri Sathya Sai look no different from the content of *dharmā* and ethics enunciated by the sages and the divinely inspired philosophers of the past, in the east as well as the west.

Title: **DHARMA**

Author: K.R. Paramahansa

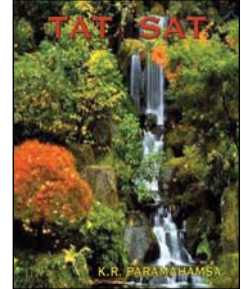
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## TAT SAT

The Brahman, the Supreme Being, is referred to by three words OM, Tat and Sat. The Brahman is the ultimate reality. It is pure consciousness devoid of all attributes (nirguna) and all categories of the intellect (nirvisesa). Being associated with Its potency (Maya), the Brahman appears as the qualified one, Saguna Brahman, or the Lord (Iswara) who is the Creator, Preserver or Destroyer of the world which is nothing but His appearance. It is thus, because of Maya, the Brahman is said to be the Creator of the world.



Maya is not pure illusion. It is not only absence of knowledge, but also positive wrong knowledge and is, therefore, Bhavarupa (of positive nature). It is indescribable. It is neither existent nor non-existent, nor both. It is not existent for the Brahman alone is the existent (sat). It is not non-existent for it is responsible for the appearance of the world on Brahman. It cannot be both existent and non-existent as such a statement is self contradictory. It is thus neither real nor unreal; it is Mithya; but is not a non-entity like the horn of a hare. A rope is mistaken as a snake. The rope is the ground on which the snake is super-imposed. When right knowledge arises, this error vanishes. The relation between the rope and the snake is neither that of identity nor of difference, nor of both. It is unique and known as non-difference (tadatmya). Similarly, Brahman is the ground on which the world appears through the power, Maya. When right knowledge dawns, the real nature of the so called Jiva is realized and Maya vanishes.

Tat Sat is a book detailing Advaita Vedanta – the mainstay of the Indian Philosophy, in its intricacies. It forms part of the rich content of Vedic literature in English on the World Wide Web portal Sri Sathya Sai Veda Pratishtan at [www.vedamu.org](http://www.vedamu.org).

Title: TAT SAT

Author: K.R. Paramahansa

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Other books by K.R. Paramahansa

## Living in Spirit

'The religions of the world are not contradictory or antagonistic. They are but various phases of one eternal religion. That one eternal religion is applied to different planes of existence and is applied to the opinions of various minds and various races. There never was my religion or yours, my national religion or your national religion; there never existed many religions, there is only the One Infinite religion that existed all through eternity and will ever exist. And this religion is expressing itself in various countries in various ways....' in the words of Swami Vivekananda.



This eternal religion is *Sanatana-dharma*, the Philosophy of Eternity and the Religion of Humanity. It is as old as God Himself; it is not confined to any time and place; and it is now everywhere. The word 'religion', in its original meaning, is something that binds, and it is literally true in respect of *Sanatana-dharma*.

Reduced to its elements, the Philosophy of Eternity and the Religion of Humanity consists of three propositions. First is that man's real nature is divine. Second is that the aim of human life is to realize this divine nature. Third is that all religions, as they are differently called, are essentially in agreement with the first two elements.

The spiritual faith of humanity is that religious truth is not absolute, but relative, continuous and progressive. The founders and spiritual promoters of all religions, though different in the non-essential aspects of their teachings, abide in the principle of the organic unity of mankind as representing the consummation of the whole process of human evolution. All religious faiths recognize the unity of God, uphold the principle of an unfettered search after truth, and condemn all forms of superstition and prejudice.

All religious traditions agree that bliss is an authentic sign of spiritual life. Bliss is an elusive thing; it cannot be sought after, and attained in itself. It is what results from a way of life that is centered on God, and sensitive to the whole of creation.

To live a spiritual life is to live in all its fullness. Fullness points to integration of the physical, the mental and the spiritual dimensions of human life. Spirituality involves the dynamic integration of all the three dimensions in living.

Title: Living in Spirit

Author: K.R. Paramahansa

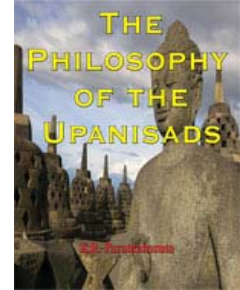
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## The Philosophy of the Upanisads

'The Upanisads are Vedanta, a book of knowledge in a higher degree even than the Veda, but knowledge in the profounder Indian sense of the word, *Jnana*. And because it is only by an integral knowing of the Self that this kind of direct knowledge can be made complete, it was the Self the Vedantic sages sought to know, to live in and to be one with IT by identity. And through this endeavor, they came easily to see that the self in us is one with the Universal Self of all things and that this self again is the same as God and the Brahman, a transcendent Being or Existence; and they beheld, felt, lived in the inmost truth of man's inner and outer existence by the light of this one and unifying vision. The Upanisads are epic hymns of 'self-knowledge', world-knowledge and God-knowledge' in the words of Sri Aurobindo.



The ontological enquiry of the 'Beingness' is the core of the Vedantic system of thought. The Vedantic system consists of the Upanisads, the Brahma-sutras (*Vedanta* aphorisms) and the Bhagavad-Gita. The *Vedanta* Aphorisms are again based on the essential content of the Upanisads. The Bhagavad-Gita also contains the essence of the philosophical teachings of the Upanisads. Thus the Upanisads constitute the basic structure on which the ontological enquiry of the Being and the Reality is based. All the Vedantins maintain that there is an essential unity threading the Upanisads together.

The Upanisads mainly aim at explaining the nature of the *Atman*. That is why the Upanisadic philosophy is said to be '*Atman*' centered. Their teaching is in line with the much later teaching of Socrates, 'Know thyself'.

The philosophical survey of the thirteen earliest Upanisads in this book borrows considerably from the work 'A Constructive Survey of the Upanisadic Philosophy' by Prof. R.D.Ranade, a very well researched and creative presentation.

Title: The Philosophy of the Upanisads

Author: K.R. Paramahansa

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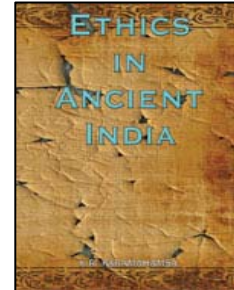
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Other books by K.R. Paramahansa

## Ethics in Ancient India

The ultimate goal of a human being, in general parlance, relates to human conduct in society. What relates to human conduct in society is called ethics. The word 'ethics' or 'ethic' means a pattern or norm or code of conduct adopted by a group of people.

Ethical Philosophers formulate and formalize existing standards. Often they propose new standards, new norms and patterns of conduct for observance by the groups. The standards lead to far encompassing considerations of, among others, duty, responsibility, equality, justice, rights, legitimate authority and benefit.



Ethical deliberation begins with specific problems of individuals facing a choice and being uncertain about what to do. Every human being faces one problem or other, and deliberates to some extent in search of a satisfactory solution.

Moral virtues such as liberality, temperance, benevolence, charity come about as a result of habit. That is why its name *ethike* - *ethics* is derived from the word *ethos* (habit). It, therefore, follows that none of the moral virtues arises in us by nature. In a way, we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit.

Ethics is, therefore, 'the discipline dealing with what is good and bad, or right and wrong, or moral duty and obligation...' The word 'conduct' implies only persons in as much as only persons *conduct* themselves, while animals behave, machines function and stars move.

This book *Ethics in Ancient India* is a compendium of the ethics elaborated in great detail in Mahabharata, Arthashastra, Bhagavata Purana and Brahma Purana. The authors of these works have narrated ethics in their entire gamut through the personages, known in those works as epitomes of flawless ethical conduct. The object may be to give authenticity to the principles of ethics so enumerated, as they reflect the standards of ethics then sought to be followed in the society at large, at the time of their compilation.

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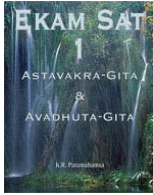
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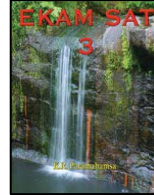
## Ekam Sat Series

Ekam Sat is the name of the series of Gita literature other than Bhagavad-Gita in five volumes, containing 19 Gitas. Volume 1 carries a detailed exposition of Monism, too. The translation into English of each sloka (verse) of the Gitas in Sanskrit is rendered corresponding to the verse in each chapter of the Gita concerned. Explanatory paragraphs are added to each translated verse, wherever considered necessary, to elaborate the essence of the content of the verses from the point of view of Monism.

**Author: K.R. Paramahansa**



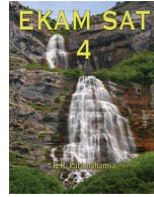
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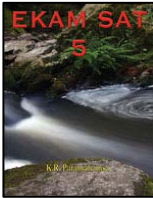
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