

# Gods of the Veda



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### Agni

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#### Agni, brief view

*Devas* in the Veda form a hierarchy with Surya, the spiritual Sun at the head. However the number of hymns in RV dedicated to Surya is small. But Agni has about 200 hymns and Indra, 250 out of about one thousand. The reason for the prominence of Agni and Indra is that human beings in their quest towards the all-sided perfection need the help of Agni and Indra much more and hence pray for them more often. The analogy is that of a student who spends more years at the pre-university level than in the university level itself.

The contribution of every *rishi* in the Rigveda begins with several hymns to Agni, then to Indra and then to the other *devas*. The RV begins with a hymn to Agni. According to tradition, the *japa* or conscious repetition of this hymn reveals the knowledge this deity stands for.

Agni in the Veda is not merely the fire on the *vedic* altar or even the deity behind this physical fire. The ordinary fire is a source of heat and light which prompted the *vedic* sages to symbolise the deity of spiritual Light and spiritual Force by the word Agni. The physical flame gives light all through the night amidst darkness and it impels human beings to study or work otherwise. Similarly the Divine Power of Agni is residing in every human being who is full of ignorance and in conscience pushing him or her towards progress. Agni is the Divine Power of will united with wisdom, denoted by the word *kratu*. It is not desire; but it embraces desire and surpasses it. In the Veda Agni is essentially Knowledge or Light taking the form of force. Agni is the mental force, will power, necessary for all action. It is Agni who makes the Divine knowledge of the Supreme Sun accessible to human beings.

He has many other functions, particularly the force of concentration *tapas*,



commonly called as austerity or mistranslated as penance. He is the force of combustion in the cosmos and also the fire in the stomach *jataragni* who digests the food in man.

In the RV Agni is said to reside hidden in the cave of the heart, *guha*. The ordinary human being in his outward activities is unaware of the presence of Agni. Still Agni prompts him/her on the journey.

After a long time, Agni, makes the outer being become aware of the Divine force Agni within. This important event is described as the birth of Agni. He is said to be born in man, *jajnana*, *janayan* in hundreds of verses.

Many translators mistake this phrase, 'birth of Agni' as the birth of Agni in the cosmos during the process of Creation. RV refers to the birth of Agni in every human. Agni and other *devas* are called twice born *dvijanma*, the first birth being in cosmos, the second in human. Depending on the response of the outer being of the human, the force of Agni, the divine will-force becomes stronger and stronger. Agni is pictured repeatedly as residing within and giving his direction. The worshipper develops a close relationship to Agni like that of son to father, friend, spouse etc. Agni reciprocates with the corresponding feeling.

In the RV, the *devas* perform not only the cosmic actions of maintaining all life, but also the individual actions, the credit for which performance is claimed by the humans. It is the *devas* who make the crops grow, trees blossom, digest food in humans and so on. But, human beings take the entire credit. RV views every action as a collaborative effort between the *devas* and the humans, the human role being nominal or subsidiary. This collaborative action is called as *yajna*, which is not a mere rite. *Bhagavad Gita* in Chapter 4 reaffirms the *vedic* view of *yajna*.

The first hymn in RV states that Agni is the master of *yajna*. He is repeatedly referred to as the performer of *yajna*. Often the *rishis* request Agni to perform the *yajna* and worship the other *devas* on their behalf. In the *Vedic* ritual, there are three types of priests, *adhvaryu*, the controller of path, *hotr* caller and the *udgathr*, singer. These three names denote distinct functions which Agni himself does. Agni guides our path to perfection at every step, hence he is the director of the *yajna*. Agni calls all the other *devas* to manifest in the human being, each *deva* developing a particular aspect of force in the human. Hence, Agni is the caller of the *devas*. He is also called the *duta*, the messenger of the humans to the *devas*, to request the latter to vitalize the human. Thirdly he is called the singer because he empowers the human being to express his aspiration to the Divine and *devas* by singing the hymns. Thus Agni the caller himself becomes the speech to be sung. In RV, the chief method of spiritual practice is the chanting of the hymns. This idea is repeated in the *Aitareya Upanishad* (1.2.4)



by the statement, "Agni becoming speech, *vak*". This phrase makes no sense at all if we have not studied the Rig *vedic* concept of Agni. Agni propels the human aspirant towards perfection and hence is said to create the perfected being, the *rishi*.

### **Agni, the mystic fire**

Even a perusal of the 253 titles of the mantras in this book will convince the readers that whatever Agni is, it cannot be described as a simple fire in the fire-altar or even a forest fire.

The ninth verse in the first hymn is a prayer to Agni 'cling to us like a father a son'. We know the effect of the physical fire clinging to us! Again the same hymn, in verse seven, states that obeisance or salutation to Agni is done by thought. In the first verse, Agni performs the *yajna*; there is no mention of a human priest performing the *yajna*.

The phrase, 'kindling of Agni', does occur as the title for the verse RV (1.26.5), verse 5 of hymn 26. Before we jump to the conclusion that this verse implies the kindling of the physical fire by a human, we have to read the qualifying phrases in the same verse, "The Gods Mitra and Varuna kindle Agni." Mitra is the Divine Force associated with friendship and harmony, Varuna with all vastness, including the vastness of the physical ocean.

Again in RV (1.12.5), there is the Sanskrit word *ghrta*, one of its meanings being melted butter, commonly poured into fire. The reader can read the discussion on this verse and convince himself/herself that to preserve the consistency of all the phrases in that verse, the alternative meaning of clarity of thought to *ghrta* is more appropriate.

The general impression conveyed by the titles of the verse and later by the translations is that Agni is a Divine Force endowed with consciousness. The epithet Kavi or seer, or one who has supraphysical visions, is commonly used for Agni.

Agni manifests his power in human beings as the commonly used epithet, 'born in man', implies. He summons the other divine powers also to manifest in man, hence the name summoner for Agni. Agni can be approached by thought as well by the recitation of the mantra. The *rishi* prays to the conscious power Agni, not merely for physical wealth like cows, but, all-round felicities, opulence and ultimately for the supreme knowledge and bliss. It is possible for a human being to enter into a conscious relationship with Agni like a friend, spouse, father, son,



etc. We see in Rigveda the beginnings of the yoga of devotion, *bhakti yoga*, described in later scriptures like *Srimad Bhagavatam*, *Bhagavad Gita*, the works of the ancient South Indian poets, *alwars* and *nayanmars* etc. The last hymn in this collection (1.99) is a prayer to Agni to carry us over all obstacles as in a boat to the shores of Supreme Bliss and Knowledge.

Some of the most poetic and lyrical hymns in the Rigveda are the nine hymns RV (1.65-1.73) by Sage *Parashara*. They have a wealth of similes for Agni which are easily understandable only if Agni is understood as a benevolent cosmic divine personality. In RV (1.65.5), we find the simile, 'Agni sits amidst waters and breathes like a Swan'. Because of the mantra 'I am He', *aham sah* which in repetition or japa becomes *hamsa*, there is an intense association between persons in deep meditation and the bird *hamsa* or swan. These epithets to Agni remind us very much of the epithets used in the litanies to describe the Goddesses, as in *Lalita Sahasra Nama* (thousand names of *Lalita*). Obviously these epithets make no sense to translators like Griffith, who insist on regarding Agni as a physical fire. No wonder, these verses are declared as unintelligible by these writers.

### **Agni Vaishvanara - The Universal Person**

Nara in *vedic* Sanskrit means the hero or the leader whereas in classical Sanskrit it refers to the ordinary person. Vishva means the universe. Here Vaishvanara means the "Universal person, the one who is actively present in the universe, in all things and beings, Gods and men; it also means the leader within of Gods and men, of the Universe and within the Universe" [Kapali Sastry, Vol. 1]. There are about twenty *suktas* in the Rigveda where Agni is adored as the Vaishvanara, the Universal Person, or Leader within.

It has been mentioned earlier that whereas the Gods of the Rigveda form a hierarchy with the supreme God being simply mentioned by the phrase "That ONE" (*tad ekam*), the Seer experienced the ONE through individual Gods, primarily Agni. Agni is not only a distinct power and personality of the ONE, namely the illumined will, the knower of births of all creatures, the youngest God, the God who brings all other Gods into their habitation in the individual human being, etc. He is also seen and experienced as the Universal person or being by several *rishis*. We clearly see here how the strength of the spiritual experience or sight prevents them from forming groups, each of whom claim superiority for one particular God. For instance, the Seer Nodha Gotama hymns Agni as the Universal person in the *sukta* (RV 1.59) and in the *sukta* (RV 1.61) he adores the deity Indra as the Ancient Person "whose greatness exceeds beyond heaven, earth, and mid region" (RV 1.61.9). The Rigveda is a happy compilation



of the distinct and individual experiences of more than one hundred seers with no note of discordance or disharmony. Seer hymns a God with some epithets used by others and some not used by others. If we compile the hymns of different seers to the same God (as Sri Aurobindo did regarding the deity Agni), we can easily see the special powers and personality associated with each deity. For instance, take the word "*adhbhuta*" or wonderful. It is used more than twenty times in the Rigveda, almost always as an appellation of the God Agni (except once when it is used for Indra). Again the word *kumara* or *jatavedas* is used only in connection with Agni. Even though the Gods are described in superlative epithets, the set of phrases describing each God is clearly distinct, indicating that the different Seers who hymn Indra really had the vision of that deity doing the divine tasks attributed to that deity.

It is also important to study the hymns dedicated to the Vaishvanara Agni because they form the basis for the experience of the Upanishadic seers named as "*vaishvanara vidya*" appearing in the *Chandogya* upanishad. There are several such bridges between the Rigveda and the upanishads like the doctrine of mystic honey, which will be considered elsewhere.

The glories of Agni Vaishvanara are extolled in about twenty *suktas* of the Rigveda. Translations of three of them will be given here with appropriate comments. All other fires are only thy branches. In thee, rejoice all the Gods. Thou, Vaishvanara, art the navel of men and supports them like a pillar (RV 1.59.1).

Agni has several forms depending on his functions. Primarily, Agni is the Divine and Will (*kratu*) who is eager to take birth in every person to lead him/her to the higher realm. This is the spiritual function. Agni is also the cosmic fire which maintains the universe. He is also the fire in the individual living being, *jatara* Agni, who coordinates all the forces of digestion and makes life possible. Thus the *rishi*, Nodasa Gotama, says that all other fires, representative of their different functions, are only your branches. The ritualistic interpretation of the phrase "all other fires" as different sacrificial fires in different houses is too narrow an interpretation.

All the Gods rejoice in Agni because he begins the task in which all of them are involved, namely the divinization of man here on earth. Agni, the Divine force and will, supports every creature just as pillars support a house. Head of heaven, centre of earth, Agni became the messenger of heaven and earth. O Vaishvanara, the Gods manifested thee as Light for the pilgrim sacrificer (1.59.2).

Even though Agni is stationed in the higher realms of heaven, his center of activity is on earth. In the *veda*, human life is viewed as a pilgrimage from our



imperfect state to a perfected condition, envisioned as the heaven. The individual progresses in this journey by means of offering all he has, all he is, all he does to the supreme. Agni provides the Light for this journey. Like the rays are firmly set in the Sun, All treasures are vested in Vaishvanara . Thou art the monarch of all the treasures in the mountains, in the herbs, waters, in men RV (1.59.3). Heaven and Earth got wide extended as it were for their Son. He, the priest, sings our words even as a man. Several are the flame powers of Vaishvanara , superb leader, luminous, with truth-sustaining light RV (1.59.4).

Heaven denotes the pure domain of Mind and earth, the wakeful domain of matter. Agni who is born in the human sacrificer (*yajamana*) to manifest the power is called as the Son. Both heaven and earth widen themselves in the sacrificer to facilitate the birth of the Son. Agni Vaishvanara performed all the functions of the *yajamana*, such as chanting the hymns. Agni Vaishvanara , knower of all existences, thy glory exceeds the great heavens. Thou art the sovereign of the striving peoples. Thou has brought the supreme good to the Gods by battle RV (1.59.5). I extol the greatness of the showerer, whom men celebrate as slayer of Vritra. He, the Vaishvanara Agni, slew the Dasyu, Thrust the waters down, cleaving the Shambara RV (1.59.6).

The epithet "knower of all existences" (*jatavedas*) is used exclusively for Agni in many places, clearly indicating the inadequacy of translating Agni as a mere physical fire. The last line refers to the battle between Gods, the powers of Light and Dasyus, the power of darkness. Even though Indra, the God of Divine Mind, is the leader in this battle, in this *rik*, he is identified with Agni since Agni is being extolled as the universal Godhead here. Thus the *vedic* conception of Gods is always subtle and never rigid. This is the Universal Godhead. The lustrous master of sacrifice, the flame with his hundred treasures, who, by his greatness, labours in all the peoples. This is he who has the Word of Truth RV (1.59.7).

The last line is very significant. Agni has the word of truth (Sunratawan) which has the power of fulfillment.

Next we will take another hymn RV (1.98) dedicated to the Agni Vaishvanara . May we be in the grace of Vaishvanara, for he is the foremost to be served, Sovereign of all beings. Spring hence, He beholds the universe and unites with the Sun RV (1.98.1). Set in Heaven, set in Earth Agni pervades all the plants. May Agni Vaishvanara , set in vigour, guard us from the foe day and night. O Vaishvanara, may this truth be attainable to us. May wealth laden with high riches wait upon us. May it be preserved for us by Mitra, Varuna, Aditi, Ocean, Earth and Heaven. (1.98.3). Agni pervades the entire universe, manifests individually in each person and grows in him/her, and connects each person to the Light above, the Sun (in the first *rik*). A common feature of the *vedic* hymns is a prayer to guard us from the foes, the forces of darkness who are opposed to





the growth of the force of Light in man. Even though some moderns may scoff at such a conception, the activity of the forces of darkness and falsehood is tangible for all persons who have done some spiritual practice. Only the forces of divine and not any purely human agency can protect us from these forces of falsehood.

The hymn closes with the recognition of the roles played by the various Gods in our divinization and journey to the higher realms of Light.

Some other references to Vaishvanara Agni will be referred here. (Kapali and Aurobindo translations modified). The messenger between Earth and heaven; with his Light he envelops the Vast Home RV (3.3.2). He is the measure for the seers and hymnists RV (3.3.4). At thy birth, thou has filled the worlds and earth and heaven Thou are there enveloping them with all thyself RV (3.3.10). I am from my birth the knower of all things I am measurer of the world RV (3.26.7). The heights of heaven were measured by this universal force, They were shaped by the intuition of the Immortal (6.7.6). Vaishvanara at his birth in the Supreme Heaven measured out the vast space (6.8.2). Born in the Supreme Heaven Thou like wind reaches at once the place of Gods (7.5.7). At thy birth, thou fillest the earth and heaven (7.13.2). Thou art the head of the world (10.88.5).

This *vedic* tradition of the universal Godhead has been preserved in the *sadhana* of the upanishads named as the *vaishvanara vidya*. The particular passage occurs in the *chandogya* upanishad (V. 11-18). The passage is "In all worlds, in all beings, in all selves, he eats the food." "*sa sarveshu lokeshu sarveshu bhuteshu sarveshu atmasu annam atti.*"

In this passage the seer Ashvapathi, who also happens to be the king, instructs his pupils Aruni and others in the art of living in accord with the truths of the Vaishvanara, the universal Person. "As the sustenance of the material body is indispensable for living, he enjoins upon them not to eat the food and live as if the *vaishvanara atman* (the self of Vaishvanara) were something separate, but to live - and eat for living - with the knowledge of Him as the ONE FIRE who lives aglow in all the creatures. Anyone who so lives, lives also for other souls, for other beings around, for the rest of the whole universe. He lives in conscious union with Him, lives a conscious life aware of the fact that what we call creatures are formations for the housing of the Great Presence of the Universal Fire, the Vaishvanara Agni. When he eats, he knows and feels that it is the awakened Fire of the Universal Person in him that eats. His living is a source of joy and power to the living of others, to the general progress of the world, of all beings and of the human kind in particular that is closer to his/her level." [Kapali, Vol. 1, p. 215].

The *vedic* tradition of a deity, who is not only a separate power and personality of the Divine, but who also is viewed as the universal Godhead, has come down



into our times as the chosen deity (*ishta devata*) associated with each person who guides him/her to the highest. We have to remember that the practice of adoring Agni both as a separate power and as the universal Godhead is based on the intuitions and spiritual experiences of the *vedic* seers and not on any intellectual arguments. When the role of the intellect became stronger and when it was not followed by strong spiritual experiences, we see the development of different cults, each one having with a fixed a rigid hierarchy of Gods, the hierarchy justified by intellectual arguments. Naturally the highest God in one system is not the same in the other leading naturally to the quarrel between the cults. All these quarrels occur because the powers of intellect which insist on the differentiation and distinction, and the power of the heart which leads to unity have not been harmonized. This power of harmony, labeled Vijnara by Sri Aurobindo, is still latent in most of us. We can clearly hope for a time when these diverse and often divisive forces can be harmonized.

### **Agni, the initiator of Divine Life in Man**

More than three thousand *riks* out of eleven thousand in the Rigveda *samhita* are dedicated to the God Agni. This feature does not indicate that Agni occupies the highest place in the hierarchy of *vedic* Gods - that role is assigned to Surya Savitri or Vishnu. Agni's preeminence comes from the fact that he initiates everyone to spiritual life and lays its foundation, which obviously takes a long time and effort. Thus every seer acknowledges his/her great debt to the deity by chanting several hymns to him adoring him and describing his glories.

A rough analogy to the role played by Agni in the spiritual life of a person is the primary education given to a child. Even though in the educational hierarchy, the graduate or post graduate education is considered higher than that of the primary school, the important role played by primary school education, clearly signified by its name, is crucial to a person.

Persons of the *vedic* age pondered on the question of how they can be free of the limitations posed by the material life so that they can behold again the infinite divine mother and become conscious of the infinity surrounding us. This searching attitude can be seen in the famous hymn of the Seer Shunahshepa in the RV (1.24.1). Which auspicious Name of God among Immortals Shall we call? Who is he that will restore us to the mighty Aditi that I may behold the Father and the Mother? *kasyu nunam katamasya amritanam manamahe caru devasya nama...* (1.24.1).

Father represents the consciousness that is of the pure Mind; the consciousness that extends and is awake in the physical world is Earth, the Mother. The



persons of the *vedic* age had the intuitive perception that a God can be invoked by uttering (*manamahe*) his auspicious (*charu*) name (*nama*). The word *manamahe* comes from the root "man" which indicates the act of worship, contemplation, meditation, etc. The *vedic* persons had immense faith in the power of the name. The *rik* quoted above begins with the word "*nunam*" (doubt). The person does not know yet the name that can be called which will give the appropriate response.

The answer comes to the praying person.

*agneh vayam prathamasya amrtanam manamahe karu devasya nama...* The auspicious name of Agni, first among the immortals, (we) utter... (1.24.2).

We have seen earlier that every word carries a force of realization with it. There are many other places in the Rigveda when the aspirant asks "what word is uttered to Agni?" Note that Agni itself is a potent word. In addition, the seer is looking for the correct word which affirms the God and leads to his realization. This word must be illuminative of the power of Agni.

The answer comes in the *rik* quoted above (1.24.2). The auspicious word for Agni is "*prathamasya amrtanam*," the "first among the immortals." Agni is born first in man and then helps in the manifestation of other gods in us later.

As Sri Kapali Sastry says, "Agni's function begins as the voice in man, *agnir vag bhutah*. It is this aspect of Agni that the *vedic* sages were initially impressed with and used prayers to evoke him so that he may awake and take up the function of being first among immortals and of calling the higher powers. Vak as hymns, prayers addressed to Agni first and other Gods later, was the main instrument of their spiritual effort." The *rishis* were clearly not unaware of the spiritual methods used in later times like meditation and concentration on sacred syllables.

The self offering and self giving the *rishis* was done through Vak, of which the prayer was the motor force. "The inspired nature of the *vedic* Vak tended to attach greater importance to and enhance the value of the sacred utterance and the result was tangible, and comparatively speaking, unailing as can be seen from a close study of most of the hymns addressed to the Gods in the Rigveda... Vak was the chief means used to awaken the Great God of the Earth, Agni, seated in the heart of man. Agni, then, is Vak, the power of expression, the voice of call, on the physical plane; in his subtler aspect at the back of the voice, he is the psychic fire whose flame throws up the force of Aspiration in the march toward the Godhead; radically he is the Godhead himself, his will secret in the heart of things." (Kapali, Vol. 1, pp. 355-356).



The word or laud as the unifying force between Agni and the seer is again brought out in 1.26.9. O immortal, may intimate words be mutual to both, to you and us mortals (1.26.9). In this *rik*, "*prasastayah*" means praises, secret words in confidence.

In 1.26.10, the seer calls upon Agni to accept the laud (*vachah*) and establish happiness in him. Agni is addressed as vision of immortality in 1.13.5 [*amrtasya chakshanam*].

The hymn 1.77 starts with a similar question. How shall we give to Agni? For him what word accepted by the Gods is spoken?" The answer is heard by the seer. That name is "*martyeshu amrita rta barvah*". i.e., Agni who is "immortal in mortals and possessed of the Truth."

The hymn RV 1.31 is particularly revealing of the problems encountered by the beginner. This hymn is addressed by the Seer Hiranyastupa Angirasa. The first three *riks* begin with the phrase "*tvam agne praithamo*," "You are important or first in the birth of the various Gods like Vayu." The beginner laments much about the difficulties in the path. The beginner is labeled "*pururavase*," "one who cries or laments to reach the high station." For such a person, Agni is *sukritarah*, the superb doer of Gods.

Another reference for the help given by Agni to the beginner is 1.31.14. "Superbly knowing, thou instructs the immature in all directions." The word used for immature is "*pakam*," that which is to be cooked.

The God Agni helps and leads a devotee even when the devotee or sacrificer is not helpful. The seer prays in (1.31.16). "O Agni, as we have gone far from thee in the path, forgive this offense. Thou art our relative... Thou art the maker of seers of mortals."

The last line, "*martyanam rsikrt*," making seers out of mortals, is the special characteristic of Agni.

Similarly in 1.31.6, the Seer addresses Agni as one who takes the devotee away from the crooked path and leads the person to the divine place that has to be known, *vidatha*. Agni establishes the mortal man in high immortality for daily inspiration. "*amrtatva uttame martam dadhasi divedive*." It is clear that Agni is establishing immortality in man on this earth, not after the physical death of man. The same *rik* says that Agni creates for the devotee both happiness (*mayah*) and pleasure (*prayah*) [1.31.7]. The *vedic* seers believed in a rich and harmonious life where pleasures were not shunned. They were accepted and enjoyed as gifts from the great God. In 1.31.9, Agni is called upon to fashion a new body for the devotee, (*tanu barkrt*), a body fit for the divine birth. Similarly



in 1.71.4, yoga. Agni is stirred into action by the *prana*. This is the basis for the statement in *svetashvatara* upanishad where the devotee calls for a body which has been purified by the Agni *yoga* (*yogagni mayam sariram*). Mortals kindle thee O Agni with words of invocation (1.36.7). We pray to Agni, the great, with auspicious words for you all (1.36.1). Youthful Agni, auspicious, in thee alone all oblations are offered, convey it to the Gods (1.36.6).

### **Agni as a friend and Purifier - Hymns of Seer Kusta**

All the hymns of the Seers of Rigveda share a common language. Most of them use the symbolism of fire-ritual. For instance, Kutsa says "may we be able to kindle thee, may we collect the fuel" (1.94). In the same *rik*, the seer makes clear that he is not referring to the physical fire: "Perfect our thoughts...." Still each *rishi* approaches the gods in a different way. *Rig vedic* hymns are records of spiritual experiences of the *rishis*. Just as we do not find any two human beings identical (or for that matter, any two trees or stones), similarly spiritual realizations of two *rishis* are distinct from one another. Different *rishis* deal with different aspects of spiritual realization and there is no end to it. Still just as each poet has his/her own style of writing, each *rishi* has his/her own unique realizations and unique style for expressing them. In addition, the compiler of Rigveda has made sure that contributions of the different seers are complimentary and that each seer makes some unique spiritual observations not made by others.

The Seer Kutsa's relationship to the Gods like Indra and Agni is that of a friend. Kutsa's hymns to Indra are reminiscent of the pleadings and prayers of Arjuna to his friend, the great God Krishna in the epic Mahabharata.

Kutsa dwells on an important aspect of Agni, namely that of purifier. Several commentators say that "*veda* desires all sins to be atoned for immediately expatriated through fire ritual" (Bose, p. 219) and the basis is the hymn RV. 1.97. Before we go into the role of Agni as purifier, we have to inquire into the ideas of Rigveda on sin itself. The word in *veda* for sin or evil is "*papma*" or "*Agha*." *veda* does not divide all actions into two rigid classes, the so-called good and evil. Rather, evil or sin is "basically a dark and opposing block of forces that prevents the release of the juice of delight, the flow of Soma (Kapali, p. 1.121). The evil forces enter these persons who offer a welcome as it were to them and the evil forces express themselves through humans in various forms. Rigveda mentions, for example, the person who would bring evil by voice or speech (*aghashamsah*, 4.4.3, 10.87.20, 6.8.5, 8.60.8), one who expresses evil through actions (*aghayatah*, *aghayam*, 4.2.6, 4.2.9). For example, in the much later book, the *bhagavad gita*, Arjuna asks his friend Krishna "Why does a man commit sin



forced as it were." Sri Krishna answers that the great forces of evil (*maha papma*) characterizing force of desire and anger (*kama esha krodha esha... maha papma...*).

We will consider the Rigveda 1.97 for detailed study. Its seer is Kutsa and it has 8 *mantras*. Each mantra ends with the refrain "May our sin wither in lament." O Agni, may our sin wither in lament, shine thy wealth on us. May our sin wither in lament (1.97.1). For happy fields, for safe paths, for wealth, we worship thee. May our sin wither in lament (1.97.2). Most auspicious among the lauders be Kutsa. Most auspicious be our wise ones. May our sin wither in lament (1.97.3). As thy worshippers become wise ones, May we, thine, O Agni, become likewise. May our sin wither in lament (1.97.4). As the conquering lustres of Agni go to every side may our sin wither in lament. To every side thy face is turned; Thou art our guardian everywhere. May our sin wither in lament (1.97.6). O thou who facest all sides, Take us beyond the foes as over the river May our sin wither in lament. Do thou convey us beyond, As in a ship for our welfare May our sin wither in lament (1.97.8).

In the entire hymn, there is not even a hint of the idea that the performance of a fire ritual is an atonement for a sin. The refrain "may our sin wither in lament" makes it clear that the Seer prays for Agni to destroy the forces of evil lodged in him so that they may wither. Note the use of the words "wither in lament." These forces are not abstract things. Rather they are personifications and they resist and lament being dislodged from a habitation in the particular human being.

Each one of the eight mantras indicates a different step or process in the eradication of the sin.

The first *mantra* says that only if Agni shines his wealth, namely the force of unshakable will, can these forces of evil be dislodged.

The second *mantra* says safe paths or happy fields are not possible if these forces persist. So the Seer calls upon Agni to destroy these forces.

The fourth *mantra* is the key. Only as wisdom dawns in the worshipper can these forces be thrown out.

The fifth *mantra* says that the forces of evil are lodged in every part of our personality. So the conquering lustres of Agni should pierce every side and dislodge these forces.

The seventh and eighty *mantras* clearly state that even when the environment may be permeated by these evil forces, Agni takes the worshipper safely across





these waters just like a good boat takes a traveler through stormy waters to the destination.

It is also instructive to see how the same Sanskrit *mantra* may suffer a grotesque translation. Take the example of the first half of 1.97.4. The translation of Griffiths is: So that thy worshippers and we thine, Agni, in our sons may live. The first two lines of the translation due to Kapali Sastry are: As thy worshippers become wise ones May we, thine, O Agni, become likewise. Note the vast difference in the meaning. The translation of Griffiths is incoherent. The difference between the two translations lies in the different meanings given to the word *pra-jayemahi*. Griffiths translates *praja* as son as in classical Sanskrit and translates *prajayemahi* as "to live in our sons." But the use of the word "*surayaha*" wise ones is redundant because both wise ones and stupid have children. All through the Rigveda Sri Kapali Sastry assigns for *prajayemahi* the meaning of "to become wise." [Also consider Sri Aurobindo's translation in which he uses *praja* in two different ways.]

Let us now consider the Kutsa's hymn to Agni emphasizing his friendship (1.94). Kutsa uses the words associated with the physical ritual like fire, but quickly adds phrases like "perfect our thoughts," etc., to emphasize the fact that he is using the physical ritual only as a symbol of the spiritual transformation occurring in his inner worlds. In Kutsa's hymns, it is clear that Agni himself is the sacrificer and not any human. Agni accomplishes everything for the human worshipper. He accomplishes unobstructed, He gains heroic might for whom, O Agni, thou sacrifices, Evil does not touch him. May we not, O Agni, suffer separation in thy friendship (1.94.2). May we, O Agni, collect the fuel, prepare the oblations reminding ourselves of the successive steps. Perfect our thoughts to prolong our life. May we not, O Agni, suffer separation in thy friendship (1.94.4). Graceful of form, O Agni, thou art alike on every side. When we see him from afar, yet he seems near to us, So brilliantly he shines across the gulfs. He sees beyond the darkness of our night May we not, O Agni, suffer separation in thy friendship (1.94.7). God among Gods, O Agni, thou are a great friend. Handsome, thou confirms the riches in the sacrifice. Under thy most wide protection, may we dwell, May we not, O Agni, suffer separation in thy friendship (1.94.13).

Each *mantra* in this hymn of fifteen *mantras*, ends with the refrain "May we not, O Agni, suffer separation in thy friendship." As mentioned earlier, Kutsa uses some aspect of the esoteric or physical ritual as a symbol of the inner sacrifice. For instance, in (1.94.7), the phrase "thou art alike on every side" means that Agni is equally effective in illuminating all the different (inner) aspect of the Seer Kutsa, which may be illumined or in a state of obscurity. The phrase "darkness of the night" refers to the state of consciousness which is completely dark and has not been penetrated by the light.



## Agni Jatavedas - Knower of the Birth

The epithet *jatavedas* for Agni is found in many hymns. We will consider one such hymn, 1.99, for discussion. It is the shortest *sukta* in the Rigveda, having exactly one *mantra*. It is repeated in later upanishad literature such as *Mahanarayana* upanishad (*anuvaka* two) as part of *durga sukta*, the *sukta* dedicated to *durga*. It is used extensively in the *tantric* literature and is part of the *Prapanchasara tantra*. It is recited to purify the environment in all *vedic* rituals.

The *rishi* of this hymn (1-99) is Kashyapa of, the son of Maricha. The metre is *trishtubh*. Agni is called knower of the births or knower of the worlds because he knows entirely the five worlds, the worlds in which, respectively, Matter, Life-energy, Mind, Truth and Beatitude are the essential energies. They are respectively *bhur*, *bhuvar*, *sva*, *maha*, and *jana* or *mayas* (Sri Aurobindo). This is also the classification of worlds in the *taittiriya* upanishad. Even though *veda* speaks of seven worlds, there is no conflict here because the world *jana* mentioned here represents the higher triple world of *sat*, *chit*, *ananda* or Existence, knowledge and bliss, in the other classification involving seven worlds.

*jatavedase sunavama somam aratiyato nidahati vedah sa nah parshadati durgani vishva naveva sindhum durita ati agnih* (1.99.1). To *jatavedas*, we offer the Soma, May he burn up the knowledge of our enemies. May Agni carry us through all difficulties, through grief as in a boat across a river.

What is the Soma mentioned here? If it is the herb, what connection could there be between an herb and the knower of all births? Western translators are fond of repeating that Soma is an intoxicating herb. However, all the Indian medicinal texts on herbs, both ancient and medieval, mention several plants belonging to the Soma family, but none of them possess any intoxicating properties. We have to look into Rigveda itself to understand the nature of Soma. The entire ninth book of Rigveda is dedicated to Soma. For instance, consider the following instances: Soma with thy natural powers thou pervades the all and flows Thou art the king and Lord of all the whole world (9.85.6). When they crush the herb, one thinks he has drunk the Soma, But no one ever tastes him whom *brahmanas* know to be Soma (10.85.3). These two quotations dismiss all notions of Soma as a creeper or Soma. The real meaning of Soma is "*sarva anubhuti rasam*," the distilled essence and delight of all experiences. Everything in this universe from the smallest particle to man exists only because it has in it the "*rasa*" or delight of existence. When we perform any work without expecting any return, the work releases its hidden Soma which brings us a touch of delight, the basis of the later *karma yoga*. Soma, the essence of all of our actions and experiences, is purified





and offered to the knower of all births.

We have mentioned earlier that Agni represents both Light and force. The *rishi* prays to Agni to protect his pilgrimage to the higher worlds from the onslaughts of the non-human evil powers who do not want the humans to progress and thus go beyond their grasp. Agni is called upon to destroy the wealth and knowledge of these non-human enemies. An interesting feature of this *mantra* is the analogy of the spiritual journey of the aspirant to one on a boat in a rough river or sea. Just as the sea has unfriendly creatures like crocodiles, the spiritual journey has also unfriendly powers. Just as a boat protects us from direct contact with the unfriendly creatures in the sea, Agni creates a protective environment around the aspirant so that he is free from unfriendly attacks. Recall the mantra (1.1.4) in which Agni is called upon to offer a protective enclosure to the onward path of the aspirant. The English word navy is derived from the Sanskrit word *nava* and this is one of the earliest references in history to travel by a boat.

### **Agni, the illumined will (RV 1.77)**

1. How shall we give to Agni? For him what Word accepted by the Gods is spoken, for the lord of the brilliant flame? for him who in mortals, immortal, possessed of the Truth, priest of the oblation strongest for sacrifice, creates the gods ?
2. He who in the sacrifices is the priest of the offering, full of peace, full of the Truth, him verily form in you by your surrenderings; when Agni manifests for the mortals the gods, he also has perception of them and by the mind offers to them the sacrifice.
3. For he is the will, he is the strength, he is the effector of perfection, even as Mitra he becomes the charioteer of the Supreme. To him, the first, in the rich-offerings the people seeking the godhead utter the word, the Aryan people to the fulfiller.
4. May this strongest of the Powers and devourer of the destroyers manifest by his presence the words and their understanding, and may they who in their extension are lords of plenitude, brightest in energy, pour forth their plenty and give their impulsion to the thought.
5. Thus has Agni, possessed of the Truth, been affirmed by the masters of light, the knower of the worlds by clarified minds. He shall foster in them the force of illumination, he too the plenty; he shall attain to increase and to harmony by his



perceptions.

### COMMENTARY

Gotama Rahugana is the seer of this Hymn, which is a *stoma* in praise of Agni, the divine Will at work in the universe.

Agni is the most important, the most universal of the Vedic gods. In the physical world he is the general devourer and enjoyer. He is also the purifier; when he devours and enjoys, then also he purifies. He is the fire that prepares and perfects; he is also the fire that assimilates and the heat of energy that forms. He is the heat of life and creates the sap, the *rasa* in things, the essence of their substantial being and the essence of their delight.

He is equally the Will in Prana, the dynamic Life-energy, and in that energy performs the same functions. Devouring and enjoying, purifying, preparing, assimilating, forming, he rises upwards always and transfigures his powers into the Maruts, the energies of Mind. Our passions and obscure emotions are the smoke of Agni's burning. All our nervous forces are assured of their action only by his support.

If he is the Will in our nervous being and purifies it by action, he is also the Will in the mind and clarifies it by aspiration. When he enters into the intellect, he is drawing near to his divine birth-place and home. He leads the thoughts towards effective power; he leads the active energies towards light.

His divine birth-place and home, - though he is born everywhere and dwells in all things, - is the Truth, the Infinity, the vast cosmic Intelligence in which Knowledge and Force are unified. For there all Will is in harmony with the truth of things and therefore effective; all thought part of Wisdom, which is the divine Law, and therefore perfectly regulative of a divine action. Agni fulfilled becomes mighty in his own home - in the Truth, the Right, the Vast. It is thither that he is leading upward the aspiration in humanity, the soul of the Aryan, the head of the cosmic sacrifice.

It is at the point where there is the first possibility of the great passage, the transition from mind to supermind, the transfiguration of the intelligence, till now the crowned leader of the mental being, into a divine Light, - it is at this supreme and crucial point in the Vedic Yoga that the Rishi, Gotama Rahugana, seeks in himself for the inspired Word. The Word shall help him to realise for himself and others the Power that must effect the transition and the state of luminous



plenitude from which the transfiguration must commence.

The Vedic sacrifice is, psychologically, a symbol of cosmic and individual activity become self-conscious, enlightened and aware of its goal. The whole process of the universe is in its very nature a sacrifice, voluntary or involuntary. Self-fulfillment by self-immolation, to grow by giving is the universal law. That which refuses to give itself, is still the food of the cosmic Powers. "The eater eating is eaten" is the formula, pregnant and terrible, in which the Upanishad sums up this aspect of the universe, and in another passage men are described as the cattle of the gods. It is only when the law is recognized and voluntarily accepted that this kingdom of death can be over passed and by the works of sacrifice Immortality made possible and attained. All the powers and potentialities of the human life are offered up, in the symbol of a sacrifice, to the divine Life in the Cosmos.

Knowledge, Force and Delight are the three powers of the divine Life; thought and its formations, will and its works, love and its harmonisings are the corresponding human activities which have to be exalted to the divine level. The dualities of truth and falsehood, light and darkness, conceptional right and wrong are the confusions of knowledge born of egoistic division; the dualities of egoistic love and hatred, joy and grief, pleasure and pain are the confusions of Love, perversities of Ananda; the dualities of strength and weakness, sin and virtue, action and inaction are the confusions of will, dissipaters of the divine Force. And all these confusions arise and even become necessary modes of our action because the triune powers of the divine Life are divorced from each other, Knowledge from Strength, Love from both, by the Ignorance which divides. It is the Ignorance, the dominant cosmic Falsehood that has to be removed. Through the Truth, then, lies the road to the true harmony, the consummated felicity, the ultimate fulfillment of love in the divine Delight. Therefore, only when the Will in man becomes divine and possessed of the Truth, *amrtah rtava*, can the perfection towards which we move be realized in humanity.

Agni, then, is the god who has to become conscient in the mortal. Him the inspired Word has to express, to confirm in this gated mansion and on the altar-seat of this sacrifice.

"How must we give to Agni?" asks the Rishi. The word for the sacrificial giving, *dasema*, means literally distribution; it has a covert connection with the root *das* in the sense of discernment. The sacrifice is essentially an arrangement, a distribution of the human activities and enjoyments among the different cosmic Powers to whose province they by right belong. Therefore the hymns repeatedly speak of the portions of the gods. It is the problem of the right arrangement and distribution of his works that presents itself to the sacrificer; for the sacrifice



must be always according to the Law and the divine ordainment (*rtu*, the later *vidhi*). The will to right arrangement is an all-important preparation for the reign of the supreme Law and Truth in the mortal.

The solution of the problem depends on right realization, and right realization starts from the right illuminative Word, expression of the inspired Thought which is sent to the seer out of the Vast. Therefore the Rishi asks farther, "What word is uttered to Agni?" What word of affirmation, what word of realization? Two conditions have to be satisfied. The Word must be accepted by other divine Powers, that is, it must bring out some potentiality in the nature or bring into it some light of realization by which the divine Workers may be induced to manifest in the superficial consciousness of humanity and embrace openly their respective functions. And it must be illuminative of the double nature of Agni, this Lord of the lustrous flame. *Bhama* means both a light of knowledge and a flame of action. Agni is a Light as well as a Force.

The Word arrives. *yo martyeshu amrtah rtava*. Agni is, pre-eminently, the Immortal in mortals. It is this Agni by whom the other bright sons of Infinity are able to work out the manifestation and self-extension of the Divine (*devaviti*, *devatati*) which is at once aim and process of the cosmic and of the human sacrifice. For he is the divine Will which in all things is always present, is always destroying and constructing, always building and perfecting, supporting always the complex progression of the universe. It is this which persists through all death and change. It is eternally and inalienably possessed of the Truth. In the last obscuration of Nature, in the lowest unintelligence of Matter, it is this Will that is a concealed knowledge and compels all these darkened movements to obey, as if mechanically, the divine Law and adhere to the truth of their Nature. It is this which makes the tree grow according to its seed and each action bear its appropriate fruit. In the obscurity of man's ignorance, - less than material Nature's, yet greater, - it is this divine Will that governs and guides, knows the sense of his blindness and the goal of his aberration and out of the crooked workings of the cosmic Falsehood in him evolves the progressive manifestation of the cosmic Truth. Alone of the brilliant Gods, he burns bright and has full vision in the darkness of Night no less than in the splendours of day. The other gods are *usarbudhah*, wakers with the Dawn.

Therefore is he the priest of the offering, strongest or most apt for sacrifice, he who, all-powerful, follows always the law of the Truth. We must remember that the oblation (*havya*) signifies always action (*karma*) and each action of mind or body is regarded as a giving of our plenty into the cosmic being and the cosmic intention. Agni, the divine Will, is that which stands behind the human will in its works. In the conscient offering, he comes in front; he is the priest set in front



(*purah-hita*), guides the oblation and determines its effectiveness.

By this self-guided Truth, by this knowledge that works out as an unerring Will in the Cosmos, he fashions the gods in mortals. Agni manifests divine potentialities in a death-besieged body; Agni brings them to effective actuality and perfection. He creates in us the luminous forms of the Immortals.

This work he does as a cosmic Power labouring upon the rebellious human material even when in our ignorance we resist the heavenward impulse and, accustomed to offer our actions to the egoistic life, cannot yet or as yet will not make the divine surrender. But it is in proportion as we learn to subjugate the ego and compel it to bow down in every act to the universal Being and to serve consciously in its least movements the supreme Will, that Agni himself takes form in us. The Divine Will becomes present and conscient in a human mind and enlightens it with the divine Knowledge. Thus it is that man can be said to form by his toil the great Gods.

The Sanskrit expression is here *a krnudhvam*. The preposition gives the idea of a drawing upon oneself of something outside and the working or shaping it out in our own consciousness. *A kr* corresponds to the converse expression, *a bhū*, used of the gods when they approach the mortal with the contact of Immortality and, divine form of godhead falling on form of humanity, "become", take shape, as it were, in him. The cosmic Powers act and exist in the universe; man takes them upon himself, makes an image of them in his own consciousness and endows that image with the life and power that the Supreme Being has breathed into His own divine forms and world-energies.

It is when thus present and conscient in the mortal, like a "house-lord", master in his mansion, that Agni appears in the true nature of his divinity. When we are obscure and revolt against the Truth and the Law, our progress seems to be a stumbling from ignorance to ignorance and is full of pain and disturbance. By constant submission to the Truth, surrenderings, *namobhih*, we create in ourselves that image of the divine Will which is on the contrary full of peace, because it is assured of the Truth and the Law. Equality of soul created by the surrender to the universal Wisdom gives us a supreme peace and calm. And since that Wisdom guides all our steps in the straight paths of the Truth we are carried by it beyond all stumblings (*duritani*).

Moreover, with Agni conscious in our humanity, the creation of the gods in us becomes a veritable manifestation and no longer a veiled growth. The will within grows conscious of the increasing godhead, awakens to the process, perceives the lines of the growth. Human action intelligently directed and devoted to the universal Powers, ceases to be a mechanical, involuntary or imperfect offering;



the thinking and observing mind participates and becomes the instrument of the sacrificial will.

Agni is the power of conscious Being, called by us will, effective behind the workings of mind and body. Agni is the strong God within (*maryah*, the strong, the masculine) who puts out his strength against all assailing powers, who forbids inertia, who repels every failing of heart and of force, who spurns out all lack of manhood. Agni actualizes what might otherwise remain as an ineffectual thought or aspiration. He is the doer of the Yoga (*sadhu*); divine smith labouring at his forge, he hammers out our perfection. Here he is said to become the charioteer of the Supreme. The Supreme and Wonderful that moves and fulfils Itself "in the consciousness of another", (we have the same word, *adbhuta*, as in the colloquy of Indra and Agastya), effects that motion with this Power as charioteer holding the reins of the activity. Mitra also, the lord of Love and Light is even such a charioteer. Love illuminated fulfils the harmony which is the goal of the divine movement. But the power of this lord of Will and Light is also needed. Force and Love united and both illumined by Knowledge fulfil God in the world.

Will is the first necessity, the chief actualizing force. When therefore the race of mortals turn consciously towards the great aim and, offering their enriched capacities to the Sons of Heaven, seek to form the divine in themselves, it is to Agni, first and chief, that they lift the realizing thought, frame the creative Word. For they are the Aryans who do the work and accept the effort, - the vastest of all works, the most grandiose of all efforts, - and he is the power that embraces Action and by Action fulfils the work. What is the Aryan without the divine Will that accepts the labour and the battle, works and wins, suffers and triumphs?

Therefore it is this Will which annihilates all forces commissioned to destroy the effort, this strongest of all the divine Puissances in which the supreme Purusha has imaged Himself, that must bestow its presence on these human vessels. There it will use the mind as instrument of the sacrifice and by its very presence manifest those inspired and realizing Words which are as a chariot framed for the movement of the gods, giving to the Thought that meditates the illuminative comprehension which allows the forms of the divine Powers to outline themselves in our waking consciousness.

Then may those other mighty Ones who bring with them the plenitudes of the higher life, Indra and the Ashwins, Usha and Surya, Varuna and Mitra and Aryaman, assume with that formative extension of themselves in the human being their most brilliant energies. Let them create their plenty in us, pouring it forth from the secret places of our being so as to be utilizable in its daylight tracts and let their impulsions urge upward the divinising thought in Mind, till it



transfigures itself in the supreme lustres.

The hymn closes. Thus, in inspired words, has the divine Will, Agni, been affirmed by the sacred chant of the Gotamas. The Rishi uses his name and that of his house as a symbol-word; we have in it the Vedic *go* in the sense "luminous", and Gotama means "entirely possessed of light". For it is only those that have the plenitude of the luminous intelligence by whom the master of divine Truth can be wholly received and affirmed in this world of an inferior Ray, -*gotamebhir rtava*. And it is upon those whose minds are pure, clear and open, *vipra*, that there can dawn the right knowledge of the great Births which are behind the physical world and from which it derives and supports its energies, -*viprebhir jatavedah*.

Agni is Jatavedas, knower of the births, the worlds. He knows entirely the five worlds and is not confined in his consciousness to this limited and dependent physical harmony. He has access even to the three highest states of all, to the udder of the mystic Cow, the abundance of the Bull with the four horns. From that abundance he will foster the illumination in these Aryan seekers, swell the plenty of their divine faculties. By that fullness and plenty of his illumined perceptions he will unite thought with thought, word with word, till the human Intelligence is rich and harmonious enough to support and become the divine idea.







### Indra

- [!\[\]\(38441ceaa711016e0bf2ad46ad394ff4\_img.jpg\) Indra, Introduction](#)
- [!\[\]\(6e027340d4263908f264926b1ad81c5e\_img.jpg\) Indra and Soma](#)
- [!\[\]\(781510d64f329bf3c880acf086e884d6\_img.jpg\) Vritra, Vala](#)
- [!\[\]\(93cdf5b84f2bfec404f7441e84b6ba5c\_img.jpg\) Battle of Indra and Vritra](#)
- [!\[\]\(0f0f932ce3b5577a82f34ad23239a6e5\_img.jpg\) Indra, giver of light](#)
- [!\[\]\(eae2be0f6c865f0a2febc97c99fc2475\_img.jpg\) Indra, thought forces](#)
- [!\[\]\(beb73fa08c38b910d1745a8873b27d81\_img.jpg\) Mind in Indian thought](#)

### Nature of Indra, the Lord of Divine Mind

He comes down into our world as the Hero with his shining horses  
And slays darkness and division with his lightnings,  
Pours down the life-giving heavenly waters,  
Finds in the trace of the hound, intuition, the lost or hidden illumination and  
Makes the Sun of truth mount high in the heaven of our mental plane.

### (Sri Aurobindo)

The role of Indra, the lord of the Divine Mind, is to help man develop the abilities for mental formation and associated action. Indra is, primarily, the deity who gives the appropriate knowledge to human beings so that they can perform all the actions. Actions are not limited to those on the physical plane, i.e., those we do with our hands, legs, mouth etc. They include actions done at the inner levels also, the inner vital, inner physical, etc.

The actions of the Divine Mind, Indra, can be broadly divided into at least three categories. The first task is to manifest knowledge in all the humans who have aspired for it. Of course, this is not done in a single step. This task is imaged as the birth of the god Indra in man.

The second task is the preparation and building up of bodies which can absorb or sustain this knowledge. The physical body is made of material, vital and mental energies. In its ordinary condition, it is like an unbaked pot, which will break if knowledge of great intensity enters it. Hence, Indra has to create new forms or subtle bodies in the modern parlance which can receive the knowledge given and allow for its growth.





The third task of Indra is to offer protection for the individuals from the hostile forces. The existence of these non-human forces operated by the non-human typical beings is not a surprise for any one who has developed an inner life of sufficient depth. These hostile forces are the forces of falsehood which conceal Truth or divide the Truth into mutually opposite chunks, the forces which tend to stop the flow of consciousness, etc. Hence Indra battles these demonic forces led by Vrtra, the concealer or tearer. Vrtra and his followers operate not only at a cosmic level, but also in the inner life of every individual. Hence, Indra has to secure victory against Vrtra, the demon, in each individual.

The divine knowledge given by Indra is not meant to come in one step or at any one moment like the experience of *samadhi* in the later *vedantic* thought. The seers get this knowledge, one step at a time. Two mantras (1.10.1) and (1.10.2) describe this procedure graphically.

The seers of the mantra rise and attain thee as they climb a ladder, (1.10.1).

When a human being starts any spiritual discipline, his/her progress is slow in the beginning, like climbing a ladder. At each step, s/he sees the several steps which s/he has yet to climb, many of them hidden from his/her sight. There is no need for discouragement for at some stage Indra himself comes to the devotee and takes upon himself the task of guiding and helping the seer on his upward journey. In the language of the Rigveda, a god taking birth in a person means that the effort of the person has reached a culmination and hereafter the god himself will lead the person, pointing out to the devotee the new, untrodden paths. Hence, in the later *mantra* of the same hymn (1.10.11), Indra is described as one "who makes a seer" and "gives a new life to the seer".

In (1.6.3), *ketu* means knowledge born of inner understanding. A person who has no such knowledge is *aketu*. Indra aims to manifest in man the higher knowledge, the knowledge of the different planes, the knowledge of gods, methods of obtaining their grace, the methods of not exposing oneself to hostile forces, etc. The process of the birth of knowledge is imaged by the *Rig Vedic* poets as the birth of a son to human being, the person who does the *yajna*. The *yajamana* prays to the gods for them to be born as his sons.

However, there is a deeper reason for imaging the dawn of knowledge in man as the birth of a god. A first step in spiritual life of many persons is the vision of a deity or a divine hearing or an appropriate suprasensual experience. But such an experience, by itself, is not sufficient to sustain spiritual life. The memory of such a vision often fades with time, subject to natural forces. But, if we want to have a continuous vision of the Godhead and continuously feel its/his presence, then we need a subtle body in addition to a gross body to support the inner vision and other experiences. The power of gods like Indra manifesting in a human has a



subtle body which is as concrete as the physical body, but operates on a different plane. Thus the first line of (1.6.3) states, "giving knowledge to one who does not have it" and the second line says, "Indra gives an appropriate form *pesho* which can sustain this knowledge." Just as the physical dawn denotes the advent of physical sun in the sky, the divine goddess *Usha* by her presence indicates the advent of the Spiritual Sun.

The quotation given above is not an isolated one, but one of a hundred or more such images in the Rigveda. In (1.4.1) Indra, is hymned as "*surupa kratnu*, fashioner of perfect forms." Indra's forms are perfect because he has access to complete knowledge. This idea of Indra as the author of forms and maker of seers (1.10.11) is not limited to the seer Madhuchchhandas. We give here the famous mantra of the seer Bharadwaja (6.47.18).

This mantra (6.47.18) is repeated in the *Bṛhadaranyaka* Upanishad (2.5) as a part of the *madhu*, "universal delight", doctrine. It is sufficient to note that the Supreme Brahman of the *vedantic* thought, is also a Supreme Person, *atman* and every form is himself, his creation, a mould of the substance, a shape of his being. Indra is the divine counterpart of every form in existence; whatever we see is only a form of Indra through which Indra is pleased to reveal himself. The *maya* powers, in fact, have nothing to do with magic or illusion. They are his creative conscious powers, through which, he has set in motion, the countless life powers, which we behold. These life forces are imaged as his thousand horses, a fairly common image for life forces. The Sanskrit word for the four-footed animal horse, *ashwa*, is derived from the word *ash*, which denotes strength. Indra's steeds are not the animals needed for his transportation; but are his life powers, and *ratha*, the chariot, indicates movement.

The seer Nema in the eighth book, gives a reply to the question of a skeptic who asks "There is no Indra; who has ever seen him?" (8.100.3). The reply is in (8.100.4) and has been given earlier.

We will give below several descriptive epithets in the hymns of Madhuchchhandas to delineate Indra's role as the Divine Mind;

Of varied lustre (1.3.4); Impelled by thought (1.3.5);

Driven forward by the illumined thinker (1.3.5);

Of clear seeing intelligence, (1.4.4)

These epithets cannot be explained if we regard Indra as the rainmaker or as a warring chieftain.



Indra is the intelligence that discriminates and counters the forces which are adverse to the *yoga* journey of the seer and offers the appropriate help, even if the beginner cannot have any intimation of the help received. Some epithets are: Indra of thousand activities (1.4.8), Doer of happy deeds (1.5.6), (giver of) manifold knowledge, abundant intelligence (1.5.3), brightens the word of praise, makes the word accomplished (1.6.9), Indra is the great harmoniser (1.7.8).

Indra himself creates the subtle body in man (1.10.11) and prepares the *yajamana* for the vision of Indra and other deities. The *yajamana*, human sacrificer, should be in a mood of inward surrender and outward activity.

Indra, impel towards us thy varied and superb wealth

Which is very pervasive and intense. (1.9.6)

In the Rigveda, Soma and Indra are hymned as great friends (1.4.10). When Indra manifests in a person, there is a profusion of Light and Delight which is clearly felt by the seer and expressed in hymns.

The rapture of thee grown indeed gives Light. (1.4.2)

(Indra) who, in his vastness, is a continent of bliss. (1.4.10).

Note here the association between bliss and vastness. The descriptions of the Truth plane are "*satyam-rtam-brhat*," "the Truth, the Right and the Vast." Bliss cannot manifest in a constricted environment. In (1.8.8), Indra is associated with Mahi, the goddess of vastness, who is *sunrta*, one with agreeable and auspicious speech, *virapsi*, flaming in exuberance, *gomati*, full of luminous knowledge, who comes to the performer of *yajna* like a ripe fruit.

The overall role of Indra is well described in the first four *mantras* of the hymn of the Seer Madhuchchhandas (1.4.1-1.4.4). *surupakrtnum utaye sudughamiva goduhe juhumasi dyavi dyavi*. (1.4.1) *upa nah savana gahi somasya somapah piba goda idrevato madah*. (1.4.2). *atha te antamanam vidyama sumatinam ma no ati kya gahi*. (1.4.3). The fashioner of perfect forms like a good yielder for the milker of herds we call for increase from day to day.

(1) Come to our Soma offerings, O Soma-drinker, drink the Soma wine; the intoxication of thy rapture gives Light.

(2) Then may be know of thy innermost right thinkings. Show not beyond us, come.



(3) Notes:

The pure bright knowledge coming from Indra is capable of effecting good mental movements and good actions which increase every day (1).

Nourished and joyous by partaking the Soma that is pressed out, Indra, the Lord of the knowledge of divine mind showers his own rays of illumination (2).

Even though we would be able to know the intimate movements of the divine knowledge by reason of the attainment of the special luminous consciousness, still may not Lord Indra go beyond our sense perception; may he show us the knowledge understandable to us at our level of attainment (3).

Indra is hymned as the king or protector of the heaven *dyu* "*brhatah patih bhuh* (1.52.13)." Indra is said to celebrate his self-dominion "*archan anu swarajam* (1.80.)," the latter phrase being the refrain of all the sixteen *mantras* of that hymn. However, Indra is not the only deity hymned as a king. The usual phrase for a king "*rajan*" is invoked for the deity Varuna frequently "*raja* Varunah (1.24.6)." It is also interesting to note that the phrase *daksham* or *putadaksham* which stands throughout the *veda* for skill in intelligence, "an intelligence of discriminating between good and bad, true and untrue, and deciding upon the truth of things" (Kapali, Vol. 4, p. 30T) is used exclusively for Varuna as in (1.2.7), (1.2.9), (1.24.7), etc. We will delineate between Varuna and Indra in a later essay on Varuna. It is sufficient to point out here that the *rishis* in the *veda* used words of everyday usage so that an inspection and meditation of the outward meanings of these words would indicate their inner symbolism. A king of an earthly country has not only overall sovereignty in that country but also has several specific functions like protecting the people from external forces, upholding the laws of the land, establishment of beauty and harmony in all walks of life in the country, etc. Indra is hymned as the "*svarat*," self-ruler, and "*samrat*," emperor. He represents the royalty of thought and action (Sri A., p. 454). Varuna is the king who is a fountainhead of discrimination, and omnipotent wisdom and he upholds the eternal law "*rtam*." We may recall that if *satya* is the absolute Truth, *rtam* is the projection of that Truth in manifestation, in this world characterized by time and space. So *rtam* is often translated as the "Right," but it also stands for the cosmic Law which cannot be violated. The deity Vrtra is also hailed as a king who upholds the harmony and beauty in all of the manifestations. Here the word king should not be interpreted in a very rigid way. The *vedic* poets were both deep and subtle, and a certain plasticity of the thought is necessary to understand their transcription of their spiritual experiences.



### Indra and Soma

A common statement repeated in different variations is that Indra drinks the Soma juice offered by the *rishis* obtained by crushing the Soma, becomes intoxicated and with his strength increased, kills the demon Vrtra and releases the cows, horses, waters, Sun, etc. We need to study the symbolism in these statements. Skeptics may say "Why not take these statements at their face value?" The Rigveda itself says that Soma is a symbol. The entire ninth book (*mandala*) of Rigveda is dedicated to Soma. One cannot make any sense of all these *mantras* if Soma were merely a creeper.

For instance, consider the following *mantra* 9.86.5. "O thou, all-seeing, O Lord, Thy illumining rays encompass all abodes; Soma with thy natural powers pervades the all and flows, You are the King and lord of the whole world." How can a creeper be all-seeing? How can it have illumining rays? How can a creeper pervade the All?

Another quotation (10.85.3) from the tenth mandala sets all doubts to rest. The seer of this *mantra* is a lady, Savitri Surya. "When they crush the herb one thinks that he has drunk the Soma; but no one ever tastes him whom *brahmanas* know to be Soma." *somam manyate papivan yat sampishantyoshidhim, somam yam brahmano viduh na tasyashnati kahchana*. In addition, Kapali Sastry adds "Twenty four varieties of Soma plant are mentioned in the section on *chikitsa sthana* of the *sushruta samhita* (Ch. 29) (a compendium of the Indian herbal medicines and their application and their uses). But nowhere is the mention of its intoxicating property." (Vol.4, p.169).

So it is clear that the creeper is only the outer symbol of Soma. As before, its name gives a clue to its real nature. Just as the physical Sun is the outer symbol of the spiritual Sun, the physical fire a symbol of the mystic fire of aspiration, the physical dawn a symbol of the dawn of spiritual light, Usha, similarly Soma, the moon whose soothing light is praised by poets the world over, is the outer symbol of *ananda*, the delight of existence which upholds the Universe.

As Sri Aurobindo says in Savitri: A hidden bliss is at the root of things. A mute delight regards Time's countless works: To house God's joy in things space gave wide room, To house God's joy in self our souls were born. There is a joy in all that meets the sense, A joy in all the experience of the soul. A joy in evil and a joy in good, A joy in virtue, a joy in sin: It grows toward the Titan and the God. (Book 10, Canto 3, pp. 630-631). The delight is being sought after by both Gods and the titans like Vrtra whose role will be explained later.

This idea is already there in Rigveda. The fathers who have divine vision set Him within as a child that is to be born. (9.83.3) The *ananda*, Bliss, is everywhere in



seed form waiting to be manifested. The bliss is released in every activity and especially in activities involving intense self-offering like *yajna*. The joy a person feels in doing any work is an indication of this bliss. However, the effects of this bliss are not perceived because our minds are preoccupied with the supposed benefits to be obtained from the action. Even when we do the work for the sake of duty or do work for work's sake, still the egoistic feeling that "I am the doer, I am the cause of the success of the work," etc. dilutes the effects of this bliss since nature is the principal doer of all actions using individuals as instruments. Hence the seers of the Rigveda insist that the Soma or the bliss released in every activity of life like *yajna* be purified by divesting them of any individual claims and other gross elements and be offered to the Gods, principally Indra. The delight of existence offered to the Gods energizes them and promotes the manifestation of the powers of Gods in the person performing the self-offering activities and also in the humanity at large. This idea is present in numerous places in the Rigveda and we will quote here the *mantra* of the Seer Madhuchchhandas (1.5.5). Purified are these Soma juices, pure, they are spent for thy manifestation able then to bear their own intensity.

In 1.5.4, Indra, the God of the Divine Mind, is said to take the Soma purified by the subtle power of thought "*anvibhih*" and by extension in the outer physical consciousness (1.3.4).

A unique feature of the *rig vedic* Gods is their camaraderie with humans. The different *vedic* Gods do not support different human beings and cause them to fight one another as the Greek Gods do in Iliad. The *vedic* Gods are eager to help a person and manifest their power in him provided the person expresses his aspiration by recognizing the delight of existence present everywhere and released by the activities s/he is involved in and offering them to the Gods. The Gods like Indra manifest in the human, remove the effects of hostile forces like Vrtra in the inner life of the person and promote the all around growth and happiness of the person.

In the Rigveda Soma and Indra are hymned as great friends (1.4.10). When Indra manifests in a person, there is a profusion of light and delight which is clearly felt by the seer and expressed in hymns. "*godah idrevato madah*" (1.4.2) The rapture of thee grown indeed gives Light. (1.4.2) "(Indra) who in his vastness is a continent of bliss." (1.4.10) "*yah rajah avanih mahan.*" (1.4.10) Note here the association between bliss and vastness. The descriptions of the Truth plane are "*satyam-rtam-brhat,*" "the Truth, the Right and the Vast." Bliss cannot manifest in a constricted environment. In (1.8.8), Indra is associated with Mahi, the goddess of vastness, who is *sunrta* under, one with agreeable and auspicious speech, *virapsi* under, flaming in exuberance, *gomati* under, full of luminous knowledge, who comes to the performer of *yajna* like a ripe fruit. "*sam te santu pracetase*" (1.5.7) "Peace to thee in thy forward looking awareness."





Here "*prachetase*" means forward looking awareness. Indra has to put his consciousness forward in thought and action, yet preserve the peace of the liberated soul. Thus Soma increases both power RV (1.5.6) and knowledge RV (1.5.7).

### **Vritra, Vala and Hostile forces**

We will briefly discuss the meaning of the hostile forces led by Vrtra. We should resist the temptation of regarding the Gods and demons as two different clans or tribes with different ideals. The followers of Vrtra have no ideals at all. The aim of the hostile forces, also called as demons, in the Rigveda is to bring down and smash all the different ideals which motivate human beings. In contrast, the only aim of the Gods is to foster a harmonious development of wisdom and force in all human beings so that the whole environment is suffused with harmony and beauty. There is no need for warfare between individuals. Agni, the great God, works in the inner life of all persons, making them strive toward light, whether they worship Agni or not. It is not correct to say that Gods help only those who worship them. The act of worship makes a human in tune with the harmonious cosmic forces so that these forces get a firm hold in him and propel him or her toward higher vistas. The demonic forces want to capture all the spiritual wealth and light, hoard them, as it were, and they do not want to share them with anyone, human or otherwise.

Since the role of the Vrtra and other demons in the macro-cosmic worlds has been discussed in another essay, we will focus on their role at a microcosmic level, i.e., in the inner and outer life of a human individual. The names of the different demons give a clue to their power and personality. Vrtra is the coverer and tearer, having the same root as *vrka*, the wolf. Vrtra enforces the separation of each individual from one another. Since the bodies of two persons are different, two persons cannot have anything common. Vrtra, like the cloud, covers the universal Sun, the nourisher of all from us and Vrtra, like the wolf, tears apart the bonds that unify humans. Vrtra represents the physical consciousness of man, the consciousness of matter in its dominating mode, suppressing all other forces. Another name for Vrtra in the *veda* is Ahi, the serpent. In Indian thought, serpents are symbols of vital forces. Since serpents assume any shape and exude varieties of vital forces, they are good symbols of vital forces. Vrtra stands for the lower vital forces, the so-called five enemies: desire for possession for everything, anger, greed, arrogance and jealousy.

Vala is another demon whose name signifies a cave, the cave of unawakened consciousness, substratum of all impressions which is hidden in us without any knowledge to our outer or waking consciousness. Vala also denotes the tendency



to hoard all things, whether physical or vital. Vala does not enjoy the things he hoards, but takes pleasure in hoarding. Panis are the sense traffickers, derived from *pana* or transaction. For them every object is tradable and has no innate value. Sushna is another domain who sucks up the vital forces and renders the place like a desert. He is the cause of all depressions, etc. It is important to understand that the attitude of the *vedic* seers toward sense enjoyments is quite different from that found in the later *vedantic* thought (not the upanishads). The *vedic* seers recognized the divinity in every aspect of life and perceived that the delight that the object conveys via the senses is only an expression of the universal delight and hence must be enjoyed only after sharing with Gods and other human beings. The *vedic* seers were not ascetics who looked down upon the sense delights conveyed by objects around them. The human beings who, becoming selfish, insist that only they can enjoy the sense-delights and who do not want to share their delights and possessions with Gods or fellow humans, these are the followers of Vala and Vrtras, the titans. So, figuratively, it is said that these persons do not press the Soma or chant the *mantras*. These persons like Panis behave like sense traffickers. They steal the delight, as it were, from the common pool and try to hoard it in the cave. It should be noted that these demonic forces have found a place in each human being by invitation. If every part of the being declined to have any dealing with these forces, the power of these forces would decay at once. The God Agni works in this hostile atmosphere in each individual and tries to kindle the psychic fire and bring in the other Gods like Indra, who is the principle of universal mind with its numerous layers. Indra is endowed both with luminous knowledge and with luminous power. Thanks to the God Agni, we recognize the benefit of extracting the delight in all things and offer it to the Gods like Indra. Indra, by accepting the Soma, pours in the luminous forces of the universal mind and destroys the Vrtras in the body of worshipper. Indra, having access to the perfect knowledge, can give perfect guidance about the actions to be done so that these actions do not encourage the forces of falsehood. Thus the mind deformed due to the pursuit of sense-objects only and deluded by false knowledge is offered release from bondage and constriction by Indra by exposing the worshipper to the vast knowledge. Indra by his rays burst the hill (1.7.3) The hill is the obscure insensate world of our subconsciousness. Indra we call for affluence, great and little, the thunderer assailing the Vrtras (1.7.5) i.e., we resort to Indra not merely in prosperity but even in adversity. O thou, by whose strong action, we shall completely deter the foes, guarded by thee and well powered with the steed (of life forces) (1.8.2). O Indra, guarded by thee, may we wield the *vajra*, May we conquer the jealous foes in battle. (1.8.3) O Indra, thy glory is manifest well. Unobstructed in its movement, it has been cleansed by Thee. O Master of the hill, open the gate of the home of the cows and release the rays of divine consciousness. (1.10.7) O Indra, thou wins the Waters of *svar*, the luminous world. Impel us towards the rays of knowledge. (1.10.8) O Indra, thou thrust open the cave of Vala (hoarder) with the cows. (1.11.5) O Indra, thou has slain with thy skill the cunning





Shushna. (1.11.7) As the name indicates, Shushna is the titan who robs the environment of its sap and converts it into a desert.

One of the roles played by the hostile forces is to oppose to the maintenance of harmony and to encourage the forces of disintegration in a human being. Indra alone has the knowledge and power to separate the forces of destruction from effecting the body. The human body is the abode of both immortality and mortality. Indra in his role of disseminating the divine knowledge, can give the force which opposes destruction. "*tanunam ma abhidruhan*" "*isanah yavaya vadham*" (1.5.10). May not our bodies be harmed. Separate all destruction from us.

### Battle of Indra and Vritra

The battle has numerous references in the Rigveda. To understand its significance, we have to control our tendency to interpret the *rig vedic* words in terms of their meanings in medieval or classical Sanskrit. It is not our intention here to claim that the people of *rig vedic* times were peaceful and did not indulge in wars. From what little evidence we have, we can say that they were organized into clans which fought with each other for the recovery of stolen cows and horses. Our claim is that the battles appearing in the Rigveda are symbolic. The seers of the Rigveda used the images of scenes around them like the battles, milking of cows, the dawn, the oceans, etc., to convey their spiritual experiences in the form of poetry. Since they were not intellectuals, they used the imagery associated with the words to convey their ideas. Hence the words occurring in the Rigveda cannot be assigned the meanings of words available in modern day dictionaries. Rigveda itself describes the meaning of the various words in various places.

For instance, take the *vajra*. It is translated as the bolt or the weapon with which Indra killed the demon Vrtra. It is translated by those who interpret *rig vedic* gods as nature powers as the bolt of lightening with which the cloud signified demon Vrtra is struck by Indra, releasing the rain. But Rigveda clearly gives the meaning of the word "*vajra*." In 1.32.2, the *vajra* is said to be formulated by the divine sculptor *tvasta* belonging to the luminous world "*svar*." "*tvasta asmai vajram svaryam tataksha*." Note the use of the word "*svar*." It is a world full of opulence which have nothing to do with the *rigid* materialism of earth. The architect *tvasta* like the Ribhus fashion for man and gods the things of immortality. To emphasize that the *vajra* is formed by the mantra, the poet says in RV (1.121.12) "*vajra*, which Ushanas, son of *kavya*, gave thee (to Indra)." Ushanas is one of the preeminent seer-poets of Rigveda and it is hard to think of a great poet fashioning a material weapon. In RV (1.51.10), addressed to Indra



the seer-poet Angirasa Savya says "When Ushanas sharpens thy strength with his own."

It is not with physical weapons that Indra fights Panis, but with words. "*panin vacobhir abhi yodad* Indra." (6.39.2). It is the force of truth alone. "By Truth, the cows (illumined thoughts) enter into the Truth; The aggressive force of the Truth seeks the cows breaking through (the enemy)..." (4.23.9). Consider the phrase (1.7.3). "(He) burst open the hill with the rays." "*gobhih adrim airayat*." Here there is no mention of a physical weapon at all. We have translated "go" as "rays." To translate "go" as "cows" is ridiculous because how can cows burst open the hill?

Similarly, neither the horses of Indra are earthly animals nor the chariot made of matter. For instance, the seer Gotama says (1.82.6). "I yoke thy lustre-maned steeds with the mantra." "*te hari brahmana yunajmi*." Again in 1.20.2, the steeds of Indra are yoked by speech (*vacoyujah*).

Again in the battle when the Indra kills the demon Vrtra and releases the waters, the poet says that the released waters as "ascending the mind" (*mano ruhanah*, 1.32.8). Elsewhere the waters have knowledge "*apo vichetasah*" (1.83.1).

Further, the *veda* often describes in various places six distinct benefits occurring from the battle, namely killing of Vrtra (ii) release of the waters (iii) release of the Sun and the Dawn (iv) release of the Soma (v) release of cows (vi) release of the horses. All of these are interconnected and occur simultaneously as stated in the Rigveda in many places. For instance, take the Seer Bharadwaja's mantra in RV (6.30.5). "O Indra, thou opened the waters wide, Broke the hardness of the mountain. Thou became the king of the world of the men that see, together gave birth to Sun, heaven and Dawn."

The release of the cows and horses cannot be separated from the release of the Dawn or Sun. For instance, in RV (1.62.5). O Reducer of foes, praised by Angiras with the dawn, Sun and rays (cows) then destroyest the blind darkness.

The exponents of the nature power theory explain Vrtra as the rain bearing cloud which covers the Sun. Indra, by breaking the cloud, causes rain and the release of the Sun. But they cannot account for the cows and horses. So they say that the release of the cows and the horses is a separate incident involving a battle between clans. They have to ignore most of the key phrases like "yoked to the mind" or "ascending to the mind," saying that the passage is vague.

Indra is not the only player among the Gods in this battle. In different hymns, Agni, the Angirasa seers, Brihaspati, Ashwins, Maruts, Pushan, the All-Gods and even Saraswati are also credited with the victory against the demons. Elsewhere



the connections between the roles of the various Gods and seers will be discussed.

For *rig vedic* seers, life is simultaneously a journey, a sacrifice and a battle. Since any poetry has to be written sequentially, one of these three aspects takes prominence in a particular hymn.

Life is for the Seers of Rigveda a spiritual journey in which we go from a plateau to a higher plateau (1.10.2). We can see what is to be done next only after reaching a plateau, not before. In this journey, they meet resistance of the hostile forces resulting in a battle. The means used in the battle are not physical weapons, but the mantra and the *yajna*, translated as sacrifice.

The Seer Hiranyastupa Angirasa describes the battle between Indra and Vritra in two hymns (RV 1.32 and 1.33), emphasizing the symbolism. We will explain these presently. The symbolism in the *veda* is like the special notation used in the classic grammar of Panini. Just as ignorance of the notation will not allow us to appreciate the beauty of grammar, the ignorance of the symbolism of Rigveda makes one regard it as gibberish. The battle takes place both at a macrocosmic level and at a microcosmic level in the spiritual life of an individual life. We will first focus on the macrocosmos.

The words Adri, Parvata (hill, mountain) signify the universe with its three lower worlds of earth (*prithvi*), the mid world (*antariksha*) and the lower heaven (*dyu*). These three worlds are said to be the worlds subjected to ignorance, i.e., the forces and influences of the titans and demons like Vritras, Vala, etc. Above this triple world is the world of *sva* or *brihat dyu* or *uru loka*, the wide world. Beyond this is the higher triple worlds of bliss, the worlds of *sat-chit-ananda* (existence-knowledge-bliss) of the later *vedantas*. Each of the seven worlds embody and manifest a separate principle. For instance, the lowest world, our earth, manifests the principle matter; the *antariksha* or mid world manifests the principle of *prana* or life energies; the lower heavens or *dyu* manifests the lower mind; *sva* manifests the higher mind, etc.

Below the worlds is the ocean below of the inconscient, *aprekata salilam*, hymned by the Seer *paramestin* in 10.129. From this inconscient base rises (or is created) the hill of the laws three worlds. The higher triple world above is also identified with the superconscient ocean above, the *supraketa* (4.50.2). The triple world and *sva* is between these two oceans. Similarly the Light (Jyoti), Truth (*satyam, ritam*) is above and is perpetual. It signifies the eternal day. The *tamas* (darkness) and falsehood is the Night. The triple world is said to lie between Light and Darkness.

There are two principal types of tygal (or nonevolving) beings, the Gods or the



children of Aditi and the demons, the children of Diti. Human beings are different from both these groups since they are evolving. The humans come under the influence of both these two kinds of tyal beings.

The gods like Indra are also called Adityas, since they are all sons of Aditi, the infinite Nature, the unslayable cow, signifying the forces of cohesion and unity. The gods are always pure and are not tainted by the lower human qualities like jealousy, hatred, etc. The gods are fosterers and sharers with man; they help man in his *yajna*, the process of the ascension of the consciousness toward Light. They help him at every step, or plateau (*sanau*), pointing out what remains to be done at each step (1.10.2) in his ultimate goal of immortality. The gods take birth in man, manifest their powers in him and accomplish the *yajna* or sacrifice through him. These are the dwellers of *svar*, the luminous world and *dyu*, the lower heaven.

The Dasyus, the Danavas, the Vrtras, Panis are the children of Diti, the divided Nature which signifies multiplicity and which has become quite separate from the principle of unity or harmony. These are children of darkness, forces of anarchy, beings that cover the light (Vrtra), the hoarders (Vala), the misers and sense-traffickers (Panis), etc. Instead of fostering harmony, sharing, the light, self offering *yajna*, they originate and encourage the forces of clash, hoarding, the darkness, robbing and grabbing. These Dasyus take control of human beings who incline themselves to such behavior and offer a welcome, albeit unconsciously, to these forces. The residence of the Dasyus is the cave or hole (*bila*) at the bottom of the hill. But their activities extend to all the three worlds. There is continuous battle between the forces of Light, the Gods, the Adityas headed by Indra and the Dasyus headed by Vrtra. The battle between them occurs in the *antariksha*, the mid world and even the lower heavens (Dyu).

However, the regions of Truth and that of Falsehood are not distinctly demarcated; they are mixed, leading to confusion. As the substance of Truth increases with each ascent, the substance of Falsehood increases downward, culminating in the Inconscience of the Earth-matter.

The *daityas* or *asuras* not only distort Truth, "but even simulate Truth by Falsehood" (Sri Kapali, vol. 10, p. 165). As the *vedantins* insist, ignorance is not the total absence of knowledge; it is deformed knowledge. One of the principle *asuras* is Kuyava (RV. 1.104.3) whose purpose is adulterate Truth with Falsehood. Truth has several layers and one level of truth covers another. (*rtena rtam apihitam; isha upanishad?*). Each layer has its own level of truth. A statement valid at one level need not be valid at another. What proponents of falsehood do is to use a statement of truth valid at one level to negate another statement at another level. As an illustration, it is well known that there exist realms of truth which are beyond the realm of speech or other modes of human



activity (*yatha vacho nivarthanthe - taittireya upanishad*). The proponents of Falsehood use this truth and say "what is the use of acts like prayer, chanting, giving gifts, etc., in reading the highest truth? The scripture itself documents their futility." This statement is a falsehood masquerading as truth because there are realms of Truth which are completely accessible to spiritual practices like prayer and an artificial opposition is set up between spiritual practices like prayer and meditation.

In an earlier battle between the gods and *daityas*, the Gods were vanquished. This battle does not get any description, but its results are mentioned at many places. They are (i) the blocking of the seven celestial rivers, (ii) the covering of Sun and Dawn, (iii) the covering of Soma, (iv) the concealing of the cows and horses in the nether cave, the Cave of Hill. In the battle hymned by Hiranyastupa Angirasa (1.32, 1.33), these effects are undone.

Let us dwell briefly on the symbolism of the above events.

Let us take the Sun. In the *veda*, Surya is the master of truth, the illuminator, the creator and increaser. The solar energy which energizes the whole solar system and enables life on this earth is the physical form of the spiritual Sun, Surya, Lord of Light and Truth. The Seers of the *veda* intuitively felt that the forces and processes of physical world repeat the truths of supraphysical worlds which produce it. The *rishis* imaged the functioning of their inner life using the symbols of the outward life. The rays of the spiritual Sun enter the three worlds including the earth via the fourth world of Svar, the luminous wide world, *ura loka*, the vast heaven, *brihat dyu* (1.36.8). What the *daityas* like Vritra did was to cover the luminous world of *sva* so that it is invisible to the denizens of the earth. At an individual level, the Seer experienced an intense darkness where the influence of the Sun was shut out, as it were. This phenomena is, of course, temporary and similar experiences have been recorded by mystics of other parts of the world. For instance, one European mystic complains of the darkness of the night of the soul. Thus the Sun and along with it the Dawn are termed as lost. Similarly there are the seven rivers of consciousness flowing out of the ocean of superconscious situated above, *suprakatum salilam*. Each river signifies one of the principles of existence like matter, vital or *pranas*, lower mind, etc. Vritra also blocked these rivers and prevented them from reaching the earth. Next let us come to the cows and horses. In the *veda*, consciousness is described using two different sets of images. One description is that of a stream or a movement of consciousness, described earlier. Consciousness is also described as embodied in distinct packets, the so-called cows, often translated as rays of consciousness. Just as each ray of the physical Sun is distinct, yet contains in it the properties of sunlight, similarly each cow, the luminous cow, symbolizes a distinct manifestation of the supreme consciousness. The four-footed animal cow was used as the symbol of the seers because of the utility and reverence associated



with that animal among the people at that time. Similarly, horses shared for the vital energy.

Now consider Soma, the delight of existence. Every human activity, ordinary or special, high or low, commonplace or creative, generates a certain *rasa* or essence which is the delight of existence. This *rasa* may have some psychological impurities in it such as the notion of doer and possessor, viz. "this activity becomes successful because of my efforts, my abilities," etc. Recognizing that all activities involve the dominating role of cosmic forces for which we as separate human beings cannot take credit, we can purify this *rasa* by removing our personal claims and offer the purified *rasa* or Soma to the Gods. The Gods Indra are pleased to accept the Soma offering and nourish the humans. It should be understood that the high Gods like Indra are not traffickers. They offer their help to all persons, both to those who adore him in their *yajna* and those who do not. As the later mystics explain, their grace is like the breeze in the lake. Anyone can use it to sail their boat, provided they take the trouble of unfurling the sail and pointing it in the proper direction. The *daityas* cover the Soma also. In all persons who perform *yajna*, the *daityas* place the idea that their activities are the result of their own strength and abilities and there is not need to be thankful to the higher powers. Hence these individuals are deprived of the experience of the delight of existence which is Soma. Hence Soma is said to be covered by the *daityas*.

Indra kills the Vrtra, the coverer, and releases the waters, the Sun, Dawn and Soma. Indra, helped by the Angirasa *rishis* with their hymns, breaks open the cellars of the nether world, releases the cows and drives them upward so that they are accessible. The divine power of intuition, the goddess Sarama, often imaged as a divine hound, shows Indra the cave where the cows are imprisoned. "This is the constant work of Indra in which he is Supreme. Though he has originally achieved and established for the benefit of mankind this victory of the recovery of the cave with the ancient Angirasa *rishis*, even today, this king of the Gods, engaged in ceaseless search of the cow-treasurer, repeats his feat for the benefit of man" (Kapali, vol. 10, p. 6).

Seer Hiranyastupa hymn to Indra. I just relate the valorous deeds performed mainly by Indra He killed the demon Ahi, struck the hill and released the waters. (1) He struck the demon hidden in the hill. The divine sculptor fashioned for him a bolt of the luminous worlds (*svar*). The flowing waters reached the ocean by a straight path like lowing cows the calves. (2) Acting like a bull, he drank the Soma in three infusions, Opulent, he wielded the weapon *vajra* and struck this first born of demons. (3) O Indra, thou struck the first born of demons, and destroyed the deceptive knowledge of the fraudulent. Illuminating the Sun (Surya), the dawn (Ushas) and the heaven (*dyau*) thou had not got at the enemy. (4) Indra, with a mighty blow of *vajra*, cut off the shoulders of the





superb coverer Vritra. The vile one lay dormant close to the earth like tree trunks specially cut with an axe. (5) The haughty and intoxicated Vritra challenged the great warrior Indra, the remover of foes. He (Vritra) ground to a halt the rivers. He could not parry the impact of blows. (6) Bereft of hands and feet, he fought Indra, who struck him at the crown. Like a eunuch desiring to act virile, Vritra fell down with his limbs shattered. (7) Like a river breaking the bank The waters which mount the minds of men flow over Vritra lying on the floor. The Vritra lay at the very feet of those whom he besieged with his might. (8) Vritra's mother lowered her arms; Indra flung the striking weapon below her; The Mother was above, the son below; She lay like a cow with the calf. (9) Vritra's body lay concealed at the bottom amidst the changing currents of waters. Vritra lay in prolonged sleep. (10) The waters constrained by Vritra stood fettered like the cows confined by the Pani. The striker of Vritra uncovered the closed aperture of the waters. (11) O Indra, when he struck thee back thou chased him away. O the supreme God, thou was the Soma, and released the seven rivers to flow. (12) When Indra and Vrtra fought each other, neither the lightening, the roar, nor the rains nor the thunderclap got at Indra. And Indra surmounted other deceitful tricks as well. (13) In thy mind a doubt arose, who else is the slayer of Vritra; Doubting, thou traversed the ninety-nine rivers and worlds like a hawk. (14) *vajra*-armed Indra is the king of the mobile and the immobile; the quiescent and the forceful. He, as a king rules over men is around them all like the rim encircling the spokes. (15) Notes on the hymn 1.32.

In hymn 1, Vritra is called by the name Ahi, the serpent, to indicate that he is a man of energy without any fixed shape.

In hymn 2, it is stated that the Indra's weapon *vajra*, translated here as bolt, was made by the divine sculptor *tvasta* from the luminous world of *sva*, the world beyond the reaches of the lower mind. Clearly in the world of *sva* all the objects are fashioned out of light, not out of any matter as in our earth.

Note that the poet says "the flowing waters, released by Indra, reach the ocean by a straight path." The rain water or rivers do not reach the ocean by a straight path. Hence these waters are not the physical rivers of northern India, but the streams of consciousness held up by Vritra.

In mantra 3, the three infusions of Soma taken by Indra are nothing but the essence of the three worlds of matter, life and mind.

In mantra 4, poet states that the demon Vritra is not an ordinary cloud. By the killing of Vritra, the deceptions of the fraudulent are also destroyed. In mantra 5, for Vritra, the poet adds the adjective *Vritranam*, clearly indicating that among the coverer, he is the most coverer.



In mantras 7 and 8, Indra has cut off the limbs of Vritra and the demon's body is lying on the floor of the ocean over which the waters flow. Again the poet describes the waters as "mounting the minds of men."

In mantra 9, the mother of Vritra, Diti, is mentioned. She is said to protect her son by placing herself above her son, Vritra.

In mantra 11, the poet says that the Indra removed the closed aperture in the hill and allowed the waters to flow. In the inner *yoga* of *tantriks*, these closed apertures are the closed knots (or *granthas*) which have to be cut before the psychic energy can flow freely.

In mantra 12, the seven rivers are the seven streams of consciousness. Mantra 13 says that when the battle was going on, the whole of nature was in a turmoil, indicated by the roaring winds, pouring rains, the thunderclaps, etc. This turmoil was caused by the tricks of Vritra, but had no effect on the outcome.

Since Vritra's body was hidden under his mother's body, the *rik* 14 indicates that Indra could not see the Vritra's body; hence Indra had a fear that Vritra was not slain and looked for him in many places.

Seer Hiranyastupa Angirasa Hymn to Indra (1.33). Come, let us go seeking the cows to Indra; For it is he that increases the thought in us; Invincible, he releases for us (from darkness) in plenty the supreme knowledge of the luminous cows. (1) I fly to the unassailable giver of the riches like a falcon to its beloved nest, bowing down to Indra with the supreme words of light, who is invoked by his affirms in their journey. (2) Along with all his armies, he has fastened the quivers; He is the fighter who brings the luminous cows to him whom he favours O Indra, who has increased (by our word) hold not back for thy self much delight Become not in us the Pani. (3) Thou slayest with thy weapon the wealthy Dasyu, ranging alone with thy powers that serve thee, O Indra; The ungriving foes, the Shanakas, came from all sides to thy bow, And met their end. (4) O Lord of the shining steeds, firm of poise Thou cast out from heaven and earth those who observe not the workings of thy law. They who do not sacrifice, but strove with sacrificers, turned their heads away and ran. (5) They (demons) fought against the blameless Indra, the Navagwa men set him (Indra) on his march; Dispersed by him, they fled from Indra by steep paths like emasculates before the potent hero. (6) O Indra, thou hast fought them who laughed and wept, on the borders of the heaven. From the high heavens, thou has burnt down the Dasyu Thou has superbly protected the sacrificers who pour Soma and affirm thee with hymns. (7) Encircling the earth, shining gold-jeweled, rushing (to fight) they could not pass beyond Indra for he set spies all around by the Sun. (8) O Indra, possessing the earth and heaven all around by thy vastness, Attacking those who think not the truth by those who think, Thou did cast out the Dasyu by the





speakers of the word. (9) Stalled by Vritra, they (the waters) from heaven did not reach the earth. Under his spell, they could not attain to Indra. Indra, the bull, made lightening his helper and he milked the shining cows out of darkness.

(10) The last line of *rik* 3 is often translated as "Become not a miser" decreasing the power of the original line. Indra is a beneficent god, whose as the Panis, are hoarders. The seer asks Indra not to hold back his delight like a Pani.

The *rik* 6 indicates that even though Virtra was dead, his followers had not stopped fighting. Moreover, the mother of the Danavas, Diti is still active. Hence Indra has still to fight repeated battles to vanquish the forces of darkness. In this fight Angirasa seers labeled here as Navagvas, "those with nine cows," help Indra with their mantra-powers.

The *rik* 7 indicates that the battle between Indra and Vritra was fought in the borders of heaven.

In *rik* 10, Indra, the lord of divine mind, is seen milking the cows and releasing the light from them. Note that in Indian thought, mind is not the source of knowledge. It is an instrument of action which can help knowledge enter our system and suffuse it with light. This process is imaged as the milking of cows.

### **Indra, giver of light (RV 1.4)**

1. The fashioner of perfect forms, like a good yielder for the milker of the Herds, we call for increase from day to day.
2. Come to our Soma-offerings. O Soma-drinker, drink of the Soma-wine; the intoxication of thy rapture gives indeed the Light.
3. Then may we know somewhat of thy uttermost right thinkings. Show not beyond us, come.
4. Come over, question Indra of the clear-seeing mind, the vigorous the unoverthrown, who to thy comrades has brought the highest good.
5. And may the Restrainers say to us, " Nay, forth and strive on even in other fields, reposing on Indra your activity."
6. And may the fighters doers of the work, declare us entirely blessed, O achiever; may we abide in Indra's peace



7. Intense for the intense bring though this glory of the sacrifice that intoxicates the man, carrying forward on the way Indra who gives joy to his friends.
8. When though hadst drunk of this, O thou of the hundred activities, thou becamest a slayer of the coverers and protectedst the rich mind in its riches.
9. Thee thus rich in thy riches we enrich again, O Indra, O thou of the hundred activities, for the safe enjoyment of our havings.
10. He who in his vastness is a continent of bliss, --the friend of the soma-giver and he carries him safely through,- to that Indra raise the chant.

### **Sayana's Interpretation**

1. The doer of ( works that have) a good shape, Indra, we call daily for protection as (one calls) for the cow-milker a good milch-cow.
2. Come to our (three) libations, drink the soma, O soma drinker; the intoxication of thee, the wealthy one, is indeed cow-giver.
3. Then (standing) among the intelligent people who are nearest to the, may we know thee. Do not (go) beyond us (and) manifest (thyself to others, but) come to us.
4. Come to him and question about me, the intelligent one, (whether I have praised him rightly or not), -- to the intelligent and unhurt Indra who gives to thy friends (the priests) the best wealth.
5. Let of us (i.e. our priests) speak (i.e. praise Indra),-and also, O you who censure, go out from here and from elsewhere too, - (our priests) doing service all about Indra.
6. O destroyer [of foes], may even our enemies speak of us as having good wealth, --men (i.e. our friends will say it of course) may we be in the peace (bestowed) by Indra.
7. Bring this Soma, that wealth of the sacrifice, the cause of exhilaration to men, (the Soma) that pervades (the three oblations) for Indra who pervades (the Soma-offering), that attains the rites and is friendly to (Indra) who gives joy (to the sacrificer).
8. Drinking of this, o thou of many actions, thou becamest a slayer of Vrtras (i.e.



enemies led by Vrtra) and didst protect entirely the fighter in the fights.

9. O Indra of many actions, for enjoyment of riches we make thee abundant in food who art strong in the battles.

10. Sing to that Indra who is a protector of wealth, great, a good fulfiller (of works) and a friend of the sacrificer.

### COMMENTARY

Madhuchchhandas, son of Vishvamitra, invokes in the Soma-offering Indra, the Master of luminous Mind, for increase in the Light. The symbols of the hymn are those of a collective sacrifice. Its subject is the growth of power and delight in Indra by the drinking of the Soma, the wine of immortality, and the consequent illumination of the human being so that the obstructions of his inner knowledge are removed and he attains to the utmost splendours of the liberated mind.

But what is this Soma, called sometimes *amrta*, the Greek ambrosia, as if it were itself the substance of immortality? It is a figure for the divine Ananda, the principle of Bliss, from which, in the Vedic conception, the existence of Man, this mental being, is drawn. A secret Delight is the base of existence, its sustaining atmosphere and almost its substance. This Ananda is spoken of in the Taittiriya Upanishad as the ethereal atmosphere of bliss without which nothing could remain in being. In the Aitareya Upanishad Soma, as the lunar deity, is born from the sense-mind in the universal Purusha and, when man is produced, expresses himself again as sense-mentality in the human being. For delight is the *raison detre* of sensation, or, we may say, sensation is an attempt to translate the secret delight of existence into the terms of physical consciousness. But in that consciousness, - often figured as *adri*, the hill, stone, or dense substance, - divine light and divine delight are both of them concealed and confined, and have to be released or extracted. Ananda is retained as *rasa*, the sap, the essence, in sense-objects and sense-experiences, in the plants and growths of the earth-nature, and among these growths the mystic Soma-plant symbolises that element behind all sense-activities and their enjoyments which yields the divine essence. It has to be distilled and, once distilled, purified and intensified until it has grown luminous, full of radiance, full of swiftness, full of energy, *gomat, asu, yuvaku*. It becomes the chief food of the gods who, called to the Soma-oblation, take their share of the enjoyment and in the strength of that ecstasy increase in man, exalt him to his highest possibilities, make him capable of the supreme experiences. Those who do not give the delight in them as an offering to the divine Powers, preferring to reserve themselves for the sense and the lower life, are adorers not of the gods, but of the Panis, lords of the sense-



consciousness, traffickers in its limited activities, they who press not the mystic wine, give not the purified offering, raise not the sacred chant. It is the Panis who steal from us the Rays of the illumined consciousness, those brilliant herds of the sun, and pen them up in the cavern of the subconscious, in the dense hill of matter, corrupting even Sarama, the hound of heaven, the luminous intuition, when she comes on their track to the cave of the Panis.

But the conception of this hymn belongs to a stage in our inner progress when the Panis have been exceeded and even the Vrtras or Coverers who seclude from us our full powers and activities and Vala who holds back the Light, are already over- passed. But there are even then powers that stand in the way of our perfection. They are the powers of limitation, the Confiners or Censurers, who, without altogether obscuring the rays or damming up the energies, yet seek by constantly affirming the deficiencies of our self-expression to limit its field and set up the progress realised as an obstacle to the progress to come. Madhuchchandas calls upon Indra to remove the defect and affirm in its place an increasing illumination.

The principle which Indra represents is Mind-Power released from the limits and obscurations of the nervous consciousness. It is this enlightened Intelligence which fashions right or perfect Forms of thought or of action not deformed by the nervous impulses, not hampered by the falsehoods of sense. The image presented is that of a cow giving abundantly its yield to the milker of the herds. The word *go* means in Sanskrit both a cow and a ray of light. This double sense is used by the Vedic symbolists to suggest a double figure which was to them more than a figure; for light, in their view, is not merely an apt poetic image of thought, but is actually its physical form. Thus, the herds that are milked are the Herds of the Sun, - Surya, God of the revelatory and intuitive mind, or else of Dawn, the goddess who manifests the solar glory. The Rishi desires from Indra a daily increase of this light of Truth by his fuller activity pouring rays in a rich yield Upon the receptive mind.

The activity of the pure illumined Intelligence is sustained and increased by the conscious expression in us of the delight in divine existence and divine activity typified by the Soma-wine. As the Intelligence feeds upon it, its action becomes an intoxicated ecstasy of inspiration by which the rays come pouring abundantly and joyously in. "Light-giving indeed is the intoxication of thee in thy rapture."

For then it is possible, breaking beyond the limitations still insisted upon by the Confiners, to arrive at something of the finalities of knowledge possible to the illumined intelligence. Right thoughts, right sensibilities, - this is the full sense of the word *sumati*; for the Vedic *mati* includes not only the thinking, but also the emotional parts of mentality. *Sumati* is a light in the thoughts; it is also a bright gladness and kindness in the soul. But in this passage the stress of the



sense is upon right thought and not on the emotions. It is necessary, however, that the progress in right thinking should commence in the field of consciousness already attained; there must not be flashes and dazzling manifestations which by going beyond Our Powers elude expression in right form and confuse the receptive mind. Indra must be not only illuminer, but a fashioner of right thought- formations, *surupakrtnu*.

The Rishi, next, turning to a comrade in the collective Yoga, or, perhaps, addressing his Own mind, encourages him or it to pass beyond the Obstruction of the adverse suggestions opposed to him and by questioning the divine Intelligence progress to the highest good which it has already given to others. For it is that Intelligence which clearly discerns and can solve or remove all still-existing confusion and obscuration. Swift of movement, intense, energetic, it does not by its energy stumble in its paths like the impulses of the nervous consciousness. Or perhaps it is rather meant that owing to its invincible energy it does not succumb to the attacks whether of the Coverers or of the powers that limit.

Next are described the results towards which the seer aspires. With this fuller light opening on to the finalities of mental knowledge the powers of Limitation will be satisfied and of them- selves will withdraw, consenting to the farther advance and to the new luminous activities. They will say, in effect, "Yes, now you have the right which we were hitherto justified in denying. Not only in the fields won already, but in other and untrod provinces pursue then your conquering march. Repose this action wholly on the divine Intelligence', not upon your lower capacities. For it is the greater surrender which gives you the greater right."

The word *arata*, move or strive, like its congeners *ari*, *arya*, *arya*, *arata*, *arani*, expresses the central idea of the Veda. The root *ar* indicates always a movement of effort or of struggle or a state of surpassing height or excellence; it is applied to rowing, ploughing, fighting, lifting, climbing. The Aryan then is the man who seeks to fulfil himself by the Vedic action, the internal and external *karma* or *apas*, which is of the nature of a sacrifice to the gods. But it is also imaged as a journey, a march, a battle, a climbing upwards. The Aryan man labours towards heights, fights his way on in a march which is at once a progress forward and an ascent. That is his Aryahood, his *arete*, virtue, to use a Greek word derived from the same root *Arata*, with the rest of the phrase, might be translated, "Out and push forward in other fields".

The idea is taken up again, in the subtle Vedic fashion of thought-connections by word-echoes, with the *arih krstayah* of the next verse. These are, I think, not the Aryan nations on earth, although that sense too is possible when the idea is that of a collective or national Yoga, but the powers that help man in his ascent, his



spiritual kindred bound to him as comrades, allies, brothers, yoke-fellows (*sakhayah, yujah, jamayah*), for his aspiration is their aspiration and by his completeness they are fulfilled. As the Restrainers are satisfied and give way, so they too, satisfied, must affirm finally their task accomplished by the fullness of human bliss, when the soul shall rest in the peace of Indra that comes with the Light, the peace of a perfected mentality standing as upon heights of consummated consciousness and Beatitude.

Therefore is the divine Ananda poured out to be made swift and intense in the system and offered to Indra for the support of his intensities. For it is this profound joy manifest in the inner sensations that gives the ecstasy by which the man or the God grows strong. The divine Intelligence will be able to move forward in the journey yet incompleting and will return the gift by fresh powers of the Beatitude descending upon the friend of God.

For it was in this strength that the Divine Mind in man destroyed all that opposed, as coverers or besiegers, its hundred fold activities of will and of thought; in this strength is protected afterwards the rich and various possessions already won in past battles from the *atris* and *dasyus*, devourers and plunderers of our gains.

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Although, continues Madhuchchhandas, that Intelligence is already thus rich and variously stored we seek to increase yet more its force of abundance, removing the Restrainers as well as the *Vrtras*, so that we may have the full and assured possession of our riches.

For this Light is, in its entire greatness free from limitation, a continent of felicity; this Power is that which befriends the human soul and carries it safe through the battle, to the end of its march, to the summit of its aspiration.





***Indra, thought forces (RV 1.171)***

1. To you I come with this obeisance, by the perfect word I seek right mentality from the swift in the passage. Take delight, O Maruts, in the things of knowledge, lay aside your wrath, unyoke your steeds.
2. Lo, the hymn of your affirmation, O Maruts; it is fraught with my obeisance, it was framed by the heart, it was established by the mind, O ye gods. Approach these my words and embrace them with the mind; for of submission are you the increasers.
3. Affirmed let the Maruts be benign to us, affirmed the lord of plenitude has become wholly creative of felicity. Upward may our desirable delights be uplifted, O Maruts, upward all our days by the will towards victory.
4. I, mastered by this mighty one, trembling with the fear of Indra, O Maruts, put far away the offerings that for you had been made intense. Let your grace be upon us.
5. Thou by whom the movements of the mind grow conscient and brilliant in our mornings through the bright power of the continuous Dawns, O Bull of the herd establish by the Maruts inspired knowledge in us—by them in their energy thou energetic, steadfast, a giver of might.
6. Do thou, O Indra, protect the Powers in their increased might; put away thy wrath against the Maruts, by them in thy forcefulness upheld, who have right perceptions. May we find the strong impulsion that shall break swiftly through.

**COMMENTARY**

A Sequel to the colloquy of Indra and Agastya, this sukta is Agastya's hymn of propitiation to the Maruts whose sacrifice he had interrupted at the bidding of the mightier deity. Less directly, it is connected in thought with the 165th hymn of the (First) Mandala, the colloquy of Indra and the Maruts, in which the supremacy of the Lord of Heaven is declared and these lesser shining hosts are admitted as subordinate powers who impart to men their impulsion towards the high truths which belong to Indra. "Giving the energy of your breath to their thoughts of varied light, become in them impellers to the knowledge of my truths. Whensoever the doer becomes active for the work and, the intelligence of the thinker creates us in him, O Maruts, move surely towards that illumined seer", - such is the closing word of the colloquy, the final injunction of Indra to



the inferior deities.

These verses fix clearly enough the psychological function of the Maruts. They are not properly gods of thought, rather gods of energy; still, it is in the mind that their energies become effective. To the uninstructed Aryan worshipper, the Maruts were powers of wind, storm and rain; it is the images of the tempest that are most commonly applied to them and they are spoken of as the Rudras, the fierce, impetuous ones, - a name that they share with the god of Force, Agni. Although Indra is described sometimes as the eldest of the Maruts, - *indrajyestho marudganah*, - yet they would seem at first to belong rather to the domain of Vayu, the Wind-God, who in the Vedic system is the Master of Life, inspirer of that Breath or dynamic energy, called the Prana, which is represented in man by the vital and nervous activities. But this is only a part of their physiognomy. Brilliance, no less than impetuosity, is their characteristic. Everything about them is lustrous, themselves, their shining weapons, their golden ornaments, their resplendent cars. Not only do they send down the rain, the waters, the abundance of heaven, and break down the things best established to make way for new movements and new formations, - functions which, for the rest, they share with other gods, Indra, Mitra, Varuna, -but, like them, they also are friends of Truth, creators of Light. It is so that the Rishi, Gotama Rahugana, prays to them, "O ye who have the flashing strength of the Truth, manifest that by your might; pierce with your lightning the Rakshasa. Conceal the concealing darkness, repel every devourer, create the Light for which we long" (1.86.9,10). And in another hymn, Agastya says to them, "They carry with them the sweetness (of the Ananda) as their eternal offspring and play out their play, brilliant in the activities of knowledge" (1.166.2). The Maruts, therefore, are energies of the mentality, energies which make for knowledge. Theirs is not the settled truth, the diffused light, but the movement, the search, the lightning-flash, and, when Truth is found, the many-sided play of its separate illuminations.

We have seen that Agastya in his colloquy with Indra speaks more than once of the Maruts. They are Indra's brothers, and therefore the god should not strike at Agastya in his struggle towards perfection. They are his instruments for that perfection, and as such Indra should use them. And in the closing formula of submission and reconciliation, he prays to the god to parley again with the Maruts and to agree with them so that the sacrifice may proceed in the order and movement of the divine Truth towards which it is directed. The crisis, then, that left so powerful an impression on the mind of the seer, was in the nature of a violent struggle in which the higher divine Power confronted Agastya and the Maruts and opposed their impetuous advance. There has been wrath and strife between the divine Intelligence that governs the world and the vehement aspiring powers of Agastya's mind. Both would have the human being reach his goal; but not as the inferior divine powers choose must that march be directed, -



rather as it has been firmly willed and settled above by the secret Intelligence that always possesses for the manifested intelligence that still seeks. Therefore the mind of the human being has been turned into a battlefield for greater Powers and is still quivering with the awe and alarm of that experience.

The submission to Indra has been made; Agastya now appeals to the Maruts to accept the terms of the reconciliation, so that the full harmony of his inner being may be restored. He approaches them with the submission he has rendered to the greater god and extends it to their brilliant legions. The perfection of the mental state and its powers which he desires, their clearness, rectitude, truth-observing energy, is not possible without the swift coursing of the Thought-Forces in their movement towards the higher knowledge. But that movement, mistakenly directed, not rightly illumined, has been checked by the formidable opposition of Indra and has departed for a time out of Agastya's mentality. Thus repelled, the Maruts have left him for other sacrificers; elsewhere shine their resplendent chariots, in other fields thunder the hooves of their wind-footed steeds. The Seer prays to them to put aside their wrath, to take pleasure once more in the pursuit of knowledge and in its activities; not passing him by any more, let them unyoke their steeds, descend and take their place on the seat of the sacrifice, assume their share of the offerings.

For he would confirm again in himself these splendid energies, and it is a hymn of affirmation that he offers them, the *stoma* of the Vedic sages. In the system of the Mystics, which has partially survived in the schools of Indian Yoga, the Word is a power, the Word creates. For all creation is expression, everything exists already in the secret abode of the Infinite, *guha hitam*, and has only to be brought out here in apparent form by the active consciousness. Certain schools of Vedic thought even suppose the worlds to have been created by the goddess Word and sound as first etheric vibration to have preceded formation. In the Veda itself there are passages which treat the poetic measures of the sacred mantras, - *anustuph*, *tristuph*, *jagati*, *gayatri*, - as symbolic of the rhythms in which the universal movement of things is cast.

By expression then we create and men are even said to create the gods in themselves by the mantra. Again, that which we have created in our consciousness by the Word, we can fix there by the Word to become part of ourselves and effective not only in our inner life but upon the outer physical world. By expression we form, by affirmation we establish. As a power of expression the word is termed *gih* or *vacas*; as a power of affirmation, *stoma*.

In either aspect it is named *manma* or *mantra*, expression of thought in mind, and *brahman*, expression of the heart or the soul, - for this seems to have been the earlier sense of the word *brahman*, afterwards applied to the Supreme Soul or Universal Being. The process of formation of the mantra is described in the



second verse along with the conditions of its effectivity. Agastya presents the *stoma*, hymn at once of affirmation and of submission, to the Maruts. Fashioned by the heart, it receives its just place in the mentality through confirmation by the mind. The mantra, though it expresses thought in mind, is not in its essential part a creation of the intellect. To be the sacred and effective word, it must have come as an inspiration, from the supramental plane, termed in Veda, *rtam*, the Truth, and have been received into the superficial consciousness either through the heart or by the luminous intelligence, *manisa*. The heart in Vedic psychology is not restricted to the seat of the emotions; it includes all that large tract of spontaneous mentality, nearest to the subconscious in us, out of which rise the sensations, emotions, instincts, impulses and all those intuitions and inspirations that travel through these agencies before, they arrive at form in the intelligence. This is the "heart" of Veda and Vedanta, *hrdaya*, *hrd*, or *brahman*. There in the present state of mankind the Purusha is supposed to be seated centrally. Nearer to the vastness of the subconscious, it is there that, in ordinary mankind, - man not yet exalted to a higher plane where the contact with the Infinite is luminous, intimate and direct, - the inspirations of the Universal Soul can most easily enter in and most swiftly take possession of the individual soul. It is therefore by the power of the heart that the mantra takes form. But it has to be received and held in the thought of the intelligence as well as in the perceptions of the heart; for not till the intelligence has accepted and even brooded upon it, can that truth of thought which the truth of the Word expresses be firmly possessed or normally effective. Fashioned by the heart, it is confirmed by the mind.

But another approval is also needed. The individual mind has accepted; the effective powers of the Cosmos must also accept. The words of the hymn retained by the mind form a basis for the new mental posture from which the future thought- energies have to proceed. The Maruts must approach them and take their stand upon them, the mind of these universal Powers approve and unite itself with the formations in the mind of the individual. So only can our inner or our outer action have its supreme effectivity.

Nor have the Maruts any reason to refuse their assent or to persist in the prolongation of discord. Divine powers who themselves obey a higher law than the personal impulse, it should be their function, as it is their essential nature, to assist the mortal in his surrender to the Immortal and increase obedience to the Truth, the Vast towards which his human faculties aspire.

Indra, affirmed and accepted, is no longer in his contact with the mortal a cause of suffering; the divine touch is now utterly creative of peace and felicity. The Maruts too, affirmed and accepted, must put aside their violence. Assuming their gentler forms, benignant in their action, not leading the soul through strife and disturbance, they too must become purely beneficent as well as puissant



agencies.

This complete harmony established, Agastya's Yoga will proceed triumphantly on the new and straight path prescribed to it. It is always the elevation to a higher plane that is the end, - higher than the ordinary life of divided and egoistic sensation, emotion, thought and action. And it is to be pursued always with the same, puissant will towards victory over all that resists and hampers. But it must be an integral exaltation. All the joys that the human being seeks with his desire, all the active energies of his waking consciousness, - his days, as it is expressed in the brief symbolic language of the Veda, - must be uplifted to that higher plane. By *vanani* are meant the receptive sensations seeking in all objectivities the Ananda whose quest is their reason for existence. These, too, are not excluded. Nothing has to be rejected, all has to be raised to the pure levels of the divine consciousness.

Formerly Agastya had prepared the sacrifice for the Maruts under other conditions. He had put their full potentiality of force into all in him that he sought to place in the hands of the Thought-Powers; but because of the defect in his sacrifice he had been met midway by the Mighty One as by an enemy and only after fear and strong suffering had his eyes been opened and his soul surrendered. Still vibrating with the emotions of that experience, he has been compelled to renounce the activities which he had so puissantly prepared. Now he offers the sacrifice again to the Maruts, but couples with that brilliant Name the more puissant godhead of Indra. Let the Maruts then bear no wrath for the interrupted sacrifice but accept this new and more justly guided action.

Agastya turns, in the two closing verses, from the Maruts to Indra. The Maruts represent the progressive illumination of human mentality, until from the first obscure movements of mind which only just emerge out of the darkness of the subconscious, they are transformed into an image of the luminous consciousness of which Indra is the Purusha, the representative Being. Obscure, they become conscient; twilit, half-lit or turned into misleading reflections, they surmount these deficiencies and put on the divine brilliance. This great evolution is effected in Time gradually, in the mornings of the human spirit, by the unbroken succession of the Dawns. For Dawn in the Veda is the goddess symbolic of new openings of divine illumination on man's physical consciousness. She alternates with her sister Night; but that darkness itself is a mother of light and always Dawn comes to reveal what the black-browed Mother has prepared. Here, however, the seer seems to speak of continuous dawns, not broken by these intervals of apparent rest and obscurity. By the brilliant force of that continuity of successive illuminations the mentality of man ascends swiftly into fullest light. But always the force which has governed and made possible the transformation, is the puissance of Indra. It is that supreme Intelligence which through the



Dawns, through the Maruts, has been pouring itself into the human being. Indra is the Bull of the radiant herd, the Master of the thought-energies, the Lord of the luminous dawns.

Now also let Indra use the Maruts as his instruments for the illumination. By them let him establish the supramental knowledge of the seer. By their energy his energy will be supported in the human nature and he will give that nature his divine firmness, his divine force, so that it may not stumble under the shock or fail to contain the vaster play of puissant activities too great for our ordinary capacity.

The Maruts, thus reinforced in strength, will always need the guidance and protection of the superior Power. They are the Purushas of the separate thought-energies, Indra the one Purusha of all thought-energy. In him they find their fullness and their harmony. Let there then be no longer strife and disagreement between this whole and these parts. The Maruts, accepting Indra, will receive from him the right perception of the things that have to be known. They will not be misled by the brilliance of a partial light or carried too far by the absorption of a limited energy. They will be able to sustain the action of Indra as he puts forth his force against all that may yet stand between the soul and its consummation.

So in the harmony of these divine Powers and their aspirations may humanity find that impulsion which shall be strong enough to break through the myriad oppositions of this world and, in the individual with his composite personality or in the race, pass rapidly on towards the goal so constantly glimpsed but so distant even to him who seems to himself almost to have attained.

### **Mind - its nature and function in Indian thought**

Before explaining the characteristics of the deity of the Divine Mind, we will have a brief discussion of the concept of human mind in Indian thought. Even though there are numerous systems of Indian spiritual thought, and metaphysics, all of them, more or less, share the same concept. "The (human) mind is not an instrument of knowledge, it is incapable of finding knowledge, but it must be moved by knowledge. Knowledge belongs to a much higher domain than that of the human mind, far above the domain of pure ideas. The mind has to be silent and attentive to receive knowledge from above and manifest it. For it is an instrument of formation, of organization and action and it is in these functions that it attains its full value and real usefulness." [Mother, CW, Vol. 12, pp. 3]

The three key functions of mind are organization, formation, and action. Let us





focus on its first task, the organization. The mind with the power of reasoning takes any topic, divides it into different aspects, and contrasts them, looks for consistency among them, rearranges them, etc. The key idea behind all major discoveries in science, metaphysics, philosophy, comes from levels of intuition and higher mind which are all very much above the human mind. But there is nothing definitive about the details of the metaphysical systems or philosophies. They are all "turbaned with doubt." As Sri Aurobindo says, "What men call knowledge is the reasoned acceptance of false appearance. Wisdom looks behind the veil and sees." "Either do not give the name of knowledge to your beliefs only and of error, ignorance or charlatanism to the beliefs of others; or do not rail at the dogmas of the sects and their intolerance." [Sri Aurobindo; Thoughts and Aphorisms, 1982 edition, p. 4]. One person receives a key idea and develops an entire system based on this idea. He and his followers think that all persons who do not believe are ideological, stupid, etc. Then another creative person comes and he begins with an idea which completely contradicts the earlier idea and builds another "complete" system. This sort of situation happens fairly often in all branches of modern thought, metaphysics, philosophy, science and mathematics. Let us take an example from mathematics which is the subject often perceived to be based on pure reason. One of the key ideas behind the geometry of Euclid is that no more than one straight line can be drawn going through two given points. The truth behind the idea is often considered self-evident, especially because of the widespread use of the results of Euclidean geometry in everyday life. Hence, Euclid's geometry reigned supreme for about eighteen centuries until the great mathematician Riemann developed another geometry which begins with the negation of the key idea of Euclid, i.e., Riemann assumed that there exist pairs of points through which numerous lines could be drawn. This is the Riemann Geometry which has numerous applications of its own. Hence systems of thought based on mutually contradictory first principles can be developed and no one can say that one is more "truthful" than the other. But in a particular situation or application one system may be better than the other. The distinction between the absolute truth and the relative truth is needed in different circumstances. They used the word *satyam* for the absolute truth; the Seers perceived that at any point of space and time and circumstance, one particular type of action is better than another and they called this action as "*rtam*", often translated as the "Right." *rtam* embodies the truth of action valid at different places and time.

Investigation is only one of the functions of the mind. Its other two functions are formation and action. There are several widespread misconceptions about the role of reason in action. It is said that every rational person evaluates the given situation objectively and comes to a course of action needed on that occasion based on reason. In Indian thought, such a view is considered as simplistic. Each one of us is made up of different personalities, as it were. One



part may want one to be a respectable member of the community, another may want to enjoy the pleasures, still another may want to involve in creative endeavors. In most of us there is no peace between these warring factions. When a situation for action arises, the appropriate action is decided upon whichever personality in us is dominating at that time. Once the decision for action is done, reason is called upon to come up with justifications for this action. Later we convince ourselves that the course of action was "best" under the circumstances. "Our blind or erring government of life, a loose republic of wants and needs, ...bowed to the uncertain sovereign mind." (Savitri, Bk. 7, Ch. 5)

A similar misconception is there about the so-called "objective evaluation of situation" which precedes action. The close connection between mental formations and action is well recognized in Indian thought. We commonly label the daydreams, imagination, the thought formations in our subconscious mind which suddenly bubbles up, nightmares, dreams, etc. as mental formations and think of them as irrelevant to the "real world" dealing with action. But the Indian psychologists claim that these mental formations which are never formally expressed which may often be not recognized, dictate the course of action. For instance, consider a person having some health problems. There are two dominant views regarding health and disease. According to the first view, propounded by the ancient Indian science of *ayurveda* (the science of longevity), every human being is designed to enjoy adequate health, provided s/he has a minimal knowledge of the functioning of the overall personality made up of several layers and s/he takes sufficient care. There is a condition of perfect health which anyone can enter and attain. It is not that every person of this age did not suffer headache or fever. The idea is that the overall system is robust and it will come back to the normal (good) state of health, provided there are no adverse movements in the way of life of the individual. The second view, proposed by the modern Western doctors, is that a human being is a very fragile machine which is invaded by millions and billions of harmful entities like virus and bacteria. They attack by each family of virus or bacteria needs a different chemical preparation to cure it. The disease is caused by external agents and hence external agents like drugs are needed to cure it. The way of life of the person does not come into the picture at all. These ideas are never stated in such clear-cut terms, but one or the other dominates us. The Indian psychologists say that the people who have a strong belief in the idea of perfect health also have access to helpful psychic forces which can counteract and withstand any jolts to the health caused by external agents like bacteria whose presence is not denied. According to these scientists, the disease is not caused by the virus; rather the protective armour provided by your mental formation of "perfect health" has had chinks in it so that the bacterial attacks caused by fever. Restoring the faith in the condition of perfect health is the first step in the



curative property.

The power of mental formations is recognized by the Western authors who publish their books in the alternative press, i.e., the press not controlled by the academics of the current medical establishment. Even the powers of mental formation have been recognized and used successfully in several instances. For instance, the use of "mental visualization" in training for athletic events are well known. A swimmer, instead of practicing in a swimming pool, may sit in a chair and mentally visualize in great detail every step of the swimming activity and this visualization is often more effective than the actual physical activity.





## Soma

 [Nature of Soma](#)

 [Lord of Delight](#)

### Nature of Soma

Soma is an enigmatic *deva*. The Occidentals have treated Soma as nothing but a plant whose creepers, on being squeezed, yield a juice which is intoxicating. There are numerous passages where Soma occurs with the word *suta* meaning pressed or squeezed. It is said that Indra drinking this juice becomes intoxicated and in his intoxication kills the adversary Vrtra. There are some references to Indra killing Vrtra after drinking Soma. The verses on Soma number more than 1,200, including all the verses in the entire ninth mandala consisting of 114 *suktas* or 1,108 verses. Reading carefully all the epithets to Soma in these verses gives a completely different picture. Let us begin with what RV has to say about whether the Soma is a herb or not, by quoting the famous verse (10.85.3) in the hymn titled "marriage of *Surya*"

"Laymen or those addicted to rituals may regard Soma as a creeper which is crushed for getting its juice for use in the ritual. But to the wise poets Soma is not something to be drunk."

The clue to its deeper meaning is indicated by the common epithet for Soma, *vanaspati*, the lord of *vana*; *vana* means in Sanskrit both herb and delight. *Kena* Upanishad (4.6) uses *vana* in the sense of delight. Soma in the deeper sense is the Lord of Delight, the Delight of Existence. In RV, every aspect of existence has an inherent delight, the idea popularised later in the *Taittiriya* Upanishad. Every action exerts a pressure on existence; this squeezing, *suta*, releases the Soma or bliss contained in that aspect of creation. We feel joy in work because of this released delight, Soma.

Here we recognise that action is done primarily by the *devas* and the humans are only subsidiary players; we should free the released Soma from our claim. This declaration, "this is not mine", is the way of purifying the Soma, purifying it of our attachment. This purified Soma is offered to the *deva*, especially Indra, the Lord of Divine Mind. This delight exhilarates Indra who takes steps to destroy the forces of ignorance, like Vrtra and *Vala*, the kill-joys or misers who do not want the supreme knowledge *go* and the energies *apah* (waters) to reach all human beings.

We will quote some verses in RV which bring out the power of Soma. Rigveda



speaks of Soma in (9.96) in the *vibhutiyoga* style as in *Bhagawad Gita*:

"Brahman among *devas*, leader among the seer-poets,

Sage among the wise, the bull among the animals,

The falcon among vultures, the axe in the woods,

Soma sings over the purifier. (9.96.3)"

"By Soma are *jdityas* strong and by Soma the earth is mighty;

This Soma is placed in the midst of all these Constellations, (*Nakshatra*).  
(10.85.2)"

"Soma advances heroic with his swift chariots by the force of subtle thought to the perfected activity of Indra. (9.15.1)"

"You are the ocean, you reveal everything; Under thy law are the five places;

Thou transcends heaven and earth;

Purifier, there are the Lights, there the Sun. (9.86.29)"

"Giving birth to the luminous world of heaven.

Giving birth to the Sun in the Waters.

The Brilliant one *Hari* clothes himself with the Waters and the Rays. (9.42.1)"

"Giving birth" means manifesting these energies in the human being.

Soma is connected to moon; ""cool moon-rays which cause delight among lovers" is a common phrase.

"Those who are utterly perfected in Works taste the enjoyment of his honey-sweetness. (9.83.4)"

"His swift ecstasies foster the soul that purifies him;

He ascends to the high level of Heaven by the conscious heart.

This is the supreme dappled bull that makes the Dawn to shine out. " (9.83.3)



We can combine all the different quotes and understand why persons who merely squeeze the Soma herb cannot know this delight. Only the person who has done *tapas* can release the delight. Delight encompasses everything. Delight makes the Sun shine as the *Taittiriya* Upanishad declares. Delight is the basis of everything. Soma denotes the delight released from actions or works, Ananda refers to Delight in its entirety.

Soma's connection with Knowledge and Light is contained in many hymns.

"Soma, we know thee pre-eminently with our understanding.

You lead us along the straight path. (1.91.1)"

"You are the master of all-existence *satpati*. You are the slayer of Vrtra and the auspicious will in action. (1.91.5)"

"Soma, thou hast generated all the delights *Vana*, the energies *apah* and the Light *go*;

You have dispelled the darkness with thy Light;

You have extended the vast Mid-world (in man). (1.91.22)"

### **Soma, Lord of Delight and Immortality (RV 9.83)**

1. Wide spread out for thee is the sieve of thy purifying, O Master of the soul; becoming in the creature thou pervadest his members all through. He tastes not that delight who is unripe and whose body has not suffered in the heat of the fire; they alone are able to bear that and enjoy it who have been prepared by the flame.
2. The strainer through which the heat of him is purified is spread out in the seat of Heaven; its threads shine out and stand extended. His swift ecstasies foster the soul that purifies him; he ascend to the high level of Heaven by the conscious heart.
3. This is the supreme dappled Bull that makes the Dawns to shine out, the Male that bears the worlds of the becoming and seeks the plenitude; the Fathers who had the forming knowledge made a form of him by that power of knowledge which is his; strong in vision they set him within as a child to be born.
4. As the Gandharva he guards his true seat; as the supreme and wonderful One he keeps the births of the gods; Lord of the inner setting, by the inner





setting he seizes the enemy. Those who are utterly perfected in works taste the enjoyment of his honey-sweetness.

5. Thou in whom is the food, thou art that divine food, thou art the vast, the divine home; wearing heaven as a robe thou encompassest the march of the sacrifice. King with the sieve of thy purifying for thy chariot thou ascendest to the plenitude; with thy thousand burning brilliances thou conquerest the vast knowledge.

### COMMENTARY

It is a marked, an essential feature of the Vedic hymns that, although the Vedic cult was not monotheistic in the modern sense of the word, yet they continually recognise, sometimes quite openly and simply, sometimes in a complex and difficult fashion, always as an underlying thought, that the many godheads whom they invoke are really one Godhead, - One with many names, revealed in many aspects, approaching man in the mask of many divine personalities. Western scholars, puzzled by this religious attitude which presents no difficulty whatever to the Indian mind, have invented, in order to explain it, a theory of Vedic henotheism. The Rishis, they thought, were polytheists, but to each God at the time of worshipping him they gave pre-eminence and even regarded him as in a way the sole deity. This invention of henotheism is the attempt of an alien mentality to understand and account for the Indian idea of one Divine Existence who manifests Himself in many names and forms, each of which is for the worshipper of that name and form the one and supreme Deity. That idea of the Divine, fundamental to the Puranic religions, was already possessed by our Vedic forefathers.

The Veda already contains in the seed the Vedantic conception of the Brahman. It recognises an Unknowable, a timeless Existence, the Supreme which is neither today nor tomorrow, moving in the movement of the Gods, but itself vanishing from the attempt of the mind to seize it (1.170.1). It is spoken of in the neuter as That and often identified with the Immortality, the supreme triple Principle, the vast Bliss to which the human being aspires. The Brahman is the Unmoving, the Oneness of the Gods. "The Unmoving is born as the Vast in the seat of the Cow (Aditi), ... the vast, the mightiness of the Gods, the One" (3-55.1). "It is the one Existent to whom the seers give different names, Indra, Matarishwan, Agni" (1.164.46).

This Brahman, the one Existence, thus spoken of impersonally in the neuter, is also conceived as the Deva, the supreme Godhead, the Father of things who appears here as the Son in the human soul. He is the Blissful One to whom the



movement of the Gods ascends, manifest as at once the Male and the Female, *vr̥san*, *dhenu*. Each of the Gods is a manifestation, an aspect, a personality of the one Deva. He can be realised through any of his names and aspects, through Indra, through Agni, through Soma; for each of them being in himself all the Deva and only in his front or aspect to us different from the others contains all the gods in himself.

Thus Agni is hymned as the supreme and universal Deva. "Thou O Agni, art Varuna when thou art born, thou becomest Mitra when thou art perfectly kindled, in thee are all the Gods, O Son of Force, thou art Indra to the mortal who gives the sacrifice. Thou becomest Aryaman when thou bearest the secret name of the Virgins. They make thee to shine with the radiances (the cows, *gobhih*) as Mitra well-established when thou makest of one mind the Lord of the house and his consort. For the glory of thee, O Rudra, the Maruts brighten by their pressure that which is the brilliant and varied birth of thee. That which is the highest seat of Vishnu, by that thou protectest the secret Name of the radiances (the cows, *gonam*). By thy glory, O Deva, the gods attain to right vision and holding in themselves all the multiplicity (of the vast manifestation) taste Immortality. Men set Agni in them as the priest of the sacrifice when desiring (the Immortality) they distribute (to the Gods) the self-expression of the being.... Do thou in thy knowledge extricate the Father and drive away (sin and darkness), he who is borne in us as thy Son, O Child of Force" (5.3). Indra is similarly hymned by Vamadeva and in this eighty-third Sukta of the ninth Mandala, as in several others, Soma too emerges from his special functions as the supreme Deity.

Soma is the Lord of the wine of delight, the wine of immortality. Like Agni he is found in the plants, the growths of earth, and in the waters. The Soma-wine used in the external sacrifice is the symbol of this wine of delight. It is pressed out by the pressing-stone (*adri*, *gravan*) which has a close symbolic connection with the thunderbolt, the formed electric force of Indra also called *adri*. The Vedic hymns speak of the luminous thunders of this stone as they speak of the light and sound of Indra's weapon. Once pressed out as the delight of existence Soma has to be purified through a strainer (*pavitra*) and through the strainer he streams in his purity into the wine bowl (*camu*) in which he is brought to the sacrifice, or he is kept in jars (*kalasa*) for Indra's drinking. Or, sometimes, the symbol of the bowl or the jar is neglected and Soma is simply described as flowing in a river of delight to the seat of the Gods, to the home of Immortality. That these things are symbols is very clear in most of that hymns of the ninth Mandala which are all devoted to the God Soma. Here, for instance, the physical system of the human being is imaged as the jar of the Soma-wine and the strainer through which it is purified is said to be spread out in the seat of



Heaven, *divaspade*.

The hymn begins with an imagery which closely follows the physical facts of the purifying of the wine and its pouring into the jar. The strainer or purifying instrument spread out in the seat of Heaven seems to be the mind enlightened by knowledge (*cetas*); the human system is the jar. *Pavitram te vitatam brahmanaspate*, the strainer is spread wide for thee, O Master of the soul; *prabhur gatrani paryesi visvatah*, becoming manifest thou pervadest or goest about the limbs everywhere. Soma is addressed here as Brahmanaspati, a word sometimes applied to other gods, but usually reserved for Brihaspati, Master of the creative Word. *Brahman* in the Veda is the soul or soul-consciousness emerging from the secret heart of things, but more often the thought, inspired, creative, full of the secret truth, which emerges from that consciousness and becomes thought of the mind, *manma*. Here, however, it seems to mean the soul itself. Soma, Lord of the Ananda, is the true creator who possesses the soul and brings out of it a divine creation. For him the mind and heart, enlightened, have been formed into a purifying instrument; freed from all narrowness and duality the consciousness in it has been extended widely to receive the full flow of the sense-life and mind-life and turn it into pure delight of the true existence, the divine, the immortal Ananda.

So received, sifted, strained, the Soma-wine of life turned into Ananda comes pouring into all the members of the human system as into a wine-jar and flows through all of them completely in their every part. As the body of a man becomes full of the touch and exultation of strong wine, so all the physical system becomes full of the touch and exultation of this divine Ananda. The words *prabhu* and *vibhu* in the Veda are used not in the later sense, "lord", but in a fixed psychological significance like *pracetas* and *vicetas* or like *prajnana* and *vijnana* in the later language. "Vibhu" means becoming, or coming into existence pervasively, "Prabhu" becoming, coming into existence in front of the consciousness, at a particular point as a particular object or experience. Soma comes out like the wine dropping from the strainer and then pervading the jar; it emerges into the consciousness concentrated at some particular point, *prabhu*, or as some particular experience and then pervades the whole being as Ananda, *vibhu*.

But it is not every human system that can hold, sustain and enjoy the potent and often violent ecstasy of that divine delight. *Ataptatanur na tad amo asnute*, he who is raw and his body not heated does not taste or enjoy that; *srtasa id vahantas tat samasata*, only those who have been baked in the fire bear and entirely enjoy that. The wine of the divine Life poured into the system is a strong, overflowing and violent ecstasy; it cannot be held in the system unprepared for it by strong endurance of the utmost fires of life and suffering



and experience. The raw earthen vessel not baked to consistency in the fire of the kiln cannot hold the Soma-wine; it breaks and spills the precious liquid. So the physical system of the man who drinks this strong wine of Ananda must by suffering and conquering all the torturing heats of life have been prepared for the secret and fiery heats of the Soma; otherwise his conscious being will not be able to hold it; it will spill and lose it as soon as or even before it is tasted or it will break down mentally and physically under the touch.

This strong and fiery wine has to be purified and the strainer for its purifying has been spread out wide to receive it in the seat of heaven, *tapospavitram vitatam divaspade*; its threads or fibres are all of pure light and stand out like rays, *Socanto asya tantavo vyasthiran*. Through these fibres the wine has to come streaming. The image evidently refers to the purified mental and emotional consciousness, the conscious heart, *cetas*, whose thoughts and emotions are the threads or fibres. Dyau or Heaven is the pure mental principle not subjected to the reactions of the nerves and the body. In the seat of Heaven, - the pure mental being as distinguished from the vital and physical consciousness, - the thoughts and emotions become pure rays of true perception and happy psychical vibration instead of the troubled and obscured mental, emotional and sensational reactions that we now possess. Instead of being contracted and quivering things defending themselves from pain and excess of the shocks of experience they stand out free, strong and bright, happily extended to receive and turn into divine ecstasy all possible contacts of universal existence. Therefore it is *divaspade*, in the seat of Heaven, that the Soma-strainer is spread out to receive the Soma.

Thus received and purified these keen and violent juices, these swift and intoxicating powers of the Wine no longer disturb the mind or hurt the body, are no longer spilled and lost but foster and increase, *avanti*, mind and body of their purifier, *avantyasya pavitaram asavah*. So increasing him in all delight of his mental, emotional, sensational and physical being they rise with him through the purified and blissful heart to the highest level or surface of heaven, that is, to the luminous world of Swar where the mind capable of intuition, inspiration, revelation is bathed in the splendours of the Truth (*rtam*), liberated into the infinity of the Vast (brhat). *Divasprstham adhi tisthanti cetasa*.

So far the Rishi has spoken of Soma in his impersonal manifestation, as the Ananda or delight of divine existence in the human being's conscious experience. He now turns, as is the habit of the Vedic Rishis, from the divine manifestation to the divine Person and at once Soma appears as the supreme Personality, the high and universal Deva. *Arurucad usasah prsnir agriyah*, the supreme dappled One, he makes the dawns to shine: *uksa bibharti bhuvanani vajayuh*, he, the Bull, bears the worlds, seeking the plenitude. The word *prsnih*, dappled, is used



both of the Bull, the supreme Male, and of the Cow, the female Energy; like all words of colour, *sveta, sukra, hari, harit, krsna, hiranyaya*, in the Veda it is symbolic; colour, *varna*, has always denoted quality, temperament, etc., in the language of the Mystics. The dappled Bull is the Deva in the variety of his manifestation, many-hued. Soma is that first supreme dappled Bull, generator of the world of the becoming, for from the Ananda, from the all-blissful One they all proceed; delight is the parent of the variety of existences. He is the Bull, *uksan*, a word which like its synonym *vrsan*, means diffusing, generating, impregnating, the father of abundance, the Bull, the Male; it is he who fertilizes Force of consciousness, Nature, the Cow, and produces and bears in his stream of abundance the worlds. He makes the Dawns shine out, - the dawns of illumination, mothers of the radiant herds of the Sun; and he seeks the plenitude, that is to say the fullness of being, force, consciousness, the plenty of the godhead which is the condition of the divine delight. In other words it is the Lord of the Ananda who gives us the splendours of the Truth and the plenitudes of the Vast by which we attain to Immortality.

The fathers who discovered the Truth, received his creative knowledge, his Maya, and by that ideal and ideative consciousness of the supreme Divinity they formed an image of Him in man, they established Him in the race as a child unborn, a seed of the godhead in man, a Birth that has to be delivered out of the envelope of the human consciousness. *mayavino mamire asya, mayaya, nrcaksasah pitaro garbham a dadhuh*. The fathers are the ancient rishis who discovered the Way of the Vedic mystics and are supposed to be still spiritually present presiding over the destinies of the race and, like the gods, working in man for his attainment to Immortality. They are the sages who received the strong divine vision, *nrcaksasah*, the Truth-vision by which they were able to find the Cows hidden by the Panis and to pass beyond the bounds of the *rodasi*, the mental and physical consciousness, to the Superconscient, the Vast Truth and the Bliss (I.36.7; TV.I.13-18; IV.2.15-18 etc.).

Soma is the Gandharva, the Lord of the hosts of delight, and guards the true seat of the Deva, the level or plane of the *Ananda*; *gandharva ittha padam asya raksati*. He is the Supreme, standing out from all other beings and over them, other than they and wonderful, *adbhutih*, and as the supreme and transcendent, present in the worlds but exceeding them, he protects in those worlds the births of the gods, *pati devanam janimani adbhutih*. The "births of the gods" is a common phrase in the Veda by which is meant the manifestation of the divine principles in the cosmos and especially the formation of the godhead in its manifold forms in the human being. In the last verse the Rishi spoke of the Deva as the divine child preparing for birth, involved in the world, in the human consciousness. Here he speaks of Him as the transcendent guarding the world of the Ananda formed in man and the forms of the godhead born in him by the



divine knowledge against the attacks of the enemies, the powers of division, the powers of undelight (*dvisah, aratih*), against the undivine hosts with their formations of a dark and false creative knowledge, Avidya, illusion, (*adevir mayah*).

For he seizes these invading enemies in the net of the inner consciousness; he is the master of a profounder and truer setting of world-truth and world-experience than that which is formed by the senses and the superficial mind. It is by this inner setting that he seizes the powers of falsehood, obscurity and division and subjects them to the law of truth, light and unity; *grbhñati ripum nidhaya nidhapatih*. Men therefore protected by the lord of the Ananda governing this inner nature are able to accord their thoughts and, actions with the inner truth and light and are no longer made to stumble by the forces of the outer crookedness; they walk straight, they become entirely perfect in their works and by this truth of inner working and outer action are able to taste the entire sweetness of existence, the honey, the delight that is the food of the soul. *sukrttama madhuno bhaksam asata*.

Soma manifests here as the offering, the divine food, the wine of delight and immortality, *havih*, and as the Deva, lord of that divine offering (*havismah*), above as the vast and divine seat, the superconscient bliss and truth, *brhat*, from which the wine descends to us. As the wine of delight he flows about and enters into this great march of the sacrifice which is the progress of man from the physical to the superconscient. He enters into it and encompasses it wearing the cloud of the heavenly ether, *nabhas*, the mental principle, as his robe and veil. *havir havismo mahi sadma daivyam, nabho vasanah pari yasi adhvaram*. The divine delight comes to us wearing the luminous-cloudy veil of the forms of mental experience.

In that march or sacrificial ascent the all-blissful Deva becomes the King of all our activities, master of our divinised nature and its energies and with the enlightened conscious heart as his chariot ascends into the plenitude of the infinite and immortal state. Like a Sun or a fire, as Surya, as Agni, engirt with a thousand blazing energies he conquers the vast regions of the inspired truth, the superconscient knowledge; *raja pavitraratho vajam aruhah, sahasrabhrstir jayasi sravo brhat*. The image is that of a victorious king, sunlike in force and glory, conquering a wide territory. It is the immortality that he wins for man in the vast Truth-Consciousness, *sravas*, upon which is founded the immortal state. It is his own true seat, *ittha padam asya*, that the God concealed in man conquers ascending out of the darkness and the twilight through the glories of the Dawn into the solar plenitudes.

With this hymn I close this series of selected hymns from the Rigveda. My





object has been to show in as brief a compass as possible the real functions of the Vedic gods, the sense of the symbols in which their cult is expressed, the nature of the sacrifice and its goal, explaining by actual examples the secret of the Veda. I have purposely selected a few brief and easy hymns, and avoided those which have a more striking depth, subtlety and complexity of thought and image, - alike those which bear the psychological sense plainly and fully on their surface and those which by their very strangeness and profundity reveal their true character of mystic and sacred poems. It is hoped that these examples will be sufficient to show the reader who cares to study them with an open mind the real sense of this, our earliest and greatest poetry. By other translations of a more general character it will be shown that these ideas are not merely the highest thought of a few rishis, but the pervading sense and teaching of the Rigveda.





### Sarasvati

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### Introduction

Sarasvati or Sarasvati is described in 72 mantra-verses of Rig Veda Samhita, some of which are repeated in Yajur Veda. Even though there was a river of that name flowing in North India in Rig Vedic times which is now dry, the mantras deal primarily with the goddess of inspiration and this was recognised by the rishis even though the commoners of that age, like the moderns, believe that Sarasvati described in Veda is a mere river or atmost a river-goddess, whatever it may mean.

We will pose here some popular questions and give our answers in the next several sections. The first question is, "what is inspiration, why is it needed?" The more aggressive ones declare, "inspiration is needed only by poets and writers; it is irrelevant for others". It is this attitude of judging an issue without even bothering to get its essentials that is preventing many persons from deriving the benefit of Veda mantras. The attitude of these persons is similar to those who have no interest in the topic of well-ness or health till sickness hits them.

Questions of the second group state, "we have read in the translations of Rig Veda by eminent Western Indologists like Wilson (or even the famous Sayana) that Sarasvati is a physical river which rises in the Himalayas; here and there she may be described as dealing with prose and poetry (described as *gadya padya*, commentary of Sayana on RV (3.54.13)). You state that she represents the power of inspiration. What is your basis? Why should we believe you instead of the earlier mentioned eminent scholars". We give a glimpse of the foundations of the Vedic interpretation according to Sri Aurobindo. The first principle is that we should focus only on the mantras of Rig Veda Samhita and not introduce passages from Purana, Ramayana, Brahmana books like Taittiriya Brahmana etc.,



which are thousands of years later than the Veda mantras. Secondly fix one meaning for each word and not give ten or twenty meanings to the same word as Sayanacharya does to force ritualists meaning he wants. In the fifth section we detail many epithets for Sarasvati from the Veda such as awakening the consciousness (*chetanti*), the thoughts (*dhiya*), etc. All these epithets are consistent with the labeling of Sarasvati as the goddess of inspiration, only a few epithets are consistent with Sarasvati as a physical river.

The questions of the third group state, "There are many stotras of Sarasvati in Purana and Ramayana. There is also the Mahasarasvati stotra in the Durga Saptashati. What is the difference between them and Veda mantra? Why are Veda mantras regarded as more powerful?"

We give the annotated translation of most of the mantras, divided into 3 categories. In the first group, we consider the sukta and mantras specifically dedicated to Sarasvati such as the complete sukta (6.61), (7.95) and (7.96) the subhymns each having 3 mantras in RV (1.3), RV (2.41) and others. We give the detailed translation of all these mantras.

In the Rig Veda there are 10 suktas called Apri suktas in which there is one mantra (in each sukta) dealing with the three goddesses Sarasvati (inspiration), Ila and Mahi or Bharati.

There are 25 mantras dedicated to other gods like Agni or Vishvedevas, in which the word Sarasvati occurs.

### Nature of Inspiration

Inspiration is a power of Truth (*ṣatyam*). Truth is intimately connected with beauty and harmony, *sundaram* and *shivam*, not only at the individual level but at the community level. In a sense Truth is the path and all-round bliss is the goal. Sin or falsehood is merely wrongly inspired emotion, wrongly directed will and action. We tell a lie because our ego tells us that the actual telling of the limited truth on the occasion is not palatable to the emotion. Similarly a person indulges in an illegal or immoral action because the ego directs the will for its own reasons of security. For most of us the central idea of our everyday life is permeated by falsehood. The wrongly directed emotion, will and action leads to a completely distorted results.

Inspiration is that power which leads to a perfect action (perfect with respect to time and space) by means of steps which are not perceivable to our mind. The perfection is all-round; beneficial to the individual and the community,



harmonious. The result of the action directed by inspiration leads to a result pervaded by beauty and harmony.

The action may occur in any field, poetry, carpentry, science, technology, music.

But we cannot order the inspiration to come; it comes to us when it likes; we have to understand its operation for its manifestation.

"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 the truth of being, and out of the truth of being (*satyam*) flows naturally truth of emotion, will and action. This is the central idea of the Veda." (Sri Aurobindo)

### Developing Inspiration

Inspiration cannot be developed by any mechanical procedure. The three mantra verses RV (1.3.10) - RV (1.3.12) give us some hints only to develop the inspiration, that too in stages. The full text and translation of the three verses is in section 8, along with others.

The first step is to become conscious of the work to be done in all its details, i.e., we become aware of the details noting both the things we claim to know and those which we do not know. We must establish some measure of mental tranquillity in us. Then the person has to become conscious that he is an instrument and the real doer is the supreme energy. Even though the supreme spirit or shakti is pouring in the energies, the person is blocking its flow by his feelings of egoism, petty emotion etc. He/she must try to counter the psychological foes like greed, delusion etc., systematically. Then we have to regard the work on hand, in which the inspiration is needed, as a self-offering (*yajna*) to the divine. Next recognize that Sarasvati can give plenty of everything in all possible forms. The Sanskrit word is *vaja*, the plenitude, plenty of everything or all-forms. Hence there is no reason for us to indulge in the inimical acts like hoarding or being greedy, jealous, arrogant etc. We always get our turn, there is no need to be jealous etc. She is also rich in thought or rich in the substance of thought (*dhiyavas*). First she uses her powers to purify (*pavaka*) us, i.e., remove the layers of falsehood embedded in our emotions, will and action. These are all negative thoughts and they can be neutralized by positive thoughts. The falsehood should go. She can do it because she is rich in the substance of thought.

Next she introduces her positive powers of thought and consciousness. She is



the impeller (*chodayitri*) of happy truths (*sunrtanam*) and the awakener in consciousness (*chetanti*) of right mentalising. Sarasvati's power makes us become more and more conscious so that our emotions do not jump to the path of falsehood. She creates in us the right states of emotion and right movement of thought which are in accordance with the supreme Truth. She pours her illumination; she impels the truth to manifest in our emotion, will and action. She thus liberates our life and being (the so called individuality) from falsehood, weakness and limitation. Then only are the un-opened doors of supreme felicity become open.

By this constant awakening and impulsion represented by the word *ketu*, Sarasvati brings down the great flood of Truth into the active consciousness in the human being. She illumines all the aspects with this consciousness. Thus our emotion, will and action become coordinated with this divine truth; and action naturally leads to a stage of perfection consistent with the time and space. Complete perfection cannot come in a single step.

Action is very much necessary even if we have ample inspiration. Completely false is the idea that chanting of the mantra will yield the required physical results without any physical action.

### **Anecdote 1**

We will give here an anecdote of an eminent yogi and engineer (MKG) regarding the play of inspiration. MKG has a bachelor's degree in biology and he has no degree in engineering. Still he became a senior engineer in a company which had collaboration with the famous Japanese company Mitsubishi. Different metals like steel, aluminium, silicon have different properties of strength. The properties of many metals are complimentary, i.e., the properties which are weak in one will be strong in other and vice versa. So combining two or more metals into a single one is called a composite so that the composite has all the good properties of its constituents. But the constituents have to be bonded, a procedure which is a secret of the supplier to the Japanese Company. MKG was faced with developing a composite. He could easily fix the types of the constituents with his intuition. However he had no clue to the bonding. He focussed all his thought to apparently no avail. The next day was Sunday; in the afternoon nap, he distinctly heard the sound 'four' repeatedly. It was around 5 pm. MKG got the clue that, "for bonding, the requisite metals should be dipped in the liquid aluminium-silicon bonding material for about 4 minutes". He went to the workshop and did the experiment. The new composite had properties which even the Japanese material did not have. MKG promptly sent a sample to the head office of the Mitsubishi in Japan. Reply by cable came 2 days later, "we are amazed at your



achievement, we have not been able to develop a composite with such properties. Your product has one hundred and fifty percent strength of our product."

**Other anecdotes:** The biography of the famous fighter for freedom, poet and savant entitled, *The glory of Vasishtha Ganapati Muni* (published by SAKSIVC, 1999) has numerous anecdotes dealing with the inflow of inspiration in a variety of circumstances including the harassment by police, composition of poetry, accidents etc. Many persons who have done some spiritual practice can relate incidents involving inspiration in their lives. The disciples of Sri Aurobindo have written many books detailing their own experiences.

### Understanding Veda - Sri Aurobindo's Approach

The Rig Veda is dated much prior to 4000 B.C.E. Still Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) was the first person to write in detail defending the Rig Veda mantras as dealing with knowledge, specifically the philosophical and psychological wisdom. In addition to writing essays of about 1500 pages, he translated roughly 3000 mantras out of 10,512 in Rig Veda, often giving a detailed explanation for the assignment of the meanings of words.

There are 4 key steps in his unraveling the secret in the Veda:

1. Fundamentally Veda is a spiritual document, Veda is book of knowledge, not of rituals.
2. In the Indian tradition, the rishis to whom the mantras were revealed are regarded as yogins or men of wisdom. However in the current translations of Rig Veda Samhita by Griffith or Wilson who follow closely the Sanskrit commentary of Sayana, many mantra-verses do not have any coherent meaning; there is no coherence between the several mantras in the same sukta. Then there are only two alternatives:
  - a) Accept the validity of ritualist commentary of Sayana in which there is no coherence in many verses in the same sukta and thus accept that rishis are not men and women of wisdom.
  - b) Accept the rishis as men and women of wisdom, accept that mantras are coherent, then automatically reject the supreme authority of the Sayana commentary; the commentary is still very useful even though it is not accepted as the final authority.



Sri Aurobindo clearly prefers the alternative (b). As he would say, the obscurantist tendency in the decadent era is so strong that the mutual exclusiveness of the two alternatives is not even acknowledged; the people want to venerate both the rishis and the commentary of S, but refuse to acknowledge the incoherence in the meanings of the mantras in the commentary.

3) Assignment of meaning for words in the Veda: collect all the verses having a given Samskrt word and assign the most appropriate meaning to it valid in all these verses. Each word should have one meaning. To force his ritualist interpretation, Sayana gives ten to twenty meanings for the same word. For instance he assigns 30 meanings for the word *gau*, cow in popular parlance. In Veda *gau* means a ray of knowledge. Hence Sri Aurobindo translated *gau* as Ray-Cow. Similarly *dhi* in Veda is thought or intellect; S would accept this meaning in some places, but also translate *dhi* as *anna* (food) in many places.

4) Veda reveals its own secret. Trying to understand Veda through the legends in Purana or Ramayana or the Brahmana books leads to incoherent results. The symbolism and aims of these books are different. Brahmana books emphasise rituals only and scarcely acknowledge any wisdom in the mantras. Purana and Ramayana emphasise the strife between rishis or gods. Veda simply states that the Gods overcome the demon of falsehood and help the human beings.

### **Sarasvati is not a mere river - epithets of Sarasvati dealing with consciousness**

**River Sarasvati:** Sarasvati was undoubtedly a mighty river in the Rig Vedic age which flowed from the mountain heights to the sea as declared in RV (7.95.2). The Sarasvati verses were revealed or composed more than eight thousand years before the present era. According to geologists, "this time synchronizes with the first interglacial period in the Holocene age marking the break up of the glaciers and release of the pent up waters which was the source for the rivers Sarasvati and Sindhu. The next three thousand years did not witness major changes in climate as revealed by the lake sediments. At the end of this period, tectonic disturbances caused major changes in drainage. As a consequence the upper course of Sarasvati in the mountain - bound Himalaya was diverted South Eastward to Yamuna; Sutlej, which earlier had joined Sarasvati, changed its course, migrated westward and became a tributary of Indus... The consequence of these changes was the drying up of the river Sarasvati which was cut off from the perennial source of water from the snowy Himalaya. It became an ephemeral stream, and finally lost itself in the sandy desert of Thar." [B.P. Radhakrishna, Jour. Geological Soc. of India, Vol. 51, June 1998]. The drying up of Sarasvati made its inhabitants move westwards resulting in the new civilization- the Indus





Valley Civilisation (3100-1900 BCE). In January 1997, the scientists at the Bhabha Atomic Energy Research Center have reconfirmed the existence of the Sarasvati river and its associated ground water sanctuaries and aquifers by using water samples collected from the deep wells in the Jaisalmer regions and North Eastern Rajasthan to conduct tritium (hydrogen isotope) analysis to establish the quality of water, flow and the age of water [ranging from 4000 to 8000 years before the present era]. More information is available in the monographs, "Vedic Sarasvati River", by Kalyanaraman and "Vedic Sarasvati", by B.P. Radhakrishna and S.S. Merh (ed), published by the Geological Society of India, 1999.

### Epithets

*chodayatri sunrtanam*: impelling happy truths, (1.3.11)

*chetanti sumatinam*: awakening right thinkings, (1.3.11)

*prachetayati ketuna*: makes (us) conscious by constant awakening and impulsion, (1.3.12)

*yaste stana shashayo*: O Sarasvati, the word of yours that is asleep in you, (1.164.49)

*yo ratnadha vasuvid*: the word that holds the ecstasy and knows the substance, (1.164.49)

*divyam suparnam vayasam*: the bird divine of beautiful wings, (addressed to Sarasvati) (1.164.52)

*sarasvatim sadhayantim dhiyam*: perfecting our understanding, (2.3.8)

*prashastim naskridhi*: make us well known, (2.41.16)

*rtavari*: possessed of the truth, (2.41.18)

*sarasvati virapatni dhiyam dhat*: may she, the mate of hero-power, hold our thought, (6.49.7)

*shushmebhihbisakha ivarujat sanum girinam*: by her forces she broke the peaks of mountains (ignorance) like weak fibres, (6.61.2)

*sarasvati devanido ni barhaya*: Sarasvati destroys the censurers of the gods and the creator of illusory forms, (6.61.3)



*dhinam avatryavatu*: May the guardian of thoughts protect us, (6.61.4)

*vrtraghni*: slayer of the demonic covering force Vrtra, (6.61.7)

*atannaheva surya*: she has extended us like the Sun the day, (6.61.9)

*trishadhastha saptadhatu*: abiding in triple session, with seven elements, (6.61.12)

*mahinasu chekite dyumnebhih*: becomes fully conscious by the thoughts, (6.61.13)

*payasa mana a dhak*: do not burn us with knowledge (*payasa*), (6.61.14)

*eka chetat*: she alone became conscious, (7.95.2)

### Sarasvati mantras in the Veda and the prayers in Puranas

There are several prayers or stotras addressed to Sarasvati in the Puranas. Whereas the prayers in the Puranas are composed by some spiritual persons, the Rig Veda mantra directly comes from the supreme ether and are revealed to the rishi. RV (1.164.39) of Rishi Dirghatamas states, "The riks abide in the unchangeable supreme Ether (*parame vyoman*) where are seated all the gods; what can he do with the rik who knows not that?"

There is another mantra RV (1.164.45): "The voice, vak, is measured out in four steps; the wise persons (*brahmana*) know them. Three of them concealed in the profound secrecy cause no movements; the fourth step is what men call the human speech".

Thus the mantras of Rig Veda were not composed but were seen by the seer (*kavi*), the hearer of the Truth (*ṣatyashrut*). Because the *paramevyoman* the abode of the Gods and the original source of the Veda mantras is not a creation of anyone, the Veda mantras are also eternal and all-powerful. Hence the common belief that the mantra is an extraordinary means of achieving all the ends of life.

All these powers associated with the Veda mantras are not associated with any puranic prayer, even the Vishnu Sahasranama or popular verses in praise of Sarasvati.



## Sarasvati in the Tantra Books

The goddess Sarasvati appears in the Tantra as the, 'secret channel or river' (*guptagamini*). Recall the three channels connecting the bottom centre Mooladhara to the centre between the eye-brows Ajna chakra, namely Ida, Pingala and Sushumna. The first two are identified with the subtle currents of the names Ganga and Jamuna. The subtle current flowing in the Sushumna, the middle channel, is Sarasvati. She is asleep normally. When she is activated by spiritual practises, she rises up indicating her manifestation (see RV (1.164.49)). She reaches the ajna chakra and starts to descend. Her descent indicates the manifested inspirational power is being directed to the performance of actions. The importance of the *tantrik* experience and explanation is that it acknowledges that the power of inspiration or Sarasvati is not only in cosmos (*brahmamda*) but also in our subtle body (*pindanda*).





### The Three Goddesses, *Ila*, *Sarasvati*, *Bharati*

These three Goddesses are celebrated together in all the *apri* hymns namely: 1.13.9; 1.142.9; 1.188.8; 2.3.8; 3.4.8; 5.5.8; 7.2.8; 9.5.8; 10.70.8; 10.110.8; Note that *Mahi* and *Bharati* are same. We reproduce below the comments of Sri Kapali Sastry.

The *puranas* speak of no difference between *Bharati* and *Sarasvati*. According to the *puranic* story, *Ila*, male head of the lunar dynasty, son of *Manu*, attained womanhood and became *Ila*. But in the Veda, it is to be noted, these three associated together, conferring Sight, Hearing Vastness on the sacrificer, the *rishi*, have their dwelling in *Svar*. Of these, *Bharati* signified by the term *Mahi*, the divine Power connected with the Vast Light, issuing from the House of *sva*, brings first the consciousness of the vast, *brhat*, to the Seer-Poet; *Ila* favours him with the consciousness-sight, commensurate with this vastness. But *Sarasvati*, the carrier of inspiration makes the seer capable of hearing the divine inspiration, the hearer of Truth.

The truth of *Bharati* or *Mahi* is described in (1.8.8) with the three adjectives *sunrta*, one with true speech, *virapshi*, flowing abundantly, and *gomati*, full of the rays of Light. The entire hymn (1.8) entitled "Indra and *Mahi*" will be discussed in the second volume. Even though *sunrta* is used for *Sarasvati* also in (1.3.11), we have to grasp the distinction between the deities.

*Ila*, *Sarasvati* and *Bharati*, conferring Sight, Hearing and Vastness respectively, are divine, born of the Truth-Light, powers of the Sun of the Light of Truth impeller supreme of the Universe. The adjective *vishvaturtih* (who carries all) used for Her of the Vastness, establishes the relation of *Bharati* to the very Impeller who is sought to impel our thoughts. All these three create supreme happiness-*mayobhuvah*. They are not to be taken as some indistinct or formless divine powers; though they are mutually associated, the seers see their form as distinct, beautiful, *supeshasah*, of good form.

We give below translations of some of the *apri* mantras.

May *Ila*, *Sarasvati*, *Mahi*, the three Goddesses of delight come to the seat, unharmed (1.13.9).

May *Sarasvati* affecting our thought *dhiyam* and Goddesses *Ila* and *Bharati* who carry all to their goal sit on our altar seat and guard our house of refuge by the self-law of things *svadhaya*. (2.3.8)



In unison may *Bharati* with her muses of invocation *bharatibhih*, *Ila* with gods, men and Agni, *Sarasvati* with her powers of inspiration *sarasvatebhirvak*, come down to us; may the three goddesses be seated, (7.2.8) and (3.4.8).

May *Ila*, *Sarasvatii* and *Mahi*, the three Goddesses who create the bliss sit on the sacred seat, they who never err (5.5.8).

May *Bharati* come swiftly to our sacrifice, *Ila* awakening to knowledge like a human thinker and *Sarasvati*, the three Goddesses, --may they sit, perfect in works, on this sacred seat of happy ease (10.110.8).

O ye three Goddesses, sit on the superior seat which we have made delightful for you; may the mother of revelation, *Ila*, and the two goddesses with the luminous feet, *ghrtapadi*, accept our firmly placed offerings and our human worship of sacrifice (10.70.8).

The translations are all due to Sri Aurobindo (HMF). Note in (10.70.8), the usual translation of *ghrtapadi* as having feet of ghee does not make sense.





### Vishnu

- ▣ [Nature of Vishnu](#)
- ▣ [All pervading godhead](#)

#### Nature of Vishnu

In the Rigveda there are forty five mantras to the deity Vishnu spread over seven *suktas*. We will be discussing only the six mantras in the 22nd hymn in the first mandala, (1.22.16)-(1.22.21), popularly known as *shad vaishnavam*.

We will give a brief picture of the functions of Vishnu. Vishnu creates or manifests the universe of seven planes, unveils its laws and maintains the universe under these laws. This happens not only in the macrocosm, but also in the microcosm, the subtle body of man. "Vishnu paces out the vast framework of the inner-worlds in which our soul-action takes place. It is by him and with him that we rise into his highest seats where we find waiting for us the Friend, the Beloved and the Beatific Godhead." [Sri Aurobindo]

The *puranic* triad of Vishnu-Brahmanaspati-Rudra is intimately related to the Vedic triad of Vishnu-Brahmanaspati-Rudra. We give a brief description of the connection. Brahma in the Veda means mantra and Brahmanaspati is the Lord of mantras. In the Veda Brahmanaspati creates all by speech. He brings out all things from the darkness of Inconscience and gives them life-forms and mental-forms.

*Rudra* forcibly leads this creation upwards. He puts down all those who arrogantly obstruct his courses and kills the evil opponents. Though thus terrible, he is beneficent, and compassionate to the distressed.

Vishnu pervades the entire manifestation and organizes it into several planes or worlds, each plane, based on a particular principle. For instance this world, earth, is dominated by matter. The midworld, *antariksha*, is dominated by life-energies, emotional energies etc. The world of heaven, *dyu*, is dominated by the mental energies. The highest station is said to be Vishnu's supreme step. He creates the path by which the mortals can reach the supreme station after traversing the intermediate worlds.

#### Symbolism of Vishnu



"When Vishnu is said to sleep on the folds of the snake *ananta* upon the ocean of sweet milk, *ananta* is clearly seen to be not the common serpent, nor the milk the material sweet milk, nor the ocean an expanse of milky liquid. The symbolic meaning is that the All-pervading Vishnu rests on the coils of the Infinite in the blissful ocean of Eternal Existence. It may be said that the authors of the *puranas* were priests, gross minds who knew not even the truth of the solar and lunar eclipses; how could they be in the know of profound varieties? They mean only the usual physical serpent and the material ocean of real milk and it is we who read into them the symbolic meaning we could point out that there is no necessity for us to imagine so. These poets themselves have imprinted the symbolic thought by means of figures and words and made known impenetrable truths for the benefit of all. Note, those words are: Vishnu means all-pervading, the serpent *Shesha* is *ananta*, the infinite; sweet milk is a symbol of bliss; the ocean is a symbol of the Eternal Existence."

### All pervading godhead (RV 1.154)

1. Of Vishnu now I declare the mighty works, who has measured out the earthly worlds and that higher seat of our self-accomplishing he supports, he the wide-moving, in the threefold steps of his universal movement.
2. That Vishnu affirms on high by his mightiness and he is like a terrible lion that ranges in the difficult places, yea, his lair is on the mountain-tops, he in whose three wide movements all the worlds find their dwelling-place.
3. Let our strength and our thought go forward to Vishnu the all-pervading, the wide-moving Bull whose dwelling- place is on the mountain, he who being One has measured all this long and far-extending seat of our self-accomplishing by only three of his strides.
4. He whose three steps are full of the honey- wine and they perish not but have ecstasy by the self-harmony of their nature; yea, he being One holds the triple principle and earth and heaven also, even all the worlds.
5. May I attain to and enjoy that goal of his movement, the Delight, where souls that seek the godhead have the rapture; for there in that highest step of the wide-moving Vishnu is that Friend of men who is the fount of the sweetness.
6. Those are the dwellings-places of ye twain which we desire as the goal of our journey, where the many-horned herds of Light go travelling; the highest





step of wide-moving Vishnu shines down on us here in its manifold vastness.

### COMMENTARY

The deity of this hymn is Vishnu the all-pervading, who in the Rig-veda has a close but covert connection and almost an identity with the other deity exalted in the later religion, Rudra. Rudra is a fierce and violent godhead with a beneficent aspect which approaches the supreme blissful reality of Vishnu; Vishnu's constant friendliness to man and his helping gods is shadowed by an aspect of formidable violence, - "like a terrible lion ranging in evil and difficult places", - which is spoken of in terms more ordinarily appropriate to Rudra. Rudra is the father of the vehemently-battling Maruts; Vishnu is hymned in the last Sukta of the fifth Mandala under the name of Evaya Marut as the source from which they sprang, that which they become, and himself identical with the unity and totality of their embattled forces. Rudra is the Deva or Deity ascending in the cosmos, Vishnu the same Deva or Deity helping and evoking the powers of the ascent.

It was a view long popularised by European scholars that the greatness of Vishnu and Shiva in the -Puranic theogonies was a later development and that in the Veda these gods have a quite minor position and are inferior to Indra and Agni. It has even become a current opinion among many scholars that Shiva was a later conception borrowed from the Dravidians and represents a partial conquest of the Vedic religion by the indigenous culture it had invaded. These errors arise inevitably as part of the total misunderstanding of Vedic thought for which the old Brahmanic ritualism is responsible and to which European scholarship by the exaggeration of a minor and external element in the Vedic mythology has only given a new and yet more misleading form.

The importance of the Vedic gods has not to be measured by the number of hymns devoted to them or by the extent to which they are invoked in the thoughts of the Rishis, but by the functions which they perform. Agni and Indra to whom the majority of the Vedic hymns are addressed, are not greater than Vishnu and Rudra, but the functions which they fulfill in the internal and external world were the most active, dominant and directly effective for the psychological discipline of the ancient Mystics; this alone is the reason of their predominance. The Maruts, children of Rudra, are not divinities superior to their fierce and mighty Father; but they have many hymns addressed to them and are far more constantly mentioned in connection with other gods, because the function they fulfilled was of a constant and immediate importance in the Vedic discipline. On the other hand, Vishnu, Rudra, Brahmanaspati, the Vedic originals of the later Puranic Triad, Vishnu-Shiva-Brahma provide the conditions of the Vedic work and



assist it from behind the more present and active gods, but are less close to it and in appearance less continually concerned in its daily movements.

Brahmanaspati is the creator by the Word; he calls light and visible cosmos out of the darkness of the inconscient ocean and speeds the formations of conscious being upward to their supreme goal. It is from this creative aspect of Brahmanaspati that the later conception of Brahma the Creator arose.

For the upward movement of Brahmanaspati's formations Rudra supplies the force. He is named in the Veda the Mighty One of Heaven, but he begins his work upon the earth and gives effect to the sacrifice on the five planes of our ascent. He is the Violent One who leads the upward evolution of the conscious being; his force battles against all evil, smites the sinner and the enemy; intolerant of defect and stumbling he is the most terrible of the gods, the one of whom alone the Vedic Rishis have any real fear. Agni, the Kumara, prototype of the Puranic Skanda, is on earth the child of this force of Rudra. The Maruts, vital powers which make fight for themselves by violence, are Rudra's children. Agni and the Maruts are the leaders of the fierce struggle upward from Rudra's first earthly, obscure creation to the heavens of thought, the luminous worlds. But this violent and mighty Rudra who breaks down all defective formations and groupings of outward and inward life, has also a beginner aspect. He is the supreme healer. Opposed, he destroys; called on for aid and propitiated he heals all wounds and all evil and all sufferings. The force that battles is his gift, but also the final peace and joy. In these aspects of the Vedic god are all the primitive materials necessary for the evolution of the Puranic Shiva-Rudra, the destroyer and healer, the auspicious and terrible, the Master of the force that acts in the worlds and the Yogin who enjoys the supreme liberty and peace.

For the formations of Brahmanaspati's word, for the actions of Rudra's force Vishnu supplies the necessary static elements, - Space, the ordered movements of the worlds, the ascending levels, the highest goal. He has taken three strides and in the space created by the three strides has established all the worlds. In these worlds he the all-pervading dwells and gives less or greater room to the action and movements of the gods. When Indra would slay Vrtra, he first prays to Vishnu, his friend and comrade in the great struggle (1.22.19), "O Vishnu, pace out in thy movement with an utter wideness", (IV.18.11), and in that wideness he destroys Vrtra who limits, Vrtra who covers. The supreme step of Vishnu, his highest seat, is the triple world of bliss and light, *paramam padam*, which the wise ones see extended in heaven like a shining eye of vision (1.22.20); it is this highest seat of Vishnu that is the goal of the Vedic journey. Here again the Vedic Vishnu is the natural precursor and sufficient origin of the Puranic Narayana, Preserver and Lord of Love.



In the Veda indeed its fundamental conception forbids the Puranic arrangement of the supreme Trinity and the lesser gods. To the Vedic rishis there was only one universal Deva of whom Vishnu, Rudra, Brahmanaspati, Agni, Indra, Vayu, Mitra, Varuna are all alike forms and cosmic aspects. Each of them is in himself the whole Deva and contains all the other gods. It was the full emergence in the upanishads of the idea of this supreme and only Deva, left in the *riks* vague and undefined and some- times even spoken of in the neuter as That or the one sole existence, the ritualistic limitation of the other gods and the progressive precision of their human or personal aspects under the stress of a growing mythology that led to their degradation and the enthronement of the less used and more general names and forms, Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra, in the final Puranic formulation of the Hindu theogony.

In this hymn of Dirghatamas Auchathya to the all-pervading Vishnu it is his significant activity, it is the greatness of Vishnu's three strides that is celebrated. We must dismiss from our minds the ideas proper to the later mythology. We have nothing to do here with the dwarf Vishnu, the Titan Bali and the three divine strides which took possession of Earth, Heaven and the sunless subterrestrial worlds of Patala. The three strides of Vishnu in the Veda are clearly defined by Dirghatamas as earth, heaven and the triple principle, *tridhatu*. It is this triple principle beyond Heaven or superimposed upon it as its highest level, *nakasya prsthe* (I. 125.5), which is the supreme stride or supreme seat of the all-pervading deity.

Vishnu is the wide-moving one. He is that which has gone abroad, - as it is put in the language of the Isha Upanishad, *sa paryagat*, - triply extending himself as Seer, Thinker and Former, in the superconscient Bliss, in the heaven of mind, in the earth of the physical consciousness, *tredha vicakramanah*. In those three strides he has measured out, he has formed in all their extension the earthly worlds; for in the Vedic idea the material world which we inhabit is only one of several steps leading to and supporting the vital and mental worlds beyond. In those strides he supports upon the earth and mid-world, -the earth the material, the mid-world the vital realms of Vayu, Lord of the dynamic Life-principle, - the triple heaven and its three luminous summits, *trini rocana*. These heavens the rishi describes as the higher seat of the fulfilling. Earth, the mid-world and heaven are the triple place of the conscious being's progressive self-fulfilling, *trisadhastha* (1.56.5), earth the lower seat, the vital world the middle, heaven the higher. All these are contained in the threefold movement of Vishnu.

But there is more; there is also the world where the self- fulfilment is accomplished, Vishnu's highest stride. In the second verse the seer speaks of it simply as "that". "That" Vishnu, moving yet forward in his third pace affirms or firmly establishes, *pra stavate*, by his divine might. Vishnu is then described in a



language which hints at his essential identity with the terrible Rudra, the fierce and dangerous Lion of the worlds who begins in the evolution as the Master of the animal, Pashupati, and moves upward on the mountain of being on which he dwells, ranging through more and more difficult and inaccessible places, till he stands upon the summits. Thus in three wide movements of Vishnu all the five worlds and their creatures have their habitation. Earth, heaven and "that" world of bliss are the three strides. Between earth and heaven is the Antariksha, the vital worlds, literally "the intervening habitation". Between heaven and the world of bliss is another vast Antariksha or intervening habitation, Maharloka, the world of the superconscient Truth of things.

The force and the thought of man, the force that proceeds from Rudra the Mighty and the thought that proceeds from Brahmanaspati, the creative Master of the Word, have to go forward in the great journey for or towards this Vishnu who stands at the goal, on the summit, on the peak of the mountain. His is this wide universal movement; he is the Bull of the world who enjoys and fertilizes all the energies of force and all the trooping herds of the thought. This far-flung extended space which appears to us as the world of our self-fulfilment, as the triple altar of the great sacrifice has been so measured out, so formed by only three strides of that almighty Infinite.

All the three are full of the honey-wine of the delight of existence. All of them this Vishnu fills with his divine joy of being. By that they are eternally maintained and they do not waste or perish, but in the self-harmony of their natural movement have always the unending ecstasy, the imperishable intoxication of their wide and limitless existence. Vishnu maintains them unendingly, preserves them imperishably. He is the One, he alone is, the sole-existing Godhead, and he holds in his being the triple divine principle to which we attain in the world of bliss, earth where we have our foundation and heaven also which we touch by the mental person within us. All the five worlds he upholds." The *tridhatu*, the triple principle or triple material of existence, is the Sachchidananda of the Vedanta; in the ordinary language of the Veda it is *vasu*, substance, *urj*, abounding force of our being, *priyam* or *mayas*, delight and love in the very essence of our existence. Of these three things all that exists is constituted and we attain to their fullness when we arrive at the goal of our journey.

That goal is Delight, the last of Vishnu's three strides. The rishi takes up the indefinite word "*tat*" by which he first vaguely indicated it; it signified the delight that is the goal of Vishnu's movement. It is the Ananda which for man in his ascent is a world in which he tastes divine delight, possesses the full energy of infinite consciousness, realises his infinite existence. There is that high-placed source of the honey-wine of existence of which the three strides of Vishnu are full. There the souls that seek the godhead live in the utter ecstasy of that wine



of sweetness. There in the supreme stride, in the highest seat of wide-moving Vishnu is the fountain of the honey-wine, the source of the divine sweetness, - for that which dwells there is the God-head, the Deva, the perfect Friend and Lover of the souls that aspire to him, the unmoving and utter reality of Vishnu to which the wide-moving God in the cosmos ascends.

These are the two, Vishnu of the movement here, the eternally stable, bliss-enjoying Deva there, and it is those supreme dwelling places of the Twain, it is the triple world of Sachchidananda which we desire as the goal of this long journey, this great upward movement. It is thither that the many-horned herds of the conscious Thought, the conscious Force are moving - that is the goal, that is their resting-place. There in those worlds, gleaming down on us here, is the vast, full, illimitable shining of the supreme stride, the highest seat of the wide-moving Bull, master and leader of all those many-horned herds, - Vishnu the all-pervading, the cosmic Deity, the Lover and Friend of our souls, the Lord of the transcendent existence and the transcendent delight.





## Surya, Savitr

- ▣ [Nature of Surya and Savitr](#)
- ▣ [Creator and increase](#)

### Nature of *Surya* and *Savitr*

We will first consider *Surya* and *Savitr* or *Savitri*. Since their names appear together in many hymns, we consider them together with the name *Surya Savitri*, translated as the Divine Sun; later we will point out the distinction between *Surya* and *Savitri* in the Veda.

*Surya Savitri* is the Godhead of the Supreme Truth and knowledge hymned as *ekam sat*, One Truth. He represents the truth of being, truth of knowledge, truth of process and act and movement and functioning. He is therefore the creator or rather the manifester of all things for creation is releasing *srj* or expressing what is present in the Truth-will; He is the father, fosterer and enlightener of our souls. Thus the luminous vision and luminous creation are the two functions of *Surya Savitri*.

He is present both in the microcosm and the macrocosm. He is the light of the Truth rising in the human consciousness. We may recall that the *devi usha*, Dawn, represents the onset of the first rays of Light in our night-ridden consciousness, the consciousness covered by the forces of darkness, ignorance and inconscience. So the *Surya Savitri* comes after the Dawn, and follows and expands the path traced for him by her. Hence it is said that *Surya* pursues the Dawn as a lover follows after his beloved (1.115.2).

All the Gods follow in the march of *Surya*, i.e., all other Divine faculties or potentialities in man expand with the expansion of Truth and Light. This is the reason for the wide spread use of the mantra for *Surya-Savitri* known as *Gayatri* of *Vishvamitra* (3.62.10).

The name *Surya* is rarely used when there is a question of creation. *Surya* is reserved for his passive aspects as the body of infinite Light and the revelation. In his active power he is addressed by various names like *Savitri*, *Tvasht* etc. *Savitri* is used whenever the *rishi* is concerned with the idea of creation i.e., the manifestation of the powers both in humans and cosmos; *Savitr* and *Surya* come from the same root. *Savitri* again manifests himself especially in the formation of the Truth in man through the four great and active deities, *Mitra*, *Varuna*, *Bhaga* and *Aryaman*, representing the Lords of pure wideness, luminous Harmony,



divine enjoyment and exalted power respectively.

*Surya* and *Savitri* appellations are used sometimes as if identical and as if distinct at others. In the Veda, there is only one deity, *ekam sat*, one existence of which all other powers are aspects connected to one another by an intricate web. We cannot partition this web into several separate rigid parts so that each part is a separate deity.

### **Surya Savitri, Creator and Increaser (RV 5.81)**

1. Men illumined yoke their mind and they yoke their thoughts to him who is illumination and largeness and clear perceiving. Knowing all phenomena he orders, sole the Energies of the sacrifice. Vast is the affirmation in all things of Savitri, the divine Creator.
2. All forms he takes unto himself, the Seer, and he creates from them good for the twofold existence and the fourfold. The Creator, the supreme Good, manifests Heaven wholly and his light pervades all as he follows the march of the Dawn.
3. In the wake of his march the other gods also reach by his force to the greatness of the Divinity. He has mapped out the realms of earthly light by his mightiness,-the brilliant one, the divine Creator.
4. And thou reachest, O Savitri, to the three luminous heavens; and thou art utterly expressed by the rays of the Sun; and thou encompassest the Night upon either side; and thou becomest by the law of thy law of thy actions the lord of Love, O God.
5. And thou art powerful for every creation; and thou becomest the Increase, O God, by thy movings; and thou illumineest utterly all this world of becomings. Shyavashwa has attained to the affirmation of thee, O Savitri.

### **COMMENTARY**

Indra with his shining hosts, the Maruts, Agni, the divine force, fulfiller of the Aryan sacrifice, are the most important deities of the Vedic system. Agni is the beginning and the end. This Will that is knowledge is the initiator of the upward effort of the mortal towards Immortality; to this divine consciousness that is one with divine power we arrive as the foundation of immortal existence. Indra, lord





of Swar, the luminous intelligence into which we have to convert our obscure material mentality in order to become capable of the divine consciousness, is our chief helper. It is by the aid of Indra and the Maruts that the conversion is effected. The Maruts take our animal consciousness made up of the impulses of the nervous mentality, possess these impulses with their illuminations and drive them up the hill of being towards the world of Swar and the truths of Indra. Our mental evolution begins with these animal troops, these *pasus*; they become, as we progress in the ascension, the brilliant herds of the Sun, *gavah*, rays, the divine cows of the Veda. Such is the psychological sense of the Vedic symbol.

But who, then, is Surya, the Sun, from whom these rays proceed? He is the Master of Truth, Surya the Illuminator, Savitri the Creator, Pushan the Increaser. His rays in their own nature are supramental activities of revelation, inspiration, intuition, luminous discernment, and they constitute the action of that transcendent principle which the Vedanta calls Vijnana, the perfect knowledge, the Veda Ritam, the Truth. But these rays descend also into the human mentality and form at its summit the world of luminous intelligence, Swar, of which Indra is the lord.

For this Vijnana is a divine and not a human faculty. Man's mind is not constituted of the self-luminous truth, like the divine mind; it is a sense-mentality, Manas, which can receive and understand Truth, but is not one with it. The light of knowledge has to present itself in this human understanding tempered so as to suit its forms to the capacities and limitations of the physical consciousness. And it has to lead up progressively to its own true nature, to manifest successive evolutionary stages for our mental development. Therefore the rays of Surya, as they labour to form our mental existence, create three successive worlds of mentality one superimposed on the other, - the sensational, aesthetic and emotional mind, the pure intellect and the divine intelligence. The fullness and perfection of these triple worlds of mind exists only in the pure mental plane of being, where they shine above the three heavens, *tisro divah*, as their three luminosities, *trini rocanani*. But their light descends upon the physical consciousness and effects the corresponding formations in its realms, the Vedic *parthivani rajamsi*, earthly realms of light. They also are triple, *tisrah prthivih*, the three earths. And of all these worlds Surya Savitri is the creator.

We have in this figure of various psychological levels, each considered as a world in itself, a key to the conceptions of the Vedic rishis. The human individual is an organised unit of existence which reflects the constitution of the universe. It repeats in itself the same arrangement of states and play of forces. Man, subjectively, contains in himself all the worlds in which, objectively, he is contained. Preferring ordinarily a concrete to an abstract language, the rishis speak of the physical consciousness as the physical world, earth, Bhu, Prithivi.



They describe the pure mental consciousness as heaven, Dyau, of which Swar, the luminous mind, is the summit. To the intermediate dynamic, vital or nervous consciousness they give the name either of Antariksha, the intermediate vision, or of Bhuvar, - multiple dynamic worlds formative of the Earth.

For in the idea of the rishis a world is primarily a formation of consciousness and only secondarily a physical formation of things. A world is a *loka*, a way in which conscious being images itself. And it is the causal Truth, represented in the person of Surya Savitri, that is the creator of all its forms. For it is the causal Idea in the infinite being, - the idea, not abstract, but real and dynamic, - that originates the law, the energies, the formations of things and the working out of their potentialities in determined forms by determined processes. Because the causal Idea is a real force of existence, it is called *satyam*, the True in being; because it is the determining truth of all activity and formation, it is called *rtam*, the True in movement; because it is broad and infinite in its self-view, in its scope and in its operation, it is called *brhat*, the Large or Vast.

Savitri by the Truth is the Creator, but not in the sense of a fabrication or mechanical forming of things. The root of the word means an impulsion, a loosing forth or sending out, - the sense also of the ordinary word for creation, *srsti*, - and so a production. The action of the causal Idea does not fabricate, but brings out by Tapas, by the pressure of consciousness on its own being, that which is concealed in it, latent in potentiality and in truth already existent in the Beyond.

Now the forces and processes of the physical world repeat, as in a symbol, the truths of the supraphysical action which produced it. And since it is by the same forces and the same processes, one in the physical worlds and the supraphysical, that our inner life and its development are governed, the rishis adopted the phenomena of physical Nature as just symbols for those functionings of the inner life which it was their difficult task to indicate in the concrete language of a sacred poetry that must at the same time serve for the external worship of the Gods as powers of the visible universe. The solar energy is the physical form of Surya, Lord of Light and Truth; it is through the Truth that we arrive at Immortality, final aim of the Vedic discipline. It is therefore under the images of the Sun and its rays, of Dawn and day and night and the life of man between the two poles of light and darkness that the Aryan seers represent the progressive illumination of the human soul. It is so that Shyavashwa of the house of Atri hymns Savitri, Creator, Increaser, Revealer.

Surya enlightens the mind and the thoughts with the illuminations of the Truth. He is *vipra*, the illumined. It is he who delivers the individual human mind from the circumscribed consciousness of self and environment and enlarges the



limited movement which is imposed on it by its preoccupation with its own individuality. Therefore he is *brhat*, the Large. But his illumination is not a vague light, nor does his largeness come by a confused and dissolved view of self and object; it holds in itself a clear discernment of things in their totality, their parts and their relations. Therefore he is *vipascit*, the clear in perception. Men, as soon as they begin to receive something of this solar illumination, strive to yoke their whole mentality and its thought-contents to the conscious existence of the divine Surya within them. That is to say, they apply, as it were, all their obscure mental state and all their erring thoughts to this Light manifested in them so that it may turn the obscurity of the mind into clearness and convert the errors of thought into those truths which they distortedly represent. This yoking (*yunjate*) becomes their Yoga. "They yoke the mind, and they yoke their thoughts, the enlightened, of (i.e. to, or so that they may be part of or belong to) the Enlightened, the Large, the Clear-perceptioned."

Then the Lord of Truth orders all the human energies offered up to him in the terms of the Truth; for he becomes in man a sole and sovereign Power governing all knowledge and action. Not interfered with by conflicting agencies, he governs perfectly; for he knows all manifestations, comprehends their Causes, contains their law and process, compels their right result. There are seven of these sacrificial energies (Hotras) in the human being, one corresponding to each of the seven constituents of his psychological existence, - body, life, mind, supermind, bliss, will and essential being. Their irregular action or wrong relation, caused and maintained by the obscuration of knowledge in Mind, is the source of all stumbling and unhappiness, of all evil act and evil state. Surya, Lord of Knowledge, puts each of them to its right place in the Sacrifice. "Knower of phenomena sole he arranges the sacrificial energies."

Man thus arrives at a vast and all-embracing affirmation in himself of this divine Creator. It is implied in this passage and indicated more clearly in the next. verse that the result is a right and happy creation - for all our existence is a constant creation .-of the universe of man's whole being. "Vast is the comprehensive affirmation of the god Savitri."

Surya is the seer, the revealer. His Truth takes into its illumination all forms of things, all the phenomenal objects and experiences which constitute our world, all the figures of the universal Consciousness within and without us. It reveals the truth in them, their sense, their purpose, their justification and right use. Ordering rightly the energies of the sacrifice it creates or produces good as the law of our whole existence. For all things have their justifiable cause of being, their good use and their right enjoyment. When this truth in them is found and utilized, all things produce good for the soul, increase its welfare, enlarge its felicity. And this divine revolution is effected both in the lower physical existence



and in the more complete inner life which uses the physical for its manifestation. "The Seer takes to himself all forms, he brings out (creates or manifests) good for the twofold (two-footed), for the fourfold (four-footed)."

The process of this new creation is described in the rest of the hymn. Surya, as the creator, as the supreme good, manifests in our human consciousness its concealed heavenly summit on the levels of the pure mind, and we are able to look up above from the earth of our physical existence and are delivered from the obscurities of the night of Ignorance. He follows, sunlike, the march of the Dawn, illuminating all the regions of our being on which falls its light; for there is always needed the precursory mental illumination before the Truth itself, the supramental principle, can take possession of this lower existence. "The creator, the supremely desirable, manifests all heaven and shines pervadingly following (after or according to) the movement forward of the Dawn."

All the other gods follow in this march of Surya and they attain to his vastness by the force of his illumination. That is to say, all the other divine faculties or potentialities in man expand with the expansion of the Truth and Light in him; in the strength of the ideal supermind they attain to the same infinite amplitude of right becoming, right action and right knowledge. The Truth in its largeness moulds all into the terms of the infinite and universal Life, replaces with it the limited individual existence, maps out in the terms of their real being the realms of the physical consciousness which, as Savitri, it has created. This also is in us a creation, although in reality it only manifests what already exists but was concealed by the darkness of our ignorance, - just as the realms of the physical earth are concealed from our eyes by the darkness, but reveal themselves as the sun in his march follows the Dawn and measures them out one by one to the vision. "Following whose march the other gods too reach the vastness of the divinity by his strength, he who maps out entirely - that brilliant one - the earthly realms of light, the god Savitri, by his greatness."

But it is not only the full capacity of our physical or earthly consciousness that this divine Truth illuminates and forms for a perfect action. It pervades the three luminous realms of the pure mind (*trini rocana*); it puts us in contact with all the divine possibilities of the sensations and emotions, of the intellect, of the intuitive reason and liberating the superior faculties from their limitation and constant reference to the material world fulfils our entire mental being. Its activities receive their completest manifestation; they are gathered up into the life of the complete Truth by the rays of the sun, that is to say, by the full splendour of the divine Super mind manifested in us. "And thou goest, O Savitri, to the three luminousnesses, and thou art perfectly expressed by the rays of the Sun (or, art gathered together by means of the rays)."



Then it is that the higher kingdom of the Immortality, Sachchidananda revealed, shines out perfectly in this world. The higher and lower are reconciled in the light of the supramental revelation. The Ignorance, the Night, is illumined upon both sides of our complete being, not only as in our present state upon one. This higher kingdom stands confessed in the principle of Beatitude which is for us the principle of Love and Light, represented by the god Mitra. The Lord of Truth, when he reveals himself in the full godhead, becomes the Lord of Bliss. The law of his being, the principle regulating his activities is seen to be Love; for in the right arrangement of knowledge and action everything here comes to be translated into terms of good, felicity, bliss. "And thou encompassest Night upon both sides, and thou becomest, O God, Mitra by the laws of thy action."

The Truth of the divine existence becomes eventually the sole Lord of all creation in ourselves; and by his constant visitations or by his continual progressions the Creator becomes the Increaser, Savitri becomes Pushan. He aggrandizes us by a constantly progressive creation until he has illumined the whole world of our becoming. We grow into the complete, the universal, the infinite. So has Shyavashwa, of the sons of Atri, succeeded in affirming Savitri in his own being as the illuminative Truth, the creative, the progressive, the increaser of man - he who brings him out of egoistic limitation into universality, out of the finite into the infinite. "And thou hast power alone for creation; and thou becomest the Increaser, O God, by the goings; and thou illumineest entirely all this world (literally, becoming). Shyavashwa has attained to the affirmation of thee, O Savitri."





## Bhaga, Savitr- The Enjoyer (RV 5.82)

1. Of Savitri divine we embrace that enjoying, that which is the best, rightly disposes all, reaches the goal, even Bhaga's, we hold by the thought.
2. For of him no pleasure in things can they diminish, for too self-victorious is it, nor the self-empire of this Enjoyer.
3. This he that sends forth the delights on the giver, the god who is the bringer forth of things; that varied richness of his enjoyment we seek.
4. Today, O divine producer, send forth o us fruitful felicity, dismiss what belongs to the evil dream.
5. All evils, O divine producer, dismiss; what is good, that send forth on us
6. Blameless for infinite being in the outpouring of the divine Producer, we hold by the thought all things of delight.
7. The universal godhead and master of being we accept into ourselves by perfect words today, the producer whose production is of the truth-
8. He who goes in front of both this day and night never faltering, placing rightly his thought, the divine Producer.
9. He who by the rhythm makes heard of the knowledge all births and produces the, the divine producer.

### COMMENTARY

Four great deities constantly appear in the Veda as closely allied in their nature and in their action, Varuna, Mitra, Bhaga, Aryaman. Varuna and Mitra are continually coupled together in the thoughts of the Rishis; sometimes a trio appears together, Varuna, Mitra and Bhaga or Varuna, Mitra and Aryaman. Separate Suktas addressed to any of these godheads are comparatively rare, although there are some important hymns of which Varuna is the deity. But the Riks in which their names occur, whether in hymns to other gods or in invocations to the All-gods, the *visve devah*, are by no means inconsiderable in number.

These four deities are, according to Sayana, solar powers, Varuna negatively as lord of the night, Mitra positively as lord of the day, Bhaga and Aryaman as names of the Sun. We need not attach much importance to these particular identifications, but it is certain that a solar character attaches to all the four. In them that peculiar feature of the Vedic gods, their essential oneness even in the play of their different personalities and functions, comes prominently to light. Not only are the four closely associated among themselves, but they seem to partake of each other's nature and attributes, and all are evidently emanations of Surya Savitri, the divine being in his creative and illuminative solar form.





Surya Savitri is the Creator. According to the Truth of things, in the terms of the *rtam*, the worlds are brought forth from the divine consciousness, from Aditi, goddess of infinite being, mother of the gods, the indivisible consciousness, the Light that cannot be impaired imaged by the mystic Cow that cannot be slain. In that creation, Varuna and Mitra, Aryaman and Bhaga are four effective Puissances. Varuna represents the principle of pure and wide being, Sat in Sachchidananda; Aryarman represents the light of the divine consciousness working as Force; Mitra representing light and knowledge, using the principle of Ananda for creation, is Love maintaining the law of harmony; Bhaga represents Ananda as the creative enjoyment; he takes the delight of the creation, takes the delight of all that is created. It is the Maya, the formative wisdom of Varuna, of Mitra that disposes multitudinously the light of Aditi brought by the Dawn to manifest the worlds.

In their psychological function these four gods represent the same principles working in the human mind, in the human temperament. They build up in man the different planes of his being and mould them ultimately into the terms and the forms of the divine Truth. Especially Mitra and Varuna are continually described as holding firm the law of their action, increasing the Truth, touching the Truth and by the Truth enjoying its vastness of divine will or its great and uncontracted sacrificial action. Varuna represents largeness, right and purity; everything that deviates from the right, from the purity recoils from his being and strikes the offender as the punishment of sin. So long as man does not attain to the largeness of Varuna's Truth, he is bound to the posts of the world-sacrifice by the triple bonds of mind, life and body as a victim and is not free as a possessor and enjoyer. Therefore we have frequently the prayer to be delivered from the noose of Varuna, from the wrath of his offended purity. Mitra is on the other hand the most beloved of the gods; he binds all together by the fixities of his harmony, by the successive lustrous seats of Love fulfilling itself in the order of things, *mitrasya dhamabhih*. His name, Mitra, which means also friend, is constantly used with a play upon the double sense; it is as Mitra, because Mitra dwells in all, that the other gods become the friends of man. Aryaman appears in the Veda with but little distinctness of personality, for the references to him are brief. The functions of Bhaga are outlined more clearly and are the same in the cosmos and in man.

In this hymn of Shyavashwa to Savitri we see both the functions of Bhaga and his oneness with Surya Savitri; for it is to the creative Lord of Truth that the hymn is addressed, to Surya, but to Surya specifically in his form as Bhaga, as the Lord of Enjoyment. The word *bhaga* means enjoyment or the enjoyer and that this sense is the one held especially appropriate to the divine name, Bhaga, is emphasised by the use of *bhojanam*, *bhaga*, *saubhagam* in the verses of the hymn. Savitri, we have seen, means Creator, but especially in the sense of producing emitting from the unmanifest and bringing out into the manifest.





Throughout the hymn there is a constant dwelling upon this root sense of the word which it is impossible to render adequately in a translation. In the very first verse there is a covert play of the kind; for *bhojanam* means both enjoyment and food and it is intended to be conveyed that the "enjoyment of Savitri" is Soma from the same root *su*, to produce, press out, distil, Soma, the food of divine beings, the supreme distilling, highest production of the great Producer. What the rishi seeks is the enjoyment in all created things of the immortal and immortalising Ananda.

It is this Ananda which is that enjoyment of the divine Producer, of Surya Savitri, the supreme result of the Truth: for Truth is followed as the path to the divine beatitude. This Ananda is the highest, the best enjoyment. It disposes all aright: for once the Ananda, the divine delight in all things is attained, it sets right all the distortions, all the evil of the world. It carries man through to the goal. If by the truth and right of things we arrive at the Ananda, by the Ananda also we can arrive at the right and truth of things. It is to the divine Creator in the name and form of Bhaga that this human capacity for the divine and right enjoyment of all things belongs. When he is embraced by the human mind and heart and vital forces and physical being, when this divine form is received into himself by man, then the Ananda of the world manifests itself.

Nothing can limit, nothing can diminish, neither god nor demon, friend nor enemy, event nor sensation, whatever pleasure this divine Enjoyer takes in things, in whatever vessel or object of his enjoyment. For nothing can diminish or hedge in or hurt his luminous self-empire, *svarajyam*, his perfect possession of himself in infinite being, infinite delight and the vastnesses of the order of the Truth.

Therefore it is he that brings the seven delights, *sapta ratna*, to the giver of the sacrifice. He looses them forth on us; for they are all there in the world as in the divine being, in ourselves also, and have only to be loosed forth on our outer consciousness. The rich and varied amplitude of this sevenfold delight, perfect on all the planes of our being, is the *bhaga*, enjoyment or portion of Bhaga Savitri in the completed sacrifice, and it is that varied wealth which the rishi seeks for himself and his fellows in the sacrifice by the acceptance of the divine Enjoyer.

Shyavashwa then calls on Bhaga Savitri to vouchsafe to him even today a felicity not barren, but full of the fruits of activity, rich in the offspring of the soul, *prajavat saubhagam*. Ananda is creative, it is *jana*, the delight that gives birth to life and world; only let the things loosed forth on us be of the creation conceived in the terms of the truth and let all that belongs to the falsehood, to the evil dream created by the ignorance of the divine Truth, *duhsvapnyam*, be dismissed, dispelled away from our conscious being.



In the next verse he makes clearer the sense of *duhsvapnyam*. What he desires to be dispelled is all evil, *vivani durityani*. *Suvitam and durityam* in the Veda mean literally right going and wrong going. *Suvitam* is truth of thought and action, *durityam* error or stumbling, sin and perversion. *Suvitam* is happy going, felicity, the path of Ananda; *durityam* is calamity, suffering, all ill result of error and ill doing. All that is evil, *visvani durityani*, belongs to the evil dream that has to be turned away from us. Bhaga sends to us instead all that is good, - *bhadram*, good in the sense of felicity, the auspicious things of the divine enjoying, the happiness of the right activity, the right creation.

For, in the creation of Bhaga Savitri, in his perfect and faultless sacrifice, - there is a double sense in the word *sava*, "loosing forth", used of the creation, and the sacrifice, the libation of the Soma, - men stand absolved from sin and blame by the Ananda, *anagasah*, blameless in the sight of Aditi, fit for the undivided and infinite consciousness of the liberated soul. The Ananda owing to that freedom is capable of being in them universal. They are able to hold by their thought all things of the delight, *visva vamanj*; for in the *dhi*, the understanding that holds and arranges, there is right arrangement of the world, perception of right relation, right purpose, right use, right fulfilment, the divine and blissful intention in all things.

It is the universal Divine, the master of the Sat, from whom all things are created in the terms of the truth, *satyam*, that the sacrificers today by means of the sacred *mantras* seek to accept into themselves under the name of Bhaga Savitri. It is the creator whose creation is the Truth, whose sacrifice is the outpouring of the truth through the outpouring of his own Ananda, his divine and unerring joy of being, into the human soul. He as Surya Savitri, master of the Truth, goes in front of both this Night and this Dawn, of the manifest consciousness and the unmanifest, the waking being and the subconscious and superconscious whose interaction creates all our experiences; and in his motion neglects nothing, is never unheeding, never falters. He goes in front of both bringing out of the night of the subconscious the divine Light, turning into the beams of that Light the uncertain or distorted reflections of the conscient, and always the thought is rightly placed. The source of all error is misapplication, wrong placing of truth, wrong arrangement, wrong relation, wrong positing in time and place, object and order. But in the Master of Truth there is no such error, no such stumbling, no such wrong placing.

Surya Savitri, who is Bhaga, stands between the Infinite and the created worlds within us and without. All things that have to be born in the creative consciousness he receives into the Vijnana; there he puts it into its right place in the divine rhythm by the knowledge that listens and receives the Word as it descends and so he looses it forth into the movement of things, *asravayati slokena pra ca suvati*. When in us each creation of the active Ananda, the



*prajavat saubhagam*, comes thus out of the unmanifest, received and heard rightly of the knowledge in the faultless rhythm of things, then is our creation that of Bhaga Savitri, and all the births of that creation, our children, our offspring, *praja, apatyam*, are things of the delight, *visva vamani*. This is the accomplishment of Bhaga in man, his full portion of the world- sacrifice.





## Vayu - The Master of the Life Energies (RV 4.48)

1. Do thou manifest the sacrificial energies that are unmanifested, even as a revealer of felicity and doer of the work; O Vayu, come in thy car of happy light to the drinking of the soma-wine.
2. Put away from thee all denials of expression and with thy steeds of the yoking, with Indra for thy charioteer come, O Vayu, in thy car of happy light to the drinking of the Soma-wine.
3. The two that, dark, yet hold all substances, shall observe thee in their labour, they in whom are all forms. O Vayu, come in thy car of happy light to the drinking of the Soma-wine.
4. Yoked let the ninety and nine bear thee, they who are yoked by the mind. O Vayu, come in thy car of Happy light to the drinking of the Soma-wine.
5. Yoke, O Vayu, thy hundred brilliant steeds that shall increase, or else with thy thousand let thy chariot arrive in the mass of its force.

### COMMENTARY

The psychological conceptions of the Vedic rishis have often a marvelous profundity and nowhere more than when they deal with the phenomenon of the conscious activities of mind and life emerging out of the subconscious. It may be said, even, that this idea is the whole basis of the rich and subtle philosophy evolved in that early dawn of knowledge by these inspired Mystics. Nor has any other expressed it with a greater subtlety and felicity than the rishi Vamadeva, at once one of the most profound seers and one of the sweetest singers of the Vedic age. One of his hymns, the last of the fourth Mandala, is indeed the most important key we possess to the symbolism which hid behind the figures of the sacrifice those realities of psychological experience and perception deemed so sacred by the Aryan forefathers.

In that hymn Vamadeva speaks of the ocean of the subconscious which underlies all our life and activities. Out of that ocean rises "the honeyed wave" of sensational existence with its undelivered burden of unrealised delight climbing full of the *ghrta* and the Soma, the clarified mental consciousness and the illumined Ananda that descends from above, to the heaven of Immortality. The "secret Name" of the mental consciousness, the tongue with which the gods taste the world, the nexus of Immortality, is the Ananda which the Soma symbolises. For all this creation has been, as it were, ejected into the subconscious by the four-horned Bull, the divine Purusha whose horns are infinite Existence, Consciousness, Bliss and Truth. In images of an energetic incongruity reminding us of the sublime grotesques and strange figures that have survived



from the old mystic and symbolic art of the prehistoric world, Vamadeva describes the Purusha in the figure of a man-bull, whose four horns are the four divine principles, his three feet or three legs the three human principles, mentality, vital dynamism and material substance, his two heads the double consciousness of Soul and Nature, Purusha and Prakriti, his seven hands the seven natural activities corresponding to the seven principles. "Triply bound" - bound in the mind, bound in the life-energies, bound in the body- "the Bull roars aloud; great is the Divinity that has entered into mortals".

For the *ghrtam*, the clear light of the mentality reflecting the Truth, has been hidden by the Panis, the lords of the lower sense-activity, and shut up in the subconscious; in our thoughts, in our desires, in our physical consciousness the Light and the Ananda have been triply established, but they are concealed from us. It is in the cow, symbol of the Light from above, that the gods find the clarified streams of the *ghrtam*. These streams, says the rishi, rise from the heart of things, from the ocean of the sub- conscient, *hrdyat samudrat*, but they are confined in a hundred pens by the enemy, Vrtra, so that they may be kept from the eye of discernment, from the knowledge that labours in us to enlighten that which is concealed and deliver that which is imprisoned. They move in the path on the borders of the subconscious, dense if impetuous in their movements, limited by the nervous action, in small formations of the life-energy Vayu, *vatapramiyah*. Purified progressively by the experiences of the conscious heart and mind, these energies of Nature become finally capable of the marriage with Agni, the divine Will-force, which breaks down their boundaries and is himself nourished by their now abundant waves. That is the crisis of the being by which the mortal nature prepares its conversion to immortality.

In the last verse of the hymn Vamadeva describes the whole of existence as established above in the seat of the divine Purusha, below in the ocean of the subconscious and in the Life, *antah samudre hrdis antar ayusi*. The conscious mind is, then, the channel through which there is communication between the upper ocean and the lower, between superconscient and subconscious, the light divine and the original darkness of Nature.

Vayu is the Lord of Life. By the ancient Mystics life was considered to be a great force pervading all material existence and the condition of all its activities. It is this idea that was formulated later on in the conception of the Prana, the universal breath of life. All the vital and nervous activities of the human being fall within the definition of Prana, and belong to the domain of Vayu. Yet this great deity has comparatively few hymns to his share in the Rigveda and even in those suktas in which he is prominently invoked, does not usually figure alone but in company with others and as if dependent on them. He is especially coupled with Indra and it would almost seem as if for the functionings demanded from him by the vedic rishis he needed the aid of the superior deity. When there is question



of the divine- action of the Life-forces in man, Agni in the form of the vedic Horse, Ashva, Dadhikravan, takes usually the place of Vayu.

If we consider the fundamental ideas of the rishis, this position of Vayu becomes intelligible. The illumination of the lower being by the higher, the mortal by the divine, was their principal concept. Light and Force, *go* and *ashva*, the Cow and the Horse, were the object of the sacrifice. Force was the condition, Light the liberating agency; and Indra and Surya were the chief bringers of Light. Moreover the Force required was the divine Will taking possession of all the human energies and revealing itself in them; and of this Will, this force of conscious energy, taking possession of the nervous vitality and revealing itself in it, Agni more than Vayu and especially Agni Dadhi-kravan was the symbol. For it is Agni who is master of Tapas, the divine Consciousness formulating itself in universal energy, of which the Prana is only a representative in the lower being. Therefore in Vamadeva's hymn, the fifty-eighth of the fourth Mandala, it is Indra and Surya and Agni who effect the great manifestation of the conscious divinity out of the subconscious. Vata or Vayu, the nervous activity, is only a first condition of the emergent Mind. And for man it is the meeting of Life with Mind and the support given by the former to the evolution of the latter which is the important aspect of Vayu. Therefore we find Indra, Master of Mind, and Vayu, Master of Life, coupled together and the latter always somewhat dependent on the former; the Maruts, the thought-forces, although in their origin they seem to be as much powers of Vayu as of Indra, are more important to the Rishis than Vayu himself and even in their dynamic aspect are more closely associated with Agni Rudra than with the natural chief of the legions of the Air.

The present hymn, the forty-eighth of the Mandala is the last of three in which Vamadeva invokes Indra and Vayu for the drinking of the Soma-wine. They are called in conjointly as the two lords of brilliant force, *Savasaspati*, as in another hymn, in a former Mandala (1.23.3), they are invoked as lords of thought, *dhiyaspati*. Indra is the master of mental force, Vayu of nervous or vital force and their union is necessary for thought and for action. They are invited to come in one common chariot and drink together of the wine of the Ananda which brings with it the divinising energies. Vayu, it is said, has the right of the first draught; for it is the supporting vital forces that must first become capable of the ecstasy of the divine action.

In the third hymn, in which the result of the sacrifice is defined, Vayu is alone invoked, but even so his companionship with Indra is clearly indicated. He is to come in a chariot of happy brightness, like Usha in another hymn, to drink of the immortalizing wine. The chariot symbolises movement of energy and it is a glad movement of already illuminated vital energies that is invoked in the form of Vayu. The divine utility of this brightly happy movement is indicated in the first three verses.



The god is to manifest - he is to bring into the light of the conscious activity sacrificial energies which are not yet manifested, are yet hidden in the darkness of the subconscious. In the ritualistic interpretation the phrase may be translated, "Eat of offerings that have not been eaten" or, in another sense of the verb *vi*, it may be rendered, "Arrive at sacrificial energies which have never been approached"; but all these renderings amount, symbolically, to the same psychological sense. Powers and activities that have not yet been called up out of the subconscious, have to be liberated from its secret cave by the combined action of Indra and Vayu and devoted to the work.

For it is not towards an ordinary action of the nervous mentality that they are called. Vayu is to manifest these energies as would "a revealer of the felicity, a doer of the Aryan work", *vipo na rayo aryah*. These words sufficiently indicate the nature of the energies that are to be evoked. It is possible, however, that the phrase may have a covert reference to Indra and thus indicate what is afterwards clearly expressed, the necessity that Vayu's action should be governed by the illumined and aspiring force of the more brilliant god. For it is Indra's enlightenment that leads to the secret of beatitude being revealed and he is the first labourer in the Work. To Indra, Agni and Surya among the gods is especially applied the term *arya*, which describes with an untranslatable compactness those who rise to the noble aspiration and who do the great labour as an offering in order to arrive at the good and the bliss.

In the second verse the necessity of Indra's guidance is affirmed expressly. Vayu is to come putting away all denials that may be opposed to the manifestation of the unmanifested, *niryuvano asastih*. The word *asastih* means literally "not-expressings" and describes the detention by obscuring powers like Vrtra of the light and power that are waiting to be revealed, ready to be called out into expression through the influence of the gods and by the instrumentality of the Word. The Word is the power that expresses, *sastram, gih, vacas*. But it has to be protected and given its right effect by the divine Powers. Vayu is to do this office; he has to expel all powers of denial, of obscuration, of non-manifestation. To do this work he must arrive "with his steeds of her yoking and Indra for charioteer", *niyutvan Indra sarathih*. The steeds of Indra, of Vayu, of Surya have each their appropriate name. Indra's horses are *hari* or *babhru*, red gold or tawny yellow; Surya's *harit*, indicating a more deep, full and intense luminousness; Vayu's are *niyut*, steeds of the yoking, for they represent those dynamic movements which yoke the energy to its action. But although they are the horses of Vayu, they have to be driven by Indra, the movements of the Master of nervous and vital energy guided by the Master of mind.

The third verse would seem at first to bring in an unconnected idea; it speaks of a dark Heaven and Earth with all their forms obeying or following in their labour the movements of Vayu in his Indra-driven car. They are not mentioned by name





but described as the two black or dark holders of substance or holders of wealth, *vasudhiti*; but the latter word sufficiently indicates earth and by implication of the dual form Heaven also, its companion. We must note that it is not Heaven the father and Earth the mother that are indicated, but the two sisters, *rodasi*, feminine forms of heaven and earth, who symbolise the general energies of the mental and physical consciousness. It is their dark states - the obscured consciousness between its two limits of the mental and the physical, - which by the happy movement of the nervous dynamism begin to labour in accordance with the movement or under the control of Vayu and to yield up their hidden forms; for all forms are concealed in them and they must be compelled to reveal them. Thus we discover that this verse completes the sense of the two that precede. For always when the Veda is properly understood, its verses are seen to unroll the thought with a profound logical coherence and pregnant succession.

The two remaining Riks indicate the result produced by this action of Heaven and Earth and by their yielding up of hidden forms and unmanifested energies on the movement of Vayu as his car gallops towards the Ananda. First of all his horses are to attain their normally complete general number. "Let the ninety-nine be yoked and bear thee, those that are yoked by the mind". The constantly recurring numbers ninety-nine, a hundred and a thousand have a symbolic significance in the Veda which it is very difficult to disengage with any precision. The secret is perhaps to be found in the multiplication of the mystic number seven by itself and its double repetition with a unit added before and at the end, making altogether  $1+49+49+1=100$ . Seven is the number of essential principles in manifested Nature, the seven forms of divine consciousness at play in the world. Each, formulated severally, contains the other six in itself; thus the full number is forty-nine, and to this is added the unit above out of which all develops, giving us altogether a scale of fifty and forming the complete gamut of active consciousness. But there is also its duplication by an ascending and descending series, the descent of the gods, the ascent of man. This gives us ninety-nine, the number variously applied in the Veda to horses, cities, rivers, in each case with a separate but kindred symbolism. If we add an obscure unit below into which all descends to the luminous unit above towards which all ascends we have the full scale of one hundred.

It is therefore a complex energy of consciousness which is to be the result of Vayu's movement; it is the emergence of the fullest movement of the mental activity now only latent and potential in man, - the ninety and nine steeds that are yoked by the mind. And in the next verse the culminating unit is added. We have a hundred horses, and because the action is now that of complete luminous mentality, these steeds, though they still carry Vayu and Indra, are no longer merely *niyut*, but *hari*, the colour of Indra's brilliant bays. "Yoke, O Vayu, a hundred of the brilliant ones, that are to be increased."



But why to be increased? Because a hundred represents the general fullness of the variously combined movements, but not their utter complexity. Each of the hundred can be multiplied by ten; all can be increased in their own kind: for that is the nature of the increase indicated by the word *posyanam*. Therefore, says the rishi, either come with the general fullness of the hundred to be afterwards nourished into their full complexity of a hundred tens or, if thou wilt, come at once with thy thousand and let thy movement arrive in the utter mass of its entire potential energy. It is the completely varied all-ensphering, all-energizing mental illumination with its full perfection of being, power, bliss, knowledge, mentality, vital force, physical activity that he desires. For, this attained, the subconscious is compelled to yield up all its hidden possibilities at the will of the perfected mind for the rich and abundant movement of the perfected life.





## Indra and Agastya (RV 1.170)

### Indra

1. It is not now, nor is It tomorrow; who knoweth that which is Supreme and Wonderful? It has motion and action in the consciousness of another, but when It is approached by the thought, It vanishes.

### Agastya

2. Why dost thou seek to smite us, O Indra? The Maruts are thy brothers. By them accomplish perfection; slay us not in our struggle.

### Indra

3. Why, O my brother Agastya, art thou my friend, yet settest thy thought beyond me? For well do I know how to us thou wilt not to give thy mind.

4. Let them make ready the altar, let them set Agni in blaze in front. It is there, the awakening of the consciousness to Immortality. Let us two extend for thee thy effective sacrifice.

### Agastya

5. O Lord of substance over all substances of being, thou art the master in force! O Lord of Love over the powers of love, thou art the strongest to hold in status! Do thou, O Indra, agree with the Maruts, then enjoy the offerings in the ordered method of the Truth.

## COMMENTARY

The governing idea of the hymn belongs to a stage of spiritual progress when the human soul wishes by the sheer force of Thought to hasten forward beyond in order to reach prematurely the source of all things without full development of the being in all its progressive stages of conscious activity. The effort is opposed



by the gods who preside over the universe of man and of the world and a violent struggle takes place in the human consciousness between the individual soul in its egoistic eagerness and the universal Powers which seek to fulfil the divine purpose of the Cosmos.

The seer Agastya at such a moment confronts in his inner experience Indra, Lord of Swar, the realm of pure intelligence, through which the ascending soul passes into the divine Truth.

Indra speaks first of that unknowable Source of things towards which Agastya is too impatiently striving. That is not to be found in Time. It does not exist in the actualities of the present, nor in the eventualities of the future. It neither is now nor becomes hereafter. Its being is beyond Space and Time and therefore in itself cannot be known by that which is in Space and Time. It manifests itself by its forms and activities in the consciousness of that which is not Itself and through those activities it is meant that It should be realised. But if one tries to approach it and study it in Itself, It disappears from the thought that would seize It and is as if It were not.

Agastya still does not understand why he is so violently opposed in a pursuit which is the eventual aim of all being and which all his thoughts and feelings demand. The Maruts are the powers of thought which by the strong and apparently destructive motion of their progress break down that which is established and help to the attainment of new formations. Indra, the Power of pure Intelligence, is their brother, kin to them in his nature although elder in being. He should by their means effect the perfection towards which Agastya is striving and not turn enemy nor slay his friend in this terrible struggle towards the goal.

Indra replies that Agastya is his friend and brother, -- brother in the soul as children of one Supreme Being, friends as comrades in a common effort and one in the divine love that unites God and man, - and by this friendship and alliance has attained to the present stage in his progressive perfection; but now he treats Indra as an inferior Power and wishes to go beyond without fulfilling himself in the domain of the God. He seeks to divert his increased thought-powers towards his own object instead of delivering them up to the universal Intelligence so that it may enrich its realisations in humanity through Agastya and lead him forward by the way of the Truth. Let the egoistic endeavour cease, the great sacrifice be resumed, the flame of the divine Force, Agni, be kindled in front as head of the sacrifice and leader of the march. Indra and Agastya together, the universal Power and the human soul, will extend in harmony the effective inner action on the plane of the pure Intelligence so that it may enrich itself there and attain beyond. For it is precisely by the progressive surrender of the lower being to the



divine activities that the limited and egoistic consciousness of the mortal awakens to the infinite and immortal state which is its goal.

Agastya accepts the will of the God and submits. He agrees to perceive and fulfill the Supreme in the activities of Indra. From his own realm Indra is supreme lord over the substances of being as manifested through the triple world of mind, life and body and has therefore power to dispose of its formations towards the fulfillment, in the movement of Nature, of the divine Truth that expresses itself in the universe, - supreme lord over love and delight manifested in the same triple world and has therefore power to fix those formations harmoniously in the status of Nature. Agastya gives up all that is realised in him into the hands of Indra, as offerings of the sacrifice, to be held by him in the fixed parts of Agastya's consciousness and directed in the motion towards fresh formations. Indra is once more to enter into friendly parley with the upward aspiring powers of Agastya's being and to establish agreement between the seer's thoughts and the illumination that comes to us through the pure Intelligence. That power will then enjoy in Agastya the offerings of the sacrifice according to the right order of things as formulated and governed by the Truth which is beyond.





### Rudra or Shiva

Both in the *puranas* and the *Agamas*, Rudra is lauded as Shiva the benevolent and the destroyer. Though Gods like Agni have specific features in the front according to their several functions, yet each is only a front of the All-Gods supporting from within, one light of the original Godhead. Hence though specific features of each deity are denoted, yet mention of those of other deities alongside makes it difficult to determine the sole specialty of each. Thus in certain hymns (e.g. 4.3.1) there is hardly any distinction between Agni and Rudra; similarly between Indra and Rudra elsewhere. Still inspite of the fact that the features of Agni, Indra, the supreme Godhead, are ascribed to Rudra, it is possible to sift certain specific characteristics of Rudra. Though the qualities of Rudra are described in the Yajur and Atharva vedas, here we take into account only the hymns in the Rigveda. Let us note, in passing, that the number of hymns devoted to each God do not measure his importance. Gods like Surya, Vishnu, Rudra may have fewer hymns, but that does not lessen their eminence. Why then are such a large number of hymns devoted to Indra or Agni? The hymns stress the role of the deities whose favour is indispensable in the upward path of the ancient *rishis* engaged in the inner sacrifice. Neither Vishnu nor Rudra are as relevant in these states of the ascent as Agni or Indra.

To come to the description of *Brahma*, Rudra and Vishnu: *Brahma* creates all by Speech. The creation is a manifestation. Things lost in darkness are brought out into light. He who thus effects the manifestation is *Brahma*, *Brahmanaspati*, the creator. He brings out all things from the darkness of Inconscience and gives them life-forms and mental forms.

Rudra forcibly leads this creation upwards. He as Shiva, puts down all those who arrogantly obstruct his course, punishes them as with a whip, kills the evil opponents with his weapons. Though thus terrible, he is beneficent, compassionate to the distressed, effects the auspicious with his healing balm.

Upholding the Universe with his three steps, *Vishnu* creates for Indra wide station amongst us mortals by which we can reach the supreme station above.

Even derivatively, the word Rudra denotes the fierce or terrible one. The hymns speak of him as the source of life-strengths, father of Rudras, parent of Maruts, as Shiva the benevolent. They speak of his greatness, plentiful progeny, parentage of Maruts and giver of the universe, who spreads felicity among all. The profound Mantra, *trayambakam yajamahe* (7.59.12) [discussed at the end of this chapter] celebrates his power to liberate all persons from death. The half of the Mantra illustrating the release from bondage contains a truth of direct experience in yoga relevant even today. It reads, *urvarukamiva bandhanat*



*mrtyor mukshiya mamrtat*; even as the fruit as it ripens gets loosened from the hard shell covering it, the soul within gets separated from the external body subject to death. So, the *rishi* says: release from bondage to death, but not from immortality. This is the basis of the passage in the *Katha* upanishad (6.17) which speaks of extracting the soul from the body as the fiber from a blade of grass.







## Nature of Varuna, the King and the Releaser of Bonds

Viewed on the surface, Varuna is an omniscient and omnipotent Lord or Creator, Master of the oceans and the sky, whose strength and speed cannot be matched by anyone else. He maintains all the laws in the Earth, mid-region and the heavens, punishing the transgressors. But a closer look reveals the esoteric meaning of the hymns just as with the other hymns of Rigveda. Varuna is the Godhead who creates pathways for the Sun in our being which is full of darkness so that the Sun can pour his knowledge into all the dark corners of the being. The oceans, of which Varuna is the master, symbolize the waters of the Truth and Varuna pours these Waters on our three bodies, viz. physical, vital and mental, and removes all sin, evil and falsehood from our lives. The seer *Shunahshepa* explicitly requests Varuna to release or loosen the three knots or bonds which represent the bonds of the three planes, namely physical, vital and mental. These knots restrict the flow of the universal psychic energies in our body. Varuna is prayed to release these knots. These knots are the celebrated knots associated with the names *Brahma*, Vishnu and *Rudra* in the *tantric* literature of a later date.

A common descriptor used for Varuna is *uru*, which means always 'wide' in the Rigveda. Varuna is the lord of all infinities, master of all the oceans and ether. Varuna's dwelling is in the vast, *urukshaya* (1.2.9), Varuna has wide vision *uru chakshasam* (1.25.16). He is hymned as *urushamsa* in (1.24.11) and (2.28.3). *shamsa* in the *Veda* always stands for the perfect expression or speech. Recall that different formations are brought out by the power of speech or *vak* in the *Veda*. *uru shamsa* means ""wide expression" the bringing out of our being (or *sat*) that which is latent in it and manifesting it in our action. Thus Varuna grants us a broader vision, removes the narrowness of our outlook so that we can express our aspiration for the attainment of infinities.

Consequently, he is also hymned as *swarat* (2.28.1), the self-ruler and *samrat* the emperor (8.25.3, 8.42.1). *samrat* means one who has complete kingship or control over both subjective and objective existence. Among the people of the *vedic* age, the emperor is also a sage; he is both a thinker and a hero. He has a plenitude of both wisdom and will, thought and action. Varuna is the king of all the dominions (8.42.1 and 8.42.2.). Hence Varuna is pictured as self-knowing, self-mastering, moving freely with the laws because he is perfectly aware of the laws. Recall that *satya* is the Truth-Absolute in the *Veda*. *rtā* is the Truth in manifestation everywhere and at any time. It is the Truth of Divine Being regulating the right activity of both body and mind. Varuna is said to be touching with the Truth *rtasparsha* (1.2.8). Varuna is also called *rtavrdha*, increaser of Truth, because he along with *Mitra* increase the Truth in the human being, the *yajamana* who performs the *yajna*, the harmonious arrangement of actions.



Varuna is endowed with a vast will-power, *brahantam kratum* (1.2.8). He increases the will-power in man so that the human can perform all actions consistent with the Truth in manifestation (*rta*). He is hymned as 'superbly laudable among the laudable' (1.17.5). Laud or praise in the *veda* is not simply a casual utterance, but has the power to bring out the intentions expressed in speech.

We will give here the description of Varuna given by seer *Nabhaka* of the family *Kanva*. "Luminous Varuna has embraced the nights; He holds the Dawns within him by his creative knowledge; Visioned, he is around every object." (8.41.3) "He who supports the worlds of life, he who well knows the hidden names of the rays of the dawns, He cherishes much wisdom (8.41.5)." "In whom all wisdom centers as the nave is set within the wheel (8.41.6)." "He wraps these regions as a robe; He contemplates the hosts of Gods and all the works of mortals; In the home of Varuna all the Gods follow his decree (8.41.7)." "He is the hidden ocean and he climbs passing beyond heaven; when he has placed the sacrificial word in these dawns, then with his luminous feet he tramples illusions and ascends to the Heavens (8.41.8)." [Sri Aurobindo, SV].

### The three oceans

In the Rigveda, three different oceans are mentioned. The *vedic* mystics saw below them "an unfathomable night and surging obscurity, darkness hidden within darkness..."; Above them, they beheld "a remote ocean of light and sweetness, a highest either, the supreme step of *Vishnu* to which their being should ascend"; between these two oceans they saw "a third sea of ever-developing conscious being, a sort of boundless wave..." (Sri Aurobindo). We have to navigate through this ocean to reach the superconscious blissful ocean above.

"Three delightful dawns increase according to the law of his workings. He of the all- seeing wisdom dwells in three white-shining earths; Three are the higher worlds of Varuna whence he rules over the harmonies of seven and seven (8.41.9)."

The three dawns mentioned here are the illuminations of the three bodies in man, the physical, the vital and the mental. He harmonizes all the activities both in the macrocosm and in the microcosm, in every individual human being.

### Sin and Shortcomings



Varuna prepares the great pathways in the human being so that the illumination of the Sun, *Surya*, can enter all the unlit regions of the human. The heart is the dwelling place of the inner self of man. Afflictions of the heart are indicative of the effects of the forces of ignorance on our inner being. The *vedic* seers did not compartmentalize the physical and psychological ailments as the moderns do. Only the Light brought in by the Sun can dislodge the forces of ignorance which cause the afflictions as declared in (1.25.7).

In the hymns of the Seer *Shunahshepa* there is repeated mention of the words sin, *enah*, disregard, *hela*, etc., which need special attention. Recall that Varuna is the upholder of the Laws, *vratani*, upholder of *rtam* which is the Truth of Divine being regulating the right activity in both mind and body. The *Rig Vedic* seers were very much aware of the human frailties. They saw around them persons steeped in selfishness and prayed that they may not be in the same boat. "May I not live, O Varuna, to witness my wealthy, liberal dear friend's destitution (3.28.10)."

There is no listing of the set of actions which constitute sins and otherwise, because such a mechanical classification is not possible. The attempts at codifying these highly plastic modes of life and conduct are found in the several ancient books of Hindus called as *dharma shastras*. The period of these books is several millennia after the age of Rigveda. Every religion like Christianity, Judaism, Islam, etc. has its own books of conduct, often represented as the word of God. Among all these books, the special feature of the Hindu *dharma shastras* is that they alone recognize that these books have some eternal elements and some other elements which are appropriate to a particular time, place and society. The seers of each generation are expected to reframe the variable parts of the rules appropriate to that time and place.

We summarize the observations of Sri M.P. Pandit: "The movement against the law of being may be with full knowledge of what one is doing or in ignorance of the wrong nature of the movement. In each case *Karma* is forged and the results suffered. Yet where one acts contrary to the law of Truth consciously, the results are particularly detrimental to the growth of Soul within. A thick crust of darkness gathers round the soul and prevents its Light from coming through (to the other parts of our body). But in the action in ignorance, the reactions are mostly on the surface and do not go deep.

Both types of sin are held up before God Varuna, the Lord of Purity, so that he may first loosen these impurities from the being of the seeker and then cut them asunder, as the following quotation from the Seer *Atri* indicates. 'Our sin against Truth and our sin by ignorance, All these clear away like loosened things. (5.85.8)'



Note that premature death itself is a transgression of the Law. Sacred is the life consecrated to the God. If it is not robbed, but well-protected, it fulfils itself. For Varuna, the master of infinities, the establishment of the forces of harmony in human bodies is not difficult as declared in (1.24.14).

### Three Methods

In (1.25.3), the seer prays "O Varuna, we bind your mind excellently with our praises like the charioteer the ready horse." There are three ingredients in the attempt of the seer to bind Varuna namely *namas* (homage), *yajna* and *havis* (offerings). The first step is to have faith and express it by the homage or adoration. The next step is to try to perform all actions in a spirit of harmony. We may recall that *yajna* is not merely a ritual. It is an orderly arrangement of all actions and their offerings to the cosmic powers to whom they rightly belong. The ritual of *yajna* is one such orderly arrangement. The next is the offering to the Gods of the delight or *rasa* released from our actions. This is the threefold way. Then the bonds of sins will be loosened as will be explained below.

### The three bonds

The force of ignorance or the falsehood in our being signified by the deity, *nirriti*, causes in us the triple cord or bond of obscure physical animality, inefficient life often dominated by the lower vital impulses and limited mind which revels in doubts. These are the three bonds or ropes which bind every one of us. The result is an inert poverty of being; it is the origin of the sheer inability of the mortal to come in touch with the universal Bliss or Delight which pervades this universe. It makes him march towards decay and death at every step. When the mighty Varuna comes and cuts this threefold bondage we are freed to move towards Delight and Riches. "Uplifted, the real man arises to his true kingship in his undivided being. The upper cord which is limiting the mental movements flies upward releasing the wings of the soul into superconscious heights; the middle cord which is limiting the movements of our life forces parts both ways and all ways, the constrained life breaking out into a happy breadth of existence; the lower cord which binds to the matter and our animal origins collapses downward taking with it the alloy of our physical being to disappear and be dissolved in the stuff of the unconscious." (Sri Aurobindo) Thus we have a threefold liberation of being hymned by the Seer *Shunahshepah* in the three mantras , (1.24.13-1.24.15).



## Relation to the *Chakras* in the *tantra*

As Sri Kapali Sastry states (CWKS, Vol. 6) "there is no doubt whatsoever that the triple bondage corresponds to the three knots famous in the *tantra yoga* under the names of *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Rudra*. The triple bondage obstructs the entry and spread of the Truth-light in the threefold being of mind, life and body. Release from it is possible by the grace of God Varuna."

We will give here the relevant passages from, *lalita sahasra nama stotra*, a standard text of *tantra yoga* giving all the main aspects of *tantra* in the form of one thousand names addressed to the Divine Mother. The three bonds are mentioned in the names 99 through 104: Residing in the *muladhara* (99), Severing the knot called *Brahma granthi* (100), Appearing in the *manipura* (101), Severing the knot called *Vishnu granthi* (102), Residing in the centre of the *ajnachakra* (103), Severing the knot called *Rudra granthi* (104).

We may recall that the subtle body has seven centers of psychic consciousness, arranged along the subtle counterpart of the physical spinal column. These centres are called as Lotuses or *chakras*. The bottom one is the *muladhara* where the Supreme Energy *Kundalini* resides. By cutting the knot here, the knot of *brahma*, the knot of matter, the energy *Kundalini* raises to the next *chakra* the *manipura*. In the *manipura* is the knot of *Vishnu* signifying the bonds which prevent the life-forces from contacting the Supreme Delight. By cutting this knot, the energy goes to the sixth center (via the fourth and fifth), the *jna chakra*. This *chakra* has the knot of *Rudra* cutting which the energy attains union with the superconscious ocean above.





## Rbhus

📖 [Rbhus](#)

📖 [Artisans of Immortality](#)

## Rbhus

The Rbhus are humans who have attained divinity by their askesis. There are about ten hymns in the *RV* addressed to the Rbhus. It is said that they are the sons of *Sudhanvan Angirasa*. Some say that they are Solar Rays. To us both are acceptable. The Truth, the Supreme Light, is denoted in the *Veda* by the Sun. A human being is inert because of his material body. Rays of Sun, manifestations of the Consciousness, descending on this field of Matter, gross and inert, uplift man. And these very Rbhus become special powers of man by virtue of his development; and man becomes immortal by a Divine Birth, effected by that special power.

How then are they spoken of as sons of *Sudhanvan*? *Dhanva* is the arid land, a field with no water, denoting inertness, sheer matter just as the Hill is the place where cows are hidden or denotes darkness that covers the Waters. The arid land acquires splendour by accepting the descending Divine Rays and absorbing the higher essence. Then it blooms forth the glory of the Rbhus as *Sudhanvan* (fair arid land).

Having attained to divinity by virtue of their action and knowledge, these deities work to help man to attain to divinity. And whatever acts they do they become divine acts only. The actions of the Rbhus are mentioned in symbolic language only. It is clear that without resort to the hidden symbolic meaning, it is not possible to explain in a straight manner these hymns that are like riddles. We will demonstrate further on.

Rbhu, *Vibhva*, *Vaja*{ these three are spoken of. The singular denotes their collectivity. And due to their association all are indicated by the word Rbhu, the eldest of them. The specialty of each of the three is celebrated by the name itself. By means of intellect and activity, Rbhu, the eldest, builds the forms conforming to the qualities of Immortality. *Vibhava* brings about its extension. *Vaja* effects the plenitude of the Divine Light and Substance. They are called the carpenters, the artisans of immortality for man.

## Artisans of Immortality (RV 1.20)



1. Lo, the affirmation made for the divine Birth with the breath of the mouth by illumined minds, that gives perfectly the bliss;
2. Even they who fashioned by the mind for Indra his two bright steeds that are yoked by Speech, and they enjoy the sacrifice by their accomplishings of the work.
3. They fashioned for the twin lords of the voyage their happy car of the all-pervading movement, they fashioned the fostering cow that yields the sweet milk.
4. O Rbhus, in your pervasion you made young again the Parents, you who seek the straight path and have the Truth in your mentalisings.
5. The raptures of the wine come to you entirely, to you with Indra companioned by the Maruts and with the Kings, the sons of Aditi.
6. And this bowl of Twashtri new and perfected you made again into four.
7. So establish for us the thrice seven ecstasies, each separately by perfect expressings of them.
8. They sustained and held in them, they divided by perfection in their works the sacrificial share of the enjoyment among the Gods.

### COMMENTARY

The Rbhus, it has been suggested, are rays of the Sun. And it is true that like Varuna, Mitra, Bhaga and Aryaman they are powers of the solar Light, the Truth. But their special character in the Veda is that they are artisans of Immortality. They are represented as human beings who have attained to the condition of godhead by power of knowledge and perfection in their works. Their function is to aid Indra in raising man towards the same state of divine light and bliss which they themselves have earned as their own divine privilege. The hymns addressed to them in the Veda are few and to the first glance exceedingly enigmatical; for they are full of certain figures and symbols always repeated. But once the principal clues of the Veda are known, they become on the contrary exceedingly clear and simple and present a coherent and interesting idea which sheds a clear light on the Vedic gospel of immortality.





The Rbhus are powers of the Light who have descended into Matter and are there born as human faculties aspiring to become divine and immortal. In this character they are called children of Sudhanwan, a patronymic which is merely a parable of their birth from the full capacities of Matter touched by the luminous energy. But in their real nature they are descended from this luminous Energy and are sometimes so addressed, "Offspring of Indra, grandsons of luminous Force" (4.37.4). For Indra, the divine mind in man, is born out of luminous Force as is Agni out of pure Force, and from Indra the divine Mind spring the human aspirations after Immortality.

The names of the three Rbhus are, in the order of their birth, *rbhu* or *rbhuksan*, the skilful Knower or the Shaper in knowledge, *vibhva* or *vibhu*, the Pervading, the self-diffusing, and *vaja*, the Plenitude. Their names indicate their special nature and function, but they are really a trinity, and therefore, although usually termed the Rbhus, they are also called the Vibhus and Vajas. Rbhu, the eldest is the first in man who begins to shape by his thoughts and works the forms of immortality; Vibhwa gives pervasiveness to this working; Vaja, the youngest, supplies the plenitude of the divine light and substance by which the complete work can be done. These works and formations of immortality they effect, it is continually repeated, by the force of Thought, with the mind for field and material; they are done with power; they are attended by a perfection in the creative and effective act, *svapasyaya*, *sukrtyaya*, which is the condition of the working out of Immortality. These formations of the artisans of Immortality are, as they are briefly summarised in the hymn before us, the horses of Indra, the car of the Ashvins, the Cow that gives the sweet milk, the youth of the universal Parents, the multiplication into four of the one drinking-bowl of the gods originally fashioned by Twashtri, the Framer of things.

The hymn opens with an indication of its objective. It is an affirmation of the power of the Rbhus made for the divine Birth, made by men whose minds have attained to illumination and possess that energy of the Light from which the Rbhus were born. It is made by the breath of the mouth, the life-power in the world. Its object is to confirm in the human soul the entire delight of the Beatitude, the thrice seven ecstasies of the divine Life. This divine Birth is represented by the Rbhus who, once human, have become immortal. By their accomplishings of the work, the great work of upward human evolution which is the summit of the world-sacrifice, - they have gained in that sacrifice their divine share and privilege along with the divine powers. They are the sublimated human energies of formation and upward progress who assist the gods in the divinising of man. And of all their accomplishings that which is central is the formation of the two brilliant horses of Indra, the horses yoked by speech to their movements, yoked by the Word and fashioned by the mind. For the free movement of the luminous mind, the divine mind in man, is the condition of all



other immortalising works.

The second work of the Rbhus is to fashion the chariot of the Ashvins, lords of the human journey, - the happy movement of the Ananda in man which pervades with its action all his worlds or planes of being, bringing health, youth, strength, wholeness to the physical man, capacity of enjoyment and action to the vital, glad energy of the light to the mental being, - in a word, the force of the pure delight of being in all his members.

The third work of the Rbhus is to fashion the cow who gives the sweet milk. It is said elsewhere that this cow has been delivered out of its covering skin, - the veil of Nature's outward movement and action, - by the Rbhus. The fostering cow herself is she of the universal forms and universal impetus of movement, *visvajuvam visvarupam*, in other words she is the first Radiance, Aditi, the infinite Consciousness of the infinite conscious Being which is the mother of the worlds. That consciousness is brought out by the Rbhus from the veiling movement of nature and a figure of her is fashioned here in us by them. She is, by the action of the powers of the duality, separated from her offspring, the soul in the lower world; the Rbhus restore it to constant companionship with its infinite mother.

Another great work of the Rbhus is - in the strength of their previous deeds, of the light of Indra, the movement of the Ashvins, the full yield of the fostering Cow - to restore youth to the aged Parents of the world, Heaven and Earth. Heaven is the mental consciousness, Earth the physical. These in their union are represented as lying long -old and prostrate like fallen sacrificial posts, worn-out and suffering. The Rbhus, it is said, ascend to the house of the Sun where he lives in the unconcealed splendour of his Truth and there slumbering for twelve days afterwards traverse the heaven and the earth, filling them with abundant rain of the streams of Truth, nourishing them, restoring them to youth and Vigour. They pervade heaven with their workings, they bring divine increase to the mentality, they give to it and the physical being a fresh and young and immortal movements. For from the home of the Truth they bring with them the perfection of that which is the condition of their work, the movement in the straight path of the Truth and the Truth itself with its absolute effectivity in all the thoughts and words of the mentality. Carrying this power with them in their pervading entry into the lower world, they pour into it the immortal essence.

It is the wine of that immortal essence with its ecstasies which they win by their works and bring with them to man in his sacrifice. And with them come and sit Indra and the Maruts, the divine Mind and its Thought-forces, and the four great Kings, sons of Aditi, children of the Infinite, Varuna, Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, the purity and vastness of the Truth-Consciousness, its law of love and light and



harmony, its power and aspiration, its pure and happy enjoyment of things.

And there at the sacrifice the gods drink in the fourfold bowl, *chamasam chaturvayam*, the pourings of the nectar. For Twashtri, the Framer of things, has given man originally only a single bowl, the physical consciousness, the physical body in which to offer the delight of existence to the gods. The Rbhus, powers of luminous knowledge, take it as renewed and perfected by Twashtri's latter workings and build up in him from the material of the four planes three other bodies, vital, mental and the causal or ideal body.

Because they have made this fourfold cup of bliss and enabled him thereby to live on the plane of the Truth-Consciousness they are able to establish in the perfected human being the thrice seven ecstasies of the supreme existence poured into the mind, vitality and body. Each of these they can give perfectly by the full expression of its separate absolute ecstasy even in the combination of the whole.

The Rbhus have power to support and contain all these floods of the delight of being in the human consciousness; and they are able to divide it in the perfection of their works among the manifested gods, to each god his sacrificial share. For such perfect division is the whole condition of the effective sacrifice, the perfect work.

Such are the Rbhus and they are called to the human sacrifice to fashion for man the things of immortality even as they fashioned them for themselves. "He becomes full of plenitude and strength for the labour, he becomes a rishi by power of self expression, he becomes a hero and a smiter hard to pierce in the battles, he holds in himself increase of bliss and entire energy whom Vaja and Vibhwa, the Rbhus foster.... For you are seers and thinkers clear-discerning; as such with this thought of our soul we declare to you our knowledge. Do you in your knowledge moving about our thoughts fashion for us all human enjoyings, - luminous plenitude and fertilizing force and supreme felicity. Here issue, here felicity, here a great energy of inspiration fashion for us in your delight. Give to us, O Rbhus, that richly-varied plenitude by which we shall awaken in our consciousness to things beyond ordinary men."





### ***Vishvedevah* or All-Gods**

Some, like the ancient commentator *Shakapuni*, believe that *Vishvedevah* constitute a special class of Deities. In the opinion of *Yaska*, the term *Vishva* is in the sense of all; hence it refers to the collectivity of all the Gods including the Gods with specific names like Agni etc. and those not specifically mentioned. This view seems to be better since all the hymns addressed to them carry the implied sense of the assembly of all the Gods. These hymns especially stress the qualities common to all the Gods. *Vishvedevah* occurs in the Rigveda for the first time in Hymn 3, mantras (3.7) to (3.9).





## Aditi (RV 1.80.10)

Aditi is Heaven,

Aditi is mid-region,

Aditi is the Mother (Earth),

Father and Son;

She is all the Gods; She is the five peoples;

Aditi is all that is born and what is to be.

She is the goddess of infinity as the verse (1.89.10) given below unambiguously declares.

The five peoples are the beings of the five planes of matter (earth), *praana* (mid-region), *manas* (heaven), *sva* (world of light) and *ananda* (the world of bliss). This verse is also the invocation to the *Prashna* upanishad.

To understand Aditi, we have to understand the *puranic* story of *Kashyapa* and his two wives, Diti and Aditi *in a symbolic sense*. Diti in the RV denotes finiteness. All the *devas* are called as *adityas* because they are descended from Aditi. RV makes several interesting references to Diti and Aditi together, as in (4.2.11).

Mitra, Varuna, in the uprising of the Sun, you ascend;  
You behold the Infinite Aditi and the finite Diti. (7.62.8).

May we abide in the law of thy workings and be blameless before the Mother infinity *aditaye*. (1.24.15).

Aditi is the Mother of all, Mother of all the Gods, Mother of all creation. She is the infinite consciousness. We can become blameless only by rejecting all things that are contrary to the Supreme Law.





## Ashvins

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### Ashvins

Ashvins are the twin divine powers whose primary function is to effect action and enjoyment. They are commonly referred to as "*madhuman*," (4.45.1), full of honey, the honey of delight of existence. "Of all the Gods, they are most ready to come to man and create for him ease or bliss." Hence they are called as "*subhaspati*," the guardians of bliss (1.34.6). Their action is to guide the humans across the travails and obstacles in the physical, vital or mental aspects of everyday life to the supreme beatitude characterized by bliss or honey. Arising from the ocean of infinite existence and endowed with Truth-Force, they are doers of action in superb thought. In the human mentality they acquire and hold the delight and treasures of the life supreme, by means of a special thought power. They effectuate in man the luminous power of impulsion needed for great action.

Recall that in *veda*, the vital world (*prana*) and its counterpart in the individual is the source of all the energies put forth by the humans. The physical world is referred to as "*anna*," it is insentient; the mental world (*mana*) is the world of thought, the information gathering of sense organs, the subjective judgments, intellectual analyses, etc. The vital activities in man cover a broad range. It includes the lower vital movement like small desires, creature comforts, petty ambitions, jealousy, etc. The higher vital deals with movements like courage, nobility, self giving, capacity for self-sacrifice for the sake of others, the urge for beauty and harmony at all levels, etc. Ashvins energize and propel forward all the higher vital movements. They put forth also the energies which damp or reduce the effect of lower vital movements like desire and anger which lead to physiological and psychological illness, the fear of old age, death, etc. Two principle characteristics of Ashvins are lauded in all the hymns. They are swift of movement aided by swift steeds and a fast chariot which has the freedom to go anywhere in the three planes of existence, namely matter, vital and mind with one of its wheels centered on the summit of heaven. Chariot in the *veda* always symbolizes movement and steeds characterize force. The name Ashvins is derived from Ashva, the physical horse or vital force indicating that they energize the vitality of the human being in its onward journey, but they also work in thought and lead them to truth.

There are several mantras which describe the Ashvins as helping the human



aspirants to cross the ocean of ignorance by rowing them in a boat. We will describe some of these mantras later.

Their second principle characteristic is their capacity for enjoyment and bestowing enjoyment on the humans. We recall that in *veda* honey or Soma always symbolizes the delight of existence which pervades all manifestation. The reason d'etre for every action, every object, is the delight behind it which holds it together. All the Gods are lovers of honey or Soma, the seers repeatedly pray for the Gods to come and accept the Soma that is being released in all their actions. The Ashvins not only seek honey everywhere but they also distribute the honey to all the human seekers. They carry three parts of satisfying delights in their car - satisfactions for the physical body, satisfactions of vitality and satisfactions of mind and these are given to the human engaged in self-giving (*yajna*).

These three forms of satisfaction are not all that their chariot holds. There is always a fourth, *turi barya* (4.45.1), a skin full of honey and out of this skin the honey breaks and overflows on every side (4.45.10). Just as the three satisfactions "*trayo*" in the word preceding *turiya* in (4.45.1) refers to the three satisfactions associated with the three planes of our consciousness, namely the body, life and mind, the fourth (*turiya*) refers to the fourth plane of our consciousness, the *mahas*, the *svar*, the *ritam britam*, Truth-vast. *drtisturiyo madhuno vi rapshate* (4.45.1). The fourth skin overflows with honey. *drtim vahethe madhumantamasvina* (4.45.3). O Ashvin, full of honey is the skin you bear. The Ashvins bear with them the honey, the *madhu* in a skin that is torn, *drti*. *drti* literally means something that is cut or torn. The Ashvins bring with them the skin, a partial formation out of the Truth consciousness to contain the honey of beatitude. The beatitude, always characterized by infinities, cannot be limited to any enclosure or skin. Hence the skin is torn. The abundant and infinite sweetness of the honey overflows everywhere, drenching all the planes of our existence with delight.

A corollary of their activity in distributing the honey to the seeker is their work as divine physicians who render relief to the human aspirants in curing their diseases, both physical and psychological. The adverse forces in nature, especially in the vital, both individual and cosmic, are opposed to the human worshippers' attempts in rising to the higher levels of consciousness and they introduce obstacles in his/her path in the form of physical or psychological ailments. Ashvins offer the required cures. Ashvins are also praised as giving the humans the relief for the ailments of old age so that old age does not hold out frightening prospects. Ashvins are prayed so that "we can enter old age comfortably with happiness just as we enter our own homes." We will discuss this aspect of Ashvins in some detail later.

Ashvins first make their appearance very early in the Rigveda in the *sukta* (1.3)





of the Seer Madhuchchandas. In this *sukta* the seer prays to the Ashvins prior to his prayer to Indra, the lord of the Divine mind. We will reproduce the three mantras and comment on them. *ashvina yajvaririsho dravatpanni subhaspati, purubhuja chanasyatam.* (1.3.1). O Ashvins, swift-footed, guardians of bliss, abundant enjoyers, Take delight in the impelling energies of the *yajna*. (1.3.1). *ashvina purudamsasa nara shaviraya dhiya, dhishnya vanatam girah.* (1.3.2). A Ashvins, accomplished of varied action, upholders in the intellect, Take joy in our words by a luminous energetic thought. (1.3.2).

In (1.3.1), the Ashvins are described as swift-footed guardians of bliss and abundant enjoyers. Guardians of bliss implies that they both accept bliss and bestow bliss on the human aspirants. Ashvins are asked to accept the delight flowing out of the performance of the *yajna* or sacrifice. *yajna* is not simply a ritual. It is self-giving. It is a way of communing with the Gods and for the *rishis*, their entire life was *yajna*. In the *yajna*, Soma, which indicates the delight of existence, is released as a result of all the actions done by the aspirant. These are the impelling energies in the mantra (1.3.1). Ashvins are requested to accept these flowing energies impregnated with delight.

In the second mantra (1.3.2), Ashvins are described as "upholders in the intellect." When the Soma is pressed and the honey is released, words capable of manifesting fresh forms of consciousness well up. The phrase "take joy in our words by a luminous energetic thought" means that the Ashvins have to establish the words in the thought, give them a thought form and then accept them. Speech is to be made one in nature with thought abounding with the strength. The Ashvins are also called as accomplishes of varied action. The subhymn (1.3.1) through (1.3.3) comes prior to the subhymn of Indra, the lord of divine mind. The *rishi* wants the help of Ashvins in strengthening the nervous mentality before praying for the power of Indra in strengthening his higher mind.

We mentioned earlier that the Ashvins hold the delight of the honey in man by a special thought power which is mentioned in (1.3.2). There are several mantras which support this statement. Ashvins, diligent in their tasks, children of ocean, making felicities accessible thro' the mind, finding the substance with thought (1.46.2). The Ashvins obtain the divine riches beyond the reach of mind. They have the thought that knows their source. Rapid as thought, strong, speeding to the joy, Lords of plenty, with many aids for our protection. (8.22.16). By the thought, the somas have been yoked. (1.46.8).

### Ashvins as divine physicians

Because of their association with *madhu* or honey or delight of existence, they



can cure all the ailments, both physical and psychological and grant longevity. *trirno ashvina divyani bheshaja, ...tridhatu sharma vahatam shubaspati* (1.34.6). Give us thrice, O Ashvins, the heavenly medicaments. ...O Guardians of auspicious, give us the well-being of three bodies (1.34.6).

The medicaments remove illnesses of various kinds. The words "three bodies" stand for the physical, vital and mental bodies.

In the *suktas* (1.116) through (1.120) by the Seer Kakshivan, there are numerous instances of the healing help given by Ashvins to various persons in various contexts. We will consider several mantras. *paravatam nasatyanudetham ucchabudhnam chakrathurjihmbaram, ksharannapo na payanaya raye sahasraya trshyate gotamasya*. (1.116.9). O Nasatyas, ye raised up the well and made the door curved so that abundant riches flowed like water for thirsty Gotama's drink (1.116.9).

Ashvins are called *nasatyas* because they are lords of movement, *nas* under. Well refers to the physical body which is hidden in the waters of the lower vital currents characterized by anger, greed, etc. Ashvins raise up the physical body and open the doors which are blocking the flow of the spiritual current from above, the *sahasrara* center of the *tantric* tradition. Once the door is opened, these spiritual riches automatically flow into the *rishi*. Clearly neither the thirst of Gotama nor the drink are physical, but psychological. In *vedic yoga*, the energies of demons and other *asuras* harass the *rishi* engaged in the inner *yajna*. One such *rishi* is Atri who is the recipient of the grace of Ashvins, as indicated in the following mantra. *himena agnim grmsam ava barrayetha barm pitumati barm u barrjvam asmai adhattam, rbi barse atrim asvina avani bartam ut ninyathuh sarvaganam svasti* (1.116.8). O Ashvins, ye quenched with cold the (inward) burning fires, ye gave him nourishing stuff; Atri, cast downward in the dark cavern, Ye restored with his hosts (senses) to well being. (1.116.8).

The burning fires do not refer to the external heat caused by the Sun, etc., but to the internal heat characterized by physical ailments like fever or psychological ailments caused by the lower vital movements like anger, sex, tasty palate, etc. Ashvins cool down the heated senses. Similarly, the *rishi* finds himself in a psychological cavern devoid of light and Atri restore him back to light and also expose his sense organs (*gana* or hosts) both internal and external to light and well being.

The next mantra also confirms the symbolic character of the Ashvins healing powers. O Ashvins, ye raised up Rebha (seer), like soma in a ladle who for ten nights and nine days had lain fettered in cruel bonds, distressed, immersed in waters (1.116.24). Ashvins, leaders, showerers, rescuing Rebha cast by unassailable enemies in waters ye made the (maimed) *rishi* whole with your



healing skills like a wounded steed. Your past deeds do not fade (1.117.4).

Both the mantras refer to the same *rishi* Rebha. The waters as before refer to the lower vital currents. Ashvins raise up the seer immersed in these currents. They heal all his wounded parts just like healing a wounded steed. Again the wounds here are both physical and psychological. The characteristic of Ashvins to endow an integral perfection as the seer, i.e., making the maimed *rishi* whole, is also mentioned in (1.117.19).

Ashvins also have the power of freeing persons from the limitations of old age. We will quote two mantras. *na jujuruso na barsatyota vavrim pramuncatam drapimiva cyava bar n a bart, pra bartiratam jahitasya a baryuh dasra bar a barditpatin krnutam kani barna barm* 11 (1.116.10). O Nasatyas, ye stripped old age from aged yavana as it were mail (armour). Ye prolonged his life and made him husband of youthful maidens (1.116.10). "Maidens" symbolize the potential unmanifested powers within a person waiting to be manifested. "Becoming their husband" means manifesting these powers. The Ashvins are full of honey of the delight of existence. Bestowing this honey on a person rejuvenates all the parts of the being and the conditions and symptoms of old age are removed in one stroke like a dress or armour. The analogy of armour or mail also indicates that old age is not easy to break up. *uta pasyan asnuvan di barrgam a bar yuh astamivet jarimanam jagamyam.* (1.116.25). May I, enjoying life with all senses active, enter old age as a master his house (1.116.25).

When a master enters his own home, all the persons obey and love him and all the objects are at his command. Similarly even in old age, the *rishi* prays that he may be in command of all his facilities including physical, mental and spiritual. Another mantra (1.119.7) says "ye restored Vandana worn out with old age; by his lauds he brought forth the sage (Vamadeva) from the womb." Here the poet is not referring to the physical delivery of a child from a mother's womb. In the *veda*, birth of a child from a womb always symbolizes the manifestation of the power of godhead in man. To be in the womb means that the power is only potential and unmanifested. The Ashvins help in manifesting this power. In this sense they bring forth the seer from the womb. In the *veda* and upanishad "*hiranya garba*" (golden womb) indicates the cosmic condition when all the things that have to be manifested are in a seed condition, ready to manifest. Since each power is divine and is shining, it is called golden.

We will quote two mantras from the eighth book to show that the powers of Ashvins are described in all books and not just the first book. And may the Ashvins, the divine physicians effect our weal (8.18.8). You both accomplishes, physicians, bringers of delight, you both won the praise of Daksha (8.86.1).

In another section, we will discuss the relationship of the Ashvins to the doctrine



of mystic honey elucidated in the *brhadaranyaka* upanishad. The Ashvins give the secret of mystic honey to Dadhyan, son of the seer Atharvan. This incident is mentioned in several mantras of Rigveda (1.117.22, 1.116.12, 1.119.9). Ashvins as guides.

There are several mantras which describe the Ashvins as the leaders of the journey. They lead the human aspirants from the present state of confusion and unhappiness to the other shore of happiness. Ashvins are commonly called as *nasatyas*, the leaders of movement (derived from the word "nas," to move). *vartanim madhuna bar jinvathas panthah*. (4.45.3)

With the honey, you gladden the movements and its paths (4.45.3). "By the action of Ashvins, man's progress toward beatitude becomes itself beatific; all his travail and struggle and labour grows full of divine delight... By the growing law of Truth in the mental and physical consciousness we finally arrive beyond the mind and body to the superconscious Truth" (Sri Aurobindo, Secret of Veda, p. 320). *yate vishva baram anu svadhya chetathaspathah*. (4.45.6). By force of Nature's self-arranging, you move consciously along all paths. (4.45.6). *du parametave pantha rtasya sadhuya*. (1.46.11). The fit path was ready to reach the shores of truth. The Ashvins follow the path of Truth, *rtasya pantha bar*, and the force is "svadha," their innate force, Nature's self-arranging force. Give us, O Ashvins, the luminous impulsion that may carry us across darkness. (1.46.6). We call the Ashvins, of auspicious car, superbly charioted, the Gods who reach the heaven. (1.22.2). Ashvins, ye have created for man this adorable light from Heaven. Do ye bring into us powerful strengths (1.92.17).

In several of the Agni hymns of Rigveda, Agni is described as helping the aspirant cross all the obstructions like a boat over the river. See for instance, (1.99). Since Ashvins are also described as helpers in the journey, what is the connection between their respective roles? This is given in (1.112.1). I laud heaven and earth to know them first, then Agni, kindled and bright shining for their coming for worship Come hither into us, O Ashvins with these aids with which you please the sacrificer for your share of the sacrifice. This mantra says that by the grace of shining Agni the path becomes clear and Ashvins help the aspirant across the indicated path. They symbols of vehicles of the journey are the "ratha" chariot or the boat. Recall that in *veda*, "ratha" commonly translated as car, always denotes a movement. As Sri Aurobindo says chariot or car if the Ashvins signify "the happy movement of the Ananda in man which pervades with its action all his worlds or planes of being." *tribandhurena trivrtta supesasa rathena yatam asvina*. (1.47.2). O Ashvins come ye in your beautiful car three columned, moving in the three worlds (1.47.2). *trisadhasthe barhisi vishvavedasa madhva yajnam mimiksatam*. (1.47.4). O Ashvins, omniscient, seated in the triple seat sprinkle our sacrifice with your honey. (1.47.4). "Your car born of truth" (3.58.8) "Come Ashvins in the car of solar skin" (8.8.2) "Gold-seated, gold-



reined (car) touching the heaven" (8.5.28). "Your car by which you move at once over all the worlds towards the enjoyment rich in offerings that make thro' the goal." (4.45.7). On the summit of the hill, you placed firm the wheel of car, The other wheel goes around. (1.30.19). One wheel of the Ashvins car is placed on the summit of the plane of the physical consciousness, the peak of ripened consciousness of man. The other wheel (or the other two wheels) go in the other worlds.

This Ashvins bring health, youth, strength and wholeness to the physical man, capacity of action and enjoyment to the vital man and the "glad energy of the light" to the mental man. They act on the three planes of *bhur*, *bhuvah* and *sva*, the planes of matter, life (or vital) and mental energy. Their chariot is often described as three wheeled or three seated or three columned. "Seat" in the *veda* is that which supports and is synonymous with the body. The three seats refers to the three bodies of man, namely physical, vital and mental. In the ritualistic interpretations, the three seated is interpreted as the three heaps of grass.

The hymn (1.34) having twelve mantras makes repeated references to the number three, "three pillars of support" (1.34.2), journey thrice by night (1.34.2), journey thrice by day (1.34.2), render faultless *yajna* thrice on the same day (1.34.3), sprinkle our sacrifice thrice with the celestial honey or *madhu* (1.34.3), sprinkle thrice for us the opulent forceful impulses, day and night.

"Come thrice to our dwelling" (1.34.4) Thrice to the sacrifice deserving protection (1.34.4) Thrice reach us the wealth (1.34.5) Thrice come to the assembly of gods (1.34.5) Bring us inspiration thrice (1.34.5) Give us the well being of the three substances (1.34.6) travel thrice around our earth (1.34.7) Come ye far to our threefold earth (1.34.7) .in -.5i

We will consider three mantras in this hymn in some detail. O Ashvins, thrice is the Soma distilled by the seven mother streams; Three are the receptacles; in the three ways is the oblation done; Moving above the three earths, ye guard the Sun in the firmament of heaven, established by day and by night. (1.34.8).

The seven streams are the streams of consciousness, namely the three streams of the lower triple worlds, viz matter, life and mind, the three streams of the upper triple world, existence (*sat*), consciousness-force (*chit*), delight (*ananda*) and the stream, *mahas* or *sva*, linking the two triples. Soma, the essence of Delight of all existence, is prepared by the radiant powers of the sevenfold Being, associated with the seven streams. The receptacles of the Soma are the three planes of matter, life and mind and they are ready. O Ashvins, accept the Soma, travel above the three worlds and guard the supreme Light. Working day and night, the Sun of truth has been established by the (inner) sacrifices, so that



we can realize it. Guard it for us.

It should be clear that interpreting seven streams as the seven rivers of Punjab as most Western indologists are wont to do even today, will make the mantra unintelligible. But when we take the hints of Sri Aurobindo and look for the hidden secret, the mantra's meaning shines luminously.

The next mantra (1.34.9) of the same hymn, is again clear if we interpret it in the esoteric sense.

Where, O Ashvins, are the three wheels of your triangular car? Where are the seat-supporting three pillars? When will the powerful ass be yoked to arrive at our sacrifice? (1.34.9).

The seer of the mantra says "we are ready to receive you, the Soma is prepared, but your car is yet to be seen; be quick of grace, yoke the asses to the car and come quickly to us."

In several mantras, Ashvins are also hymned as carrying the seer to the other shore of truth with a boat. O Ashvins, come with the boat to reach the shore beyond the thoughts; harness your car. (1.46.7). Your boat is vaster than heaven, your car is on the shore of the heavens. (1.46.8).

### Dual nature of the Ashvins

The twin powers, Ashvins, always appear together in all the mantras; they are never separated from each other. There are other twin powers in the Rigveda like Mitra and Varuna. Even though there are several mantras for the twin deities together, there are a large number of mantras for Varuna and Mitra separately. This is not the case with the Ashvins. It is not that they are identical *rishi* Paura Atreya notes that they are born "separately" (5.7.34). "They are co-existent and interdependent for their effective effecting which they discharge in common." Gritsamada's hymn (2.39) likens them to a splendid named pair, to the two lips that speak sweet words, to the two nostrils, etc. "Ashvins are two distinct formations of the same Godhead for the same purpose but representing severally Light and Power, or knowledge and will... Their mutual relation is that of a balance and harmony, neither of them can be explained by itself without the term of the other... their mutual dependence can be explained by that one secret the *madhu*, the delight of being in all existence which affects, supports and holds them in close harmony."





### Lords of Bliss (RV 4.45)

1. Lo, that Light is rising up and the all pervading car is being yoked on the high level of this Heaven; there are placed satisfying delights in their triple pairs and the fourth skin of honey overflows.
2. Full of honey upward rise the delight; upward horses and cars in the wide-shinings of the Dawn and they roll aside the veil of darkness that encompassed on every side and they extend the lower world into a shining form like that of the luminous heaven.
3. Drink of the honey with your honey-drinking mouths, for the honey yoke your car beloved. With the honey you gladden the movements and its paths; full of honey, O Ashvins, is the skin that you bear.
4. Full of the honey are the swans that bear you, golden winged, waking with the Dawn, and they come not to hurt, they rain forth the waters, they are full of rapture and touch that which holds the Rapture. Like bees to pouring of honey you come to the Soma-offerings.
5. Full of the honey the fires lead well the sacrifice and they woo your brightness, O Ashvins, day by day, when one with purified hands, with a perfect vision, with power to go through to the goal, has pressed out with the pressing-stones the honeyed Soma-wine.
6. Drinking the wine near them, the fires ride and run and extend the lower world into a shining form like that of the luminous heaven. The Sun too goes yoking his steeds; by force of Nature's self-arranging you move consciously along all paths.
7. I have declared, O Ashvins, holding the Thought in me, your car that is undecaying and drawn by perfect steeds, -your car by which you move at once over all the worlds towards the enjoyment rich in offerings that makes through to the goal.

### COMMENTARY

The hymns of the Rig-veda addressed to the two shining Twins, like those addressed to the Ribhus, are full of symbolic expressions and unintelligible without a firm clue to their symbolism. The three leading features of these hymns to the Ashvins are the praise of their chariot, their horses and their rapid all- pervading movement; their seeking of honey and their joy in the honey,





*madhu*, and the satisfying delights that they carry in their car; and their close association with the Sun, with Surya the daughter of the Sun and with the Dawn.

The Ashvins like the other gods descend from the Truth- Consciousness, the *rtam*; they are born or manifested from Heaven, from Dyau, the pure Mind; their movement pervades all the worlds, - the effect of their action ranges from the body through the vital being and the thought to the superconscient Truth. It commences indeed from the ocean, from the vague of the being as it emerges out of the subconscious and they conduct the soul over the flood of these waters and prevent its foundering on its voyage. They are therefore *nasatya*, lords of the movement, leaders of the journey or voyage.

They help man with the Truth which comes to them especially by association with the Dawn, with Surya, lord of the Truth, and with Surya, his daughter, but they help him more characteristically with the delight of being. They are lords of bliss, *Subhaspati*; their car or movement is loaded with the satisfactions of the delight of being in all its planes, they bear the skin full of the overflowing honey; they seek the honey, the sweetness, and fill all things with it. They are therefore effective powers of the Ananda which proceeds out of the Truth-Consciousness and which manifesting itself variously in all the three worlds maintains man in his journey. Hence their action is in all the worlds. They are especially riders or drivers of the Horse, Ashvins, as their name indicates, - they use the vitality of the human being as the motive-force of the journey: but also they work in the thought and lead it to the Truth. They give health, beauty, wholeness to the body; they are the divine physicians. Of all the gods they are the most ready to come to man and to create for him ease and joy, *agamistha*, *subhaspati*. For this is their peculiar and perfect function. They are essentially lords of weal, of bliss, *subhaspati*.

This character of the Ashvins is brought out with a continual emphasis by Vamadeva in the present hymn. In almost every verse occurs with a constant iteration the words *madhu*, *madhuman*, honey, honied. It is a hymn to the sweetness of existence; it is a chant of the delight of being. The great Light of lights, the Sun of Truth, the illumination of the Truth-Consciousness is rising up out of the movement of life to create the illumined Mind, *Swar*, which completes the evolution of the lower triple world. *Esa sya bhanur udiyarti*. By this rising of Sun in man, the full movement of the Ashvins becomes possible; for by the Truth comes the realised Delight, the heavenly beatitude. Therefore, the chariot of the Ashvins is being yoked upon the height of this Dyau, the high level or plane of the resplendent mind. That chariot is all-pervading; its motion goes everywhere; its speed runs freely on all planes of our consciousness. *Yujyate rathah parijma divo asya sanavi*.

The full all-pervading movement of the Ashvins brings with it the fullness of all



the possible satisfactions of the delight of being. This is expressed symbolically in the language of the Veda by saying that in their car are found the satisfactions, *prksasah*, in three pairs, *prksaso asmin mithuna adhi trayah*. The word *prksa*, is rendered food in the ritual interpretation like the kindred word *prayas*. The root means pleasure, fullness, satisfaction, and may have the material sense of a "delicacy" or satisfying food and the psychological sense of a delight, pleasure or satisfaction. The satisfactions or delicacies which are carried in the car of the Ashvins are, then, in three pairs; or the phrase may simply mean, they are three but closely associated together. In any case, the reference is to the three kinds of satisfaction or pleasure which correspond to the three movements or worlds of our progressive consciousness, - satisfactions of the body, satisfactions of vitality, satisfactions of the mind. If they are in three pairs, then we must understand that on each plane there is a double action of the delight corresponding to the double and united twinhood of the Ashvins. It is difficult in the Veda itself to distinguish between these brilliant and happy Twins or to discover what each severally represents. We have no such indication as is given us in the case of the three Ribhus. But perhaps the Greek names of these two Dioskouroi, *divo napata*, sons of Heaven, contain a clue. Kastor, the name of the elder, seems to be Kashitri, the Shining One; Poludeukes may possibly be Purudansas, a name which occurs in the Veda as an epithet of the Ashvins, the Manifold in activity. If so, the twin birth of the Ashvins recalls the constant Vedic dualism of Power and Light, Knowledge and Will, Consciousness and Energy, *go*, and *ashva*. In all the satisfactions brought to us by the Ashvins these two elements are inseparably united; where the form is that of the Light or Consciousness, there Power and Energy are contained; where the form is that of the Power or Energy, there Light and Consciousness are contained.

But these three forms of satisfaction are not all that their chariot holds for us; there is something else, a fourth, a skin full of honey and out of this skin the honey breaks and overflows on every side. *drtis turiyo madhuno vi rapsate*. Mind, life and body, these are three; *turiya*, the fourth plane of our consciousness, is the superconscient, the Truth-Consciousness. The Ashvins bring with them a skin, *drti*, literally a thing cut or torn, a partial formation out of the Truth-Consciousness to contain the honey of the superconscient Beatitude; but it cannot contain it; that unconquerably abundant and infinite sweetness breaks out and overflows everywhere drenching with delight the whole of our existence.

With that honey the three pairs of satisfactions, mental, vital, bodily, are impregnated by this all-pervasive overflowing plenty and they become full of its sweetness, *madhumantah*. And so becoming, at once they begin to move upward. Touched by the divine delight all our satisfactions in this lower world soar upward irresistibly attracted towards the superconscient, towards the Truth, towards the Beatitude. And with them, for, secretly or openly, consciously or



subconsciously it is the delight of being that is the leader of our activities, -all the chariots and horses of these gods take the same soaring upward movement. All the various movements of our being, all the forms of Force that give them their impulsion, all follow the ascending light of Truth towards its home. *ud vam prksaso madhumanta irate, ratha asvasa usaso vyustisu.*

“In the wide-shinings of the Dawn” they rise; for Dawn is the illumination of the Truth rising upon the mentality to bring the day of full consciousness into the darkness or half-lit night of our being. She comes as Dakshina, the pure intuitive discernment on which Agni the God-force in us feeds when he aspires towards the Truth or as Sarama, the discovering intuition, who penetrates into the cave of the subconscious where the niggard lords of sense-action have hidden the radiant herds of the Sun and gives information to Indra. Then comes the lord of luminous Mind and breaks open the cave and drives upward the herds, *udajat*, upwards towards the vast Truth-Consciousness, the own home of the gods. Our conscious existence is a hill (*adri*) with many successive levels and elevations, *sanuni*, the cave of the subconscious is below; we climb upwards towards the godhead of the Truth and Bliss where are the seats of Immortality, *yatramrtasa asate.*

By this upward movement of the chariot of the Ashvins with its burden of uplifted and transformed satisfactions the veil of Night that encompasses the worlds of being in us is rolled away. All these worlds, mind, life, body, are opened to the rays of the Sun of Truth. This lower world in us, rajas, is extended and shaped by this ascending movement of all its powers and satisfactions into the very brightness of the luminous intuitive mind, Swar, which receives directly the higher Light. The mind, the act, the vital, emotional, substantial existence, all becomes full of the glory and the intuition, the power and the light of the divine Sun, - *tat savitur varenyam bhargo devasya.* The lower mental existence is transformed into an image and reflection of the higher Divine. *apornuvasanta tama a parivrtam, svar na sukram tanvanta a rajah.*

This verse closes the general description of the perfect and final movement of the Ashvins. In the third the Rishi Vamadeva turns to his own ascension, his own offering of the Soma, his voyage and sacrifice; he claims for it their beatific and glorifying action. The mouths of the Ashvins are made to drink of the sweetness; in his sacrifice, then, let them drink of it. *madhvah pibatam madhupebhir dsabhih.* Let them yoke their chariot for the honey, their chariot beloved of men; *uta priyam madhune yunjatham ratham.* For man's movement, his progressive activity, is made by them glad in all its paths with that very honey and sweetness of the Ananda. *A vartanim madhuna jinvathas pathah.* For they bear the skin full and overflowing with its honey. *drtim vahethe madbumantam asvina.* By the action of the Ashvins man's progress towards the beatitude becomes itself beatific; all his travail and struggle and labour grows full of a divine delight. As it



is said in the Veda that by Truth is the progress towards the Truth, that is to say, by the growing law of the Truth in the mental and physical consciousness we arrive finally beyond mind and body to the superconscious Truth, so here it is indicated that by Ananda is the progress towards the Ananda, -by a divine delight growing in all our members, in all our activities we arrive at the superconscious beatitude.

In the upward movement the horses that draw the chariot of the Ashvins change into birds, into swans, *hamsasah*. The Bird in the Veda is the symbol, very frequently, of the soul liberated and upsoaring, at other times of energies so liberated and upsoaring, winging upwards towards the heights of our being, winging widely with a free flight, no longer involved in the ordinary limited movement or labouring gallop of the Life-energy, the Horse, *asva*. Such are the energies that draw the free car of the Lords of Delight, when there dawns on us the Sun of the Truth. These winged movements are full of the honey showered from the overflowing skin, *madhumantah*. They are unassailable, *asridhah*, they come to no hurt in their flight; or, the sense may be, they make no false or hurtful movement. And they are golden-winged, *hiranyaparnah*. Gold is the symbolic colour of the light of Surya. The wings of these energies are the full, satisfied, attaining movement, *parna*, of his luminous knowledge.

For these are the birds that awake with Dawn; these are the winged energies that come forth from their nests when the feet of the daughter of Heaven press the levels of our human mentality, *divo asya sanavi*. Such are the swans that bear the swift-riding Twins. *hamsaso ye vam madbumanto asridho hiranyaparna uhuva usarbudhah*.

Full of the honey these winged energies shower on us as they rise the abundance of the waters of heaven, the full outpouring of the high mental consciousness; they are instinct with ecstasy, with rapture, with the intoxication of the immortal wine; and they touch, they come into conscious contact with that superconscious being which is eternally in possession of the ecstasy, rapturous for ever with its divine intoxication. *udapruto mandino mandinisprah*. Drawn by them the Lords of delight come to the rishi's Soma-offering like bees to tricklings of honey; *madhvo na maksah savanani gacchathah*. Makers themselves of the sweetness, they like the bees seek whatever sweetness can serve them as their material for more delight.

In the sacrifice the same movement of general illumination already described as the result of the ascending flight of the Ashvins is now described as being effected by the aid of the fires of Agni. For the flames of the Will, the divine Force burning up in the soul, are also drenched with the overflowing sweetness and therefore they perform perfectly from day to day their great office of leading the sacrifice progressively to its goal. For that progress they woo with their



flaming tongues the daily visitation of the brilliant Ashvins who are bright with the light of the intuitive illuminations and uphold them with their thought of flashing energy. *svadhvarso madhumanto agnaya usra jarante prati vastor asvina.*

This aspiration of Agni happens when the Sacrificer with pure hands, with a perfectly discerning vision, with power in his soul to travel to the end of its pilgrimage, to the goal of the sacrifice through all obstacles, breaking all opposers, has pressed out the immortalising wine with the pressing-stones and that too becomes full of the honey of the Ashvins. *yan niktahastas taranir vicaksanah, somam susava madhumantam adribhih.* For the individual's delight in things is met by the Ashvins' triple satisfactions and by the fourth, the delight pouring from the Truth. The cleansed hands of the Sacrificer, *niktahastah*, are possibly symbolic of the purified physical being; the power comes from a fulfilled life-energy; the force of clear mental vision, *vicaksana*, is the sign of the truth-illuminated mind. These are the conditions in mind, life and body for the overflowing of the honey over the triple satisfactions of the Ashvins.

When the sacrificer has thus pressed out the honey-filled delight of things in his sacrifice, the flames of the Will are able to drink them from near, they are not compelled to bring them meagrely or with pain from a distant and hardly accessible plane of consciousness. Therefore, drinking immediately and freely, they become full of an exultant force and swiftness and run and race about over the whole field of our being to extend and build up the lower consciousness into the shining image of the world of free and luminous Mind. *akenipaso ahabhir davidhvatah, svar na sukram tanvanta a rajah.* The formula used is repeated without variations from the second Rik; but here it is the flames of the Will full of the fourfold satisfaction that do the work. There the free upsoaring of the gods by the mere touch of the Light and without effort; here the firm labour and aspiration of man in his sacrifice. For then it is by Time, by the day, that the work is perfected, *ahabhih*, by successive dawns of the Truth each with its victory over the night, by the unbroken succession of the sisters of which we have had mention in the hymn to the divine Dawn. Man cannot seize or hold at once all that the illumination brings to him; it has to be repeated constantly so that he may grow in the light.

But not only the fires of the Will are at work to transform the lower consciousness. The Sun of Truth yokes also his lustrous coursers and is in movement; *surascid asvan yuyujana iyate.* The Ashvins too take knowledge for the human consciousness of all the paths of its progress so that it may effect a complete, harmonious and many-sided movement. This movement advancing in many paths is combined in the light of the divine knowledge by the spontaneous self-arranging action of Nature which she assumes when the will and the knowledge are wedded in the perfect harmony of a fully self-conscious,



intuitively guided action. *Visvan anu svadhaya cetathas pathah.*

Vamadeva closes his hymn. He has been able to hold firmly the shining Thought with its high illumination and has expressed in himself by the shaping and fixing power of the Word the chariot, that is to say, the immortal movement of the delight of the Ashvins; the movement of a bliss that does not fade or grow old or exhaust itself, - it is ageless and undecaying, *ajarah*, - because it is drawn by perfect and liberated energies and not by the limited and soon exhausted, soon recalcitrant horses of the human vitality. *pra vam avocam asvina dhiyamhdhah, rathah svasvo ajaro yo asti.* In this movement they traverse in a moment all the worlds of the lower consciousness, covering it with their speeding delight, and so arrive to that universal enjoyment in man full of his offering of the Soma-wine by which they can lead him, puissantly entering into it, through all opposers and to the great goal. *yena sadyah pari rajamsi yatho havismantam taranim bhojam accha.*







### Ganapati

📖 [Ganapati](#)

📖 [Brhaspati](#)

### Gods of the mantra

The two deities are closely connected to each other. The Rigveda contains fourteen hymns dedicated to Brhaspati and Brahmanaspati. Each is mentioned in the hymn to the other. They are mentioned in other *riks* also. In all there are over one hundred *riks* dealing with these two deities. These *rik* give a clear picture of their powers and personalities without resorting to *puranas* or other books.

The name Brahmanaspati literally means the lord of *brahmanas*. What are these *brahmanas*? The word *brahman* or *brahmana* occurs more than a hundred times in the Rigveda. In only one place, the *purusha sukta* occurring in the tenth *mandala*, a relatively late composition, does *brahmana* signify an ideal caste. In all other places, *brahmana* has nothing to do with caste. Again *brahman* of the Rigveda has nothing to do with the *brahman parabrahman* of the upanishads, the highest principle of Existence. Rigveda uses the word "*tad ekam*", "That one," to signify the *parabrahman* or "That without a second" of the upanishads.

Again, the word *brahma* or *brahman* should not be confused with the *puranic* God Brahma, the creator, part of the *puranic* trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Brhaspati of the Rigveda has no connection either to the Brhaspati of *puranas* where he is the teacher of the Gods or to the Jupiter whose Sanskrit name is Brhaspati.

A word about the connection between the vedic Gods and *puranic* Gods is appropriate here. In the veda, all the Gods are pure and harmonious with no qualities like competition and others of human nature. Each vedic God has a distinct power and personality, but he or she carries the presence of the Supreme, "That one." All the vedic Gods harmoniously work together in divinity. In the *puranic* period, an individual person by being born in him. When the age of the vedic *samhita* came to an end, centuries later the upanishadic period started to capture the truths of the vedic period. At a much later period, the *puranas* started to state the esoteric truths of the veda in a language accessible to the common man or woman. However, in this attempt the qualities of the vedic Gods were mixed up with the qualities of some other lower vital Gods. Thus in the *puranas*, the various Gods are mixed together sometimes, but also quarrel with one another. The concept of Brahma as the creator in the *purana* is clearly derived from the Brahmanaspati/Brhaspati of the veda where they are the creators through the power of the Word. The elephant-faced *tantrik* God Ganapati clearly captures the aspects of the vedic God Brahmanaspati. Ganapati is invoked by a vedic *rik* associated with Brahmanaspati. The elephant-face appears like the written letter *om*, the primal word, the seed of all creation. The word Ganapati means the lord of *ganas* or hosts. In the *purana*, the hosts (*ganas*) are the beings of the vital world. But in the Rigveda, the *ganas* or hosts of Brhaspati/Brahmanaspati are stated to be the chants, the *riks* and the *stomas*, the words of praise (RV. 4.50). In the *purana*





Brahmanaspati/Brhaspati is a God of a very high plane and has little to do with the lower vital I

According to Sri Aurobindo, "*brahman* in the veda signifies the vedic Word or mantra in its p aspect as the expression of the intuition arising out of the depths of the soul or being. It is a the rhythm which has created the worlds and creates perpetually. To give a simplified picture, speak of creation at two levels, namely the cosmic level and the individual level. Although the consciousness designated in the Rigveda by the phrase *ekam sat* - That one (1.164. Satchidananda in the upanishads) upholds the universe from the superconscious levels (signifie R.V. by the phrase "*parama paravat*" in RV. 4.50), it enters the inconscient and works to rele concealed truths of existence from the inconscient waters (signified by the phrase "*apraketam* RV. 10.129) and lead them upwards in manifestation. *brahman* in the Rigveda also signifi propelling consciousness which creates the different planes and worlds at the cosmic level creation is perpetually happening in every one of us, humans and the different planes are bei in us, signified by the birth of the corresponding Gods in each person and this creation is : office of the Supreme Word. Of this supreme word, fashioning the worlds in the individual Brhaspati or Brahmanaspati is the master. Brahmanaspati means the master of the word. Th Brhaspati, according to grammarians, is formed from the "*brhat*" the vast and "*pati*," the "*brhat*" the vast, part of the trinity of *satyam*, *rtam* and *brhat* (the Truth, the Right and the the home of the mantras. Hence Brhaspati also means the master of the Word or mantra. Th slight distinction between the two deities into which we will not dwell here. The two deit intimately connected to each other, the name of one comes often in the hymn dedicated to the

We will begin our description of the powers, glories and deeds of the great God Brahmanasp the *rik* of the Seer Grithsamada. This rik is widely used even today in worship and it also oc *shiva purana* and other *puranas*. *gananam tva ganapatim havamahe kavim I upamashravastamam, jyeshta rajam brahmanam Brahmanaspatim na shrnvantu uthibit sadanam*. We call thee, Brahmanaspati Lord and leader of heavenly hosts Seer among seers, I inspired knowledge King Supreme of mantras Hear us with guidance; may you take your sea home. "RV(2.23.1)". *kavi* in vedic Sanskrit means a seer, one endowed with the vision of high of existence. In classical Sanskrit *kavi* means a poet. As Sri Aurobindo says elsewhere, poetry r its highest pitch is mantra to which the seer gives utterance.

This deity is addressed as Ganapati, the leader of the heavenly hosts. In later *puranas* and in times, the deity Ganapati is the elephant-headed one, son of Shiva and Parvati, patron of stuc art, scribe of the epic *mahabharata*, etc. Who are these hosts? In *shiva purana*, these hosts c are gnomes and other beings of the lower vital worlds. However, there is no need to bring descriptions in the veda because *puranas* came several millennium after the Rigveda and the , express the truths of Rigveda, diluted as it were so that they are easily accessible to the c person.

But the Rigveda itself describes the *gana* or hosts in RV(4.50.5) They are the mantras.

*sa sushtubha sa rikvata ganena*. "He with his cohort of rhythm that affirms, of the cha illumines...". The hosts or *ganas* are the *riks* and *stubs*. As Sri Aurobindo says, "*rik*, connect



the work *arka* which means light or illumination, is the Word considered as a power of realizing the illuminating consciousness; *stubbh* is the Word considered as a power which affirms and controls the settled rhythm of things. It is by the powers of the Word, by the rhythmic army of soul-forms that Brhaspati brings all into expression and dispels all the darknesses that encompass us makes as the Night" (p. 310). The deity gives us guidance (*uthibih*) continuously.

Brahmanaspati's role as a creator, alluded earlier, is brought out vividly in the following (RV. 10.72.2). The Seer sees the deity as a blacksmith who, using the fire and the forge, shapes things into desired objects. *Brahmanaspatireta sam karmara evadhamat devanam purve yug sadajayata* (10.72.2) Brahmanaspati like a smith fashioned them into a perfect shape, And from the primal age of *devas* from nonexistence existence sprang translation from Bose, p. 267. Brahmanaspati is stationed within many as if asleep. In the hymn RV. 1.40, there is a prayer for this deity to rise up and lead. By the power of his Word, the happy speech of Truth, the Maruts, Indra, Mitra, Varuna, and other gods take their position within the man. *uttishta brahmanaspate devayantastvemahe, yantu marutah sudanava Indra prashurbhava sacha* RV(1.40.1). Rise up, Brahmanaspati; Aspire, O Gods, we beseech thee, May Maruts with auspicious gifts arrive O Indra, come swiftly with him. There are several *riks* attesting to the power of Brahmanaspati in leading the aspirant on the divine path by removing all the obstacles in the path. It is this aspect which was later expanded in the role of the *tantric* God, the elephant-faced Ganapati as *Vijnaraja*, king and remover of obstacles. The obstacles are the forces and beings of the vital planes and worlds who do not want the progress of man towards Light. We will quote one such *rik* here *tvam no gopah pathikrt vichakshanastava mathibhirjaramahe brhaspate yo no abhi hvaro dadhe sva tam marmartu duchhuna harasi* RV. 2.23.6 Thou are our keeper, wise, prepare of our paths, We pray to thee with the hymn of Brhaspati, whoever lays a snare for us, Him may his evil fate, destroy (Griffith's translation).

The obstacles in the path of each one of us is caused by the forces and beings of darkness which are housed in the unconscious regions of each one of us. Their presence becomes evident only when they manifest their effects, like intense anger, sickness, depression, etc., bubble up, as it were, from the unconscious regions and make their appearance to the surface consciousness. We should understand that these forces are not abstract conceptions, but concrete beings with distinct forms and personalities visible to persons with occult vision. These individual evil forces residing in the unconscious are only projections of the broader and more powerful cosmic forces and powers of evil and darkness called as Asuras or Dasyus or demons. The name *asura* is derived from the root *as*, denoting to enclose. These beings, as their name indicates, are full of might. The vedic seers looked upon life as a continuous battle between the forces of light represented by the *devas* or Gods and the forces of darkness, represented by the Asuras or Dasyus or demons. The prize in this battle is the survival of the human being on earth. In the Rigveda several Dasyus such as Vala, Vrtra, Panis, etc., are specifically mentioned and their names clearly indicate their function. The chief of Dasyus is Vala, whose name signifies circumscriber or "encloser." Vala means a cave. Vala, along with his followers, confines the cows, the horses and waters in the cave. The cave is nothing but the universal unconscious. The four-footed animals (or go in Sanskrit) are not the four-footed animals but stand for the rays of knowledge. The cow (or cow) occurs in the Rigveda in numerous places (more than a thousand) and its interpretation as a four-footed animal can be sustained only in a minority of cases, probably less than a quarter. The rays of knowledge (or the veda) stand for the rays of Light, knowledge and wisdom. Similarly the horse (or *ashva*) stands



the vital forces open to the light and knowledge. Waters always stand for the pure consciousness. Vala confines these powers into the cave. Another prominent Dasyu is Vrtra means obstructor or enfolding coverer. The Dasyus who steal the cows and horses are called *asuras* which means dealers, traffickers, misers or hoarders. They want to hoard the knowledge and do not allow for their circulation. The veda speaks of the battle between the Gods led by Indra and the Dasyus. Rigveda mentions that the Indra smashes the Adri, the hill of the unconscious (where the cows and horses have been hidden) by means of his *vajra*, the thunderbolt and releases the cows and currents of divine consciousness confined in the cave. The Rigveda mentions again and again that *vajra* is not a physical weapon. It is fashioned by the mantra. We have to reiterate that *de* Indra or Agni are not physical persons, as the western orientalisists are wont to do. The battle is not a physical one, but psychological and psychical. The victory over the Dasyus is the common victory of the *devas*. For instance, RV. 1.11.5 says "O Lord of the thunderbolt, thou didst uncover the Vala of the cows; the *devas*, unfeared, entered putting their face into thee." Consequently in the *Upanishads* we find different *devas* like Agni, Brhaspati, Maruts, being praised for the victory. For instance the hymn RV. 5.2, Agni is praised in the recovery of the cows.

Brhaspati (Brahmanaspati) is more frequently the hero of this victory. The hymns clearly state Brhaspati slays the foe by the hymns of illumination, as quoted below. Brhaspati, Angirasa, breaker, first-born, possessed of the truth, the giver of oblation, pervader of the two-worlds, divider of the heat and light of the sun, Roars aloud as the bull to the two firmaments. (RV 6.73.1) Brhaspati who for the man the voyager has fashioned that other world in the calling of the Gods Slay Vrtra-forces breaks open the cities, Conquering foes in his battles (RV 6.73.2). Brhaspati conquers him the treasures, great pens this god wins full of knowledge. Seeking the conquest of the world unassailable; Brhaspati slays the foe by the hymns of illumination (*arkaih*) (RV 6.73.3).

This hymn clearly brings out the help given by Brhaspati both at the individual level and cosmic level. He is the hill-breaker, the breaker of the hill of the unconscious where the cows have been imprisoned. He breaks the hill by his mantras. He gives the treasures to the devotee who recites the hymns.

When Brhaspati breaks the hill with his cry, he releases the imprisoned streams of honey, the Soma sweetness (RV 2.24.3). This secret well of honey is drunk by all those who are able to reach the highest heaven *svar* (covered earlier) and they pour out its billowing fountain of sweet manifold streams together (RV. 2.24.4). These many streams poured out together are the seven streams poured down the hill by Indra after slaying of the Vrtra, the rivers or streams of truth. Thus the rivers are not the physical rivers of Punjab, but the seven headed though of veda.

Sri Aurobindo says that this well of honey covered by the rock must be the *ananda* or divine bliss of the Supreme threefold world of bliss, the *satya*, *tapas* and *jana* of the worlds of the *puranic* based upon the three supreme principles of *sat*, *chit-tapas* and *ananda*. (RV 5.40) Brhaspati.

We will give here Sri Aurobindo's translation of the 50th hymn from the first *mandala* of the Rigveda (4.50) since it gives not only all the dominant powers and characteristics of the deity Brhaspati (Brahmanaspati), but also the benefits of adoring Brhaspati. Brhaspati, by his cry, has established his might the extremities of the earth, in the triple world of our fulfillment. On him the pristine



meditated, and illumined, 'set him in their front with his tongue of ecstasy. (1)' O Brhaspati vibrating with the impulse of their movement rejoicing in perfected consciousness, wove abundant, rapid, invincible, wide, the world from which this being was born. 'That do thou praise Brhaspati.(2)' O Brhaspati, that which is the highest supreme of existence, Thither from thence they attain and take their seat who touch the truth. For thee are dug wells of honey which draw out of the hill 'And their sweetnesses stream out on every side and break into overflowing. (3)' Brhaspati, from his birth from the vast light in the highest place with his seven fronts, with his seven rays, with his many births, drives utterly away the darkness 'that encompasses us with his cry. (4)' He is the cohort of rhythm that affirms, of the chant that illumines, Has broken Vala into pieces with his cry. Brhaspati drives upward the Bright ones who speed our offerings, 'he shouts as he leads them and they reply. (5)' Thus to the Father, the universal Godhead, the Bull of the herds, May we dispense our sacrifices and submissions and oblations, O Brhaspati, full of energy and rich in offspring, 'that we may become masters of the felicities. (6)' Verily is he King and conquers by his energy, by his heroic power, all that is in the worlds that confront him, who bears Brhaspati in him well contained and illumined, in exultant dance and adores 'and gives him the first fruits of his enjoyment. (7)' Yea, he dwells seated in his proper home and for him, Ila at all times grows in richness. To him all creatures of the world themselves submit, the King, he is whom the soul-power goes in front. Ila: seeing speech. No one can assail him, he conquers utterly all the riches of the worlds which confront him and the world in which he dwells; he who for the Soul-Power that seeks its manifestation. 'creates in himself that which is good, cherished by the gods. (9)' Thou, O Brhaspati, and Indra, drink the Soma-wine rejoicing in the sacrifice, lavishing substance. Let the powers of its Delight enter into you 'And take perfect control in us a felicity full of energy. (10)' O Brhaspati, O Indra, increase in us together And in your perfection be created in us; foster the thoughts, bring out the mind's multiple powers 'Devoid of the poverties that they bring who seek to conquer the *Aryan*. (11)' In *rik 1*, it is clearly said Brhaspati has firmly established the limits of the earth, i.e., the material consciousness. This he does by his cry, *ravana*, for the Word is the cry of the soul as it awakens to ever new perceptions and formations. In meditating on Brhaspati, the seven sages became illumined and became full of the joy of perfected consciousness. They have woven for the human race the truth-consciousness which is the world, the birthplace of the conscious being. The nature of this truth-consciousness is its abundance in its flowings; it is many colored in the variety of its harmonized qualities; it is rapid in its movements and triumphs over all that seek to quell it; it is wide, infinite (*rik 2*).

In the hill of the physical being there are dug for the soul these abounding wells of sweetnesses which draw out of its hard rigidity, the concealed *ananda*, the associated rivers of the honey of immortality cover the whole extent of human consciousness (*rik 3*).

Thus Brhaspati becoming manifest in man presents himself in the full sevenfold aspect of perfected consciousness (seven rays) and with his triumphant cry dispels all powers of the inconscient, the demon Vala (*rik 4*).

Brhaspati breaks the cave of the demon Vala into fragments by the power of the Word, by the power of his cry, so that all imprisoned lustres are released. The demon Vala holds the truth-consciousness himself (literally in his cave) and denies its manifestation. After breaking the cave, Brhaspati releases these hidden lights with the voice of superconscious knowledge, they follow him with the response



conscious intuition. We climb to the highest levels of consciousness by means of these lights v established in us by Brhaspati (*rik 5*).

This self-expressive Soul, Brhaspati is the supreme Divinity, the father of all things; to this d offer all the materials of our being by sacrificial action. By the grace of this Godhead, we shall full of heroic energy for the battle of life, masters of the felicities which are attained by enlightenment and right action (*rik 6*).

The person who bears in himself and able to bear firmly this conscious soul-power of Br masters all that comes to him in all worlds in the progress of his being. He becomes the rule environment. This person adores the Godhead Brhaspati always giving it the first fruits of enj (*rik 7*).

Ila, the seeing word, the goddess of the direct revealing vision in knowledge grow in him. All c submit to the Truth in him because they see in him the Truth of themselves (*rik 8*).

The creature Soul, the *brahma*, seeks to manifest and increase himself in the royalty of the nature. He who attains to that royalty of light and power finds himself cherished and fostere the divine powers. Nothing can assail or affect his progress (*rik 9*).

Indra, the divine mental power and Brhaspati, the soul power, are the two divine powers fullness in us are the conditions of our perfection. May they create in us the perfection of th and bring out the mind's multiple powers. The powers that attack the aspirant create weaknesses, the poverties of mind and the poverties of the emotive nature. Soul-force (Brhasp mental-force (Indra) destroy all such forces of poverty and bring man to his perfect Kingdom and 11).

### **Brhaspati (RV 4.50)**

1. He who established in his might the extremities of the earth, Brhaspati, in the triple work fulfilment, by his cry, on him the pristine sages meditated and illumined, set him in their front tongue of ecstasy.
2. They, O Brhaspati, vibrating with the impulse of their movement, rejoicing in p consciousness wove for us abundant, rapid, invincible, wide the world from which this being w That do thou protect, O Brhaspati.
3. O Brhaspati, that which is the highest supreme of existence, thither from this world the and take their seat who touch the Truth. For thee are dug the wells of honey which drain this their sweetnesses stream out on every side and break into overflowing.
4. Brhaspati first in his birth from the vast light, in the highest heavenly space, with his sever



with his seven rays, with his many births, drives utterly away the darkneses that encompass his cry.

5. He with his cohort of the rhythm that affirms, of the chant that illumines, has broken V pieces with his cry. Brhaspati drives upward the Bright Ones who speed our offerings; he aloud as he leads them, lowing they reply.

6. Thus to the Father, the universal Godhead, the Bull of the herds, may we dispose our s; and submission and oblation; O Brhaspati, full of energy and rich in offspring, may we l masters of the felicities.

7. Verily is he King and conquers by his energy, by his heroic force all that is in he wor confront him, who bears Brhaspati in him well-contained and has the exultant dance and adc gives him the first fruits of his enjoyment.

8. Yea, he dwells firmly seated in his proper home and for him Ila at all times grows in richr him all creatures of themselves submit, the King, he in whom the Soul-Power goes in front.

9. None can assail him, he conquers utterly all the riches of the worlds which confront him world in which he dwells; he who for the Soul-Power that seeks its manifestation creates in that highest good, is cherished by the gods.

10. Thou, O Brhaspati, and Indra, drink the Soma-wine rejoicing in this sacrifice, lavishing sub: Let the powers of its delight enter into you and take perfect form, control in us a felicity full c energy.

11. O Brhaspati, O Indra, increase in us together and may that your perfection of mind be cr us; foster the thoughts, bring out the mind's multiple powers; destroy all poverties that they br seek to conquer the Aryan.

### COMMENTARY

Brhaspati, Brahmanaspati, Brahma are the three names of the god to whom the rishi Va addresses this mystic hymn of praise. In the later puranic theogonies Brhaspati and Brahma ha become separate deities. Brahma is the Creator, one of the Three who form the great puranic Brhaspati is a figure of no great importance, spiritual teacher of the gods and incidentally gua the planet Jupiter; Brahmanaspati, the middle term which once linked the two, has disappea restore the physiognomy of the Vedic deity we have to reunite what has been disjoined and the values of the two separated terms in the light of the original Vedic conceptions.

*Brahman* in the Veda signifies ordinarily the Vedic Word or Mantra in its profoundest aspect expression of the intuition arising out of the depths of the soul or being. It is a voice of the





which has created the worlds and creates perpetually. All world is expression or manifestation by the Word. Conscious Being luminously manifesting its contents in itself, of itself, at the super-conscious; holding its contents obscurely in itself it is the subconscious. The higher, the luminous descends into the obscure, into the night, into darkness concealed in darkness, *tamasa gulham*, where all is hidden in formless being owing to fragmentation of consciousness *tucchyenabhvapihitam*. It arises again out of the Night by the Word to reconstitute in the conscious vast unity, *tan mahinajayataikam*. This vast Being, this all-containing and all-forth consciousness is Brahman. It is the Soul that emerges out of the subconscious in Man and towards the superconscious. And the word of creative Power welling upward out of the soul *brahman*.

The Divine, the Deva, manifests itself as conscious Power of the soul, creates the worlds Word out of the waters of the subconscious, *apraketam salilam sarvam*, - the unconscious ocean was this all, as it is plainly termed in the great Hymn of Creation (10.129). This power of the Brahma, the stress in the name falling more upon the conscious soul-power than upon the Word expresses it. The manifestation of the different world-planes in the conscious human being culminated in the manifestation of the superconscious, the Truth and the Bliss, and this is the office of the supreme Word or Veda. Of this supreme Word Brhaspati is the master, the stress in this name upon the potency of the Word rather than upon the thought of the general soul-power which is it. Brhaspati gives the Word of knowledge, the rhythm of expression of the superconscious, to gods and especially to Indra, the lord of Mind, when they work in man as "Aryan" powers for their consummation. It is easy to see how these conceptions came to be specialised in the broader, more subtle and profound puranic symbolism into Brahma, the Creator, and Brhaspati, the teacher of the gods. In the name, Brahmanaspati, the two varying stresses are unified and equalised. It is the name between the general and the special aspects of the same deity.

Brhaspati is he who has established firmly the limits and definitions of the Earth, that is to say, of material consciousness. The existence out of which all formations are made is an obscure, fluctuating and indeterminate movement, - *salilam*, Water. The first necessity is to create a sufficiently firm formation out of this flux and running so as to form a basis for the life of the conscious. This Brahma does in the formation of the physical consciousness and its world, *sahasa*, by force, by a mighty constraint upon the resistance of the subconscious. This great creation he effected by establishing the triple principle of mind, life and body, always present together and involved in each other or evolved out of each other in the world of the cosmic labour and fulfilment. The three principles form the triple seat of Agni and there he works out the gradual work of accomplishment or perfection which is the object of the sacrifice. Brhaspati forms by sound, by his cry, *ravana*, for the Word of the soul as it awakens to ever-new perceptions and formations. "He who established firmly the ends of the earth, Brhaspati in the triple seat of the fulfilment, by his cry."

On him, it is said, the ancient or pristine rishis meditated; meditating, they became illumined and illumined, they set him in front as the god of the ecstatic tongue, *mandra-jihvam*, the tongue which takes joy of the intoxicating wine of Soma, *mada, madhu*, of that which is the wave of sweet *madhuman urmih* (9.20.2), hidden in the conscious existence and out of it progressively delivered.





of whom is there question? The seven divine rishis, *rsayo divyah*, who fulfilling consciousness of its seven principles and harmonising them together superintend the evolution of the world human fathers, *pitara manusyah*, who first discovered the higher knowledge and formulated the infinity of the Truth-Consciousness? Either may be intended, but the reference seems to be to the conquest of the Truth by the human fathers, the Ancients. The word *didhyanah* in itself means both shining, becoming luminous, and thinking, meditating, fixing in the thought constantly being used with the peculiar Vedic figure of a double or complex sense. In the first must be connected with *viprah*, and the suggestion is that the rishis became more and more luminous in thought by the triumphant force of Brhaspati until they grew into Illuminates, *viprah*. In the second it is connected with *dadhire* and suggests that the rishis, meditating on the intuitions that rise from the soul with the cry of Brhaspati in the sacred and enlightening Word, holding them firmly in thought, became illuminated in mind, open to the full inflow of the superconscient. They were able to bring into the front of the conscious being that activity of the soul-thoughts which is usually in the background, veiled, and to make it the leading activity of their nature. As a result Brhaspati in them became able to taste for them the bliss of existence, the wine of Immortality, the supreme Ananda. The formation of the definite physical consciousness is the first step, this awakening to the Ananda by the bringing forward in mind of the intuitive soul as the leader of our conscious activities is the consummation or, at least, the condition of the consummation.

The result is the formation of the Truth-Consciousness in man. The ancient rishis attained to the rapid vibration of the movement; the most full and swift streaming of the flux of consciousness constitutes our active existence, no longer obscure as in the subconscious, but full of the perfected consciousness, - not *apraketam* like the Ocean described in the Hymn of Creation, *supraketam*. Thus they are described, *dhunetayah supraketam madantah*. With this attainment of full rapidity of the activities of consciousness unified with its full light and bliss in the human mind they have woven for the race by the web of these rapid, luminous and joyous perceptions the Truth-Consciousness, *rtam brhat*, which is the womb or birth-place of this conscient being. For it is the superconscient that existence descends into the subconscious and carries with it that which emerges here as the individual human being, the conscious soul. The nature of this Truth-Consciousness is in itself this that it is abundant in its outflowings, *prasantam*, or, it may be coloured in the variety of its harmonised qualities; it is rapid in its motion, *srpram*; by that luminous rapidity it triumphs over all that seeks to quell or break it, it is *adabdham*; above all it is wide and infinite, *urvam*. In all these respects it is the opposite of the first limited movement which emerges from the subconscious; for that is stunted and grey, slow and hampered, easily overcome and broken by the opposition of hostile powers, scanty and bounded in its scope. But this Truth-Consciousness manifested in man is capable of being again veiled from him by the resurgence of the power of the deny, the Vritras, Vala. The *rishi* therefore prays to Brhaspati to guard it against that obscuring of the fullness of his soul-force.

The Truth-Consciousness is the foundation of the superconscient, the nature of which is the Bliss, the supreme of the supraconscient, *parama paravat*, from which the being has descended, the *parardha* of the Upanishads, the existence of Sachchidananda. It is to that highest existence that those arise out of this physical consciousness, *atah*, who like the ancient *rishis* enter into contact



the Truth-Consciousness. They make it their seat and home, *ksaya, okas*. For in the hill of the being there are dug for the soul those abounding wells of sweetness which draw out of its hard the concealed Ananda; at the touch of the Truth the rivers of honey, the quick pourings of the Immortality trickle and stream and break out into a flood of abundance over the whole external human consciousness.

Thus Brhaspati, becoming manifest first of the gods out of the vastness of that Light or Consciousness, in that highest heavenly space of the supreme superconscient, *maho jyotisah vyoman*, presents himself in the full sevenfold aspect of our conscious being, multiply born in forms of the interplay of its seven principles ranging from the material to the purest spiritual, it with their sevenfold ray which lights all our surfaces and all our profundities, and with his triumphant cry dispels and scatters all powers of the Night, all encroachments of the inconscient, all darkensses.

It is by the powers of the Word, by the rhythmic army of the soul-forces that Brhaspati brings expression and dispelling all the darkensses that encompass us makes an end of the Night. The Brahmas of the Veda, charged with the word, the *brahman*, the *mantra*; it is they in the : who raise heavenward the divine *Rik*, the *stubh* or Stoma. *Rik*, connected with the Word *ark* means light or illumination, is the Word considered as a power of realisation in the illumined consciousness; *stubh* is the Word considered as a power which affirms and confirms in the rhythm of things. That which has to be expressed is realised in consciousness, affirmed and confirmed by the power of the Word. The Brahmas or Brahmana forces are the priests of the the creators by the divine rhythm. It is by their cry that Brhaspati breaks Vala into fragments.

As Vritra is the enemy, the Dasyu, who holds back the flow of the sevenfold waters of cosmic existence, - Vrtra, the personification of the inconscient, so Vala is the enemy, the Dasyu, who holds back in his hole, his cave, *bilam, guha*, the herds of the Light; he is the personification of the subconscious. Vala is not himself dark or inconscient, but a cause of darkness.

Rather his substance is of the light, *valasya gomatah, valasya govapusah*, but he holds the herds of the Light in himself and denies its conscious manifestation. He has to be broken into fragments in order that the hidden lustres may be liberated. Their escape is expressed by the emergence of the Bright Oxen, the herds of the Dawn, from the cavern below in the physical hill and their driving upward by Brhaspati to the heights of our being whither with them and by them we climb. He calls to them with the voice of the superconscient knowledge; they follow him with the response of the conscious intuition. They bring in their course the impulsion to the activities which form the material of the sacrifice and cosmic order, the offerings given to the gods and these also are carried upward till they reach the same divine heights.

This self-expressive Soul, Brhaspati, is the Purusha, the Father of all things; it is the universal I, it is the Bull of the herds, the Master and fertilizer of all these luminous energies evolved or in process of evolution, active in the day or obscurely working in the night of things, which constitute the becoming of cosmic existence, *bhuvanam*. To the Purusha under the name of Brhaspati the rishi would have us direct the order of a sacrifice all the materials of our being by sacrificial action in which they are given to the gods.



the All-Soul as acceptable ablations offered with adoration and surrender. By the sacrifice v become through the grace of this godhead full of heroic energy for the battle of life, rich offspring of the soul, masters of the felicities which are attained by divine enlightenment ar action.

For the soul's energy and overcoming force are perfected in the human being who bears in and is able to bear firmly this conscious Soul-Power brought forward as the leading agency nature, who arrives by it at a rapid and joyous movement of the inner activities as did the sages, compasses that harmonious bound and gallop of the steed of Life within and adores alw godhead giving it the first fruits of results and enjoyments. By that energy he throws himself up masters all that comes to him in the births, the worlds, the planes of consciousness that open u perception in the progress of the being. He becomes the king, the *samrat*, ruler of his environment.

such a soul attains to a firmly settled existence in its own proper home, the Truth-Consciousn infinite totality, and for it at all times Ila, the highest Word, premier energy of the Consciousness, she who is the direct revealing vision in knowledge and becomes in that kno the spontaneous self- attainment of the Truth of things in action, result and experience, - Ii; perpetually in body and richness. To him all creatures of themselves incline, they submit to th in him because it is one with the Truth in themselves. For the conscious Soul-Power tha universal creator and realiser, leads in all his activities. It gives him the guidance of the Trut relations with all creatures and therefore he acts upon them with an entire and spontaneous r This is the ideal state of man that the soul-force should lead him, Brhaspati, Brahma, the spirit and counsellor, and he realising himself as Indra, the royal divinity of action, should govern and all his environment in the right of their common Truth, *brahma rajani purva eti*.

For this Brahma, this creative Soul seeks to manifest and increase himself in the royalty of the nature and he who attains to that royalty of light and power and creates in himself for Brah highest human good, finds himself always cherished, fostered, increased by all the divine powers who work for the supreme consummation. He wins all those possessions of the soul w necessary for the royalty of the spirit, those that belong to his own plane of consciousness, ar that present themselves to him from other planes of consciousness. Nothing can assail or at triumphant progress.

Indra and Brhaspati are thus the two divine powers whose fullness in us and conscious posse the Truth are the conditions of our perfection. Vamadeva calls on them to drink in this great : the wine of immortal Ananda, rejoicing in the intoxication of its ecstasies, pouring out abunda substance and riches of the spirit. Those outpourings of the superconscient beatitude must er the soul-force and there take being perfectly. Thus a felicity will be formed, a governed h; replete with all the energies and, capacities of the perfected nature which is master of itself world.

So let Brhaspati and Indra increase in us and that state of right mentality which together the



will be manifested; for that is the final condition. Let them foster the growing thoughts and by expression those energies of the mental being which by an enriched and multiple thought is capable of the illumination and rapidity of the Truth-Consciousness. The powers that attack the fighter, would create in him poverties of mind and poverties of the emotive nature, all infelicities of force and mental-force increasing together, destroy all such poverty and insufficiency. Together bring man to his crowning and his perfect kingdom.





## Maruts - The Thought-Gods

As their name indicates, the Maruts are gods associated both with intense energy and mental movements. They are powers of both action and knowledge. In the esoteric interpretations Maruts are imaged as powers of wind, storm and rain, particularly of the tempest. They are always hymned in their collectivity, *ganas* the hosts, never individually. Next to Agni and Indra, the Maruts have the largest number of hymns dedicated to them in the Rigveda, clearly indicating their importance in the spiritual evolution of the individual aspirant and the humanity at large. Because of their impetuosity, they are called as the children of the fierce and terrible God Rudra [*rudraha*, RV. 1.39.7; *rudrasah*, 1.39.4]. Because they have more hymns dedicated to them than Rudra does not imply that in the *vedic* hierarchy they have a higher place than the great god Rudra. Their importance comes from the help offered by them to the beginning spiritual aspirant because of their proximity to the earth plane.

The Maruts also give a divine motion to the activities of the intelligence illumined by the light and strength of Indra, the Lord of the divine mind. Hence they are called as brothers of Indra (*Indrajyestha*, 1.23.8; *Marutvantam Indra*, 1.23.7]. This aspect of aiding the work of Indra, the divine mind, gives them the appellation, thought-Gods. We should realize that their functions are not limited to the control and origination of thoughts.

Since Maruts have been as thought-Gods, it is appropriate for us to delineate the distinction between thoughts and mind in the psychology of the sages of the *vedic* periods and the later periods. The viewpoint is best expressed in the following quotation: "Mind is an instrument of formation, of organization and action, and it is in these functions that it attains its full value and real usefulness." The mind collects the information given by the five senses and the information stored in the memory about earlier sense contacts. Thoughts are mental entities formed and released by the mind. Each one of us forms these thoughts and releases them. Once they are released, their life is independent of the mind that formed them and they travel around according to their own laws. Each thought has an idea in it. When the thought travels, it is caught by the minds of all persons who offer a welcome to it and the thought spreads the idea it contains to the mind of the recipient. The power of thought depends on the power given to it by the originator. As Sri Aurobindo says elsewhere, the thought containing the ideas of equality, fraternity and liberty were originated by some sage on the peak of Himalayas endowed with immense power, but they were welcomed, as it were, only in France, causing the great French Revolution which popularized the three words. These thoughts have a life of their own. A thought released by a person joins together with similar thoughts released by others and they form a group or a flock like the flock of birds. A flock of birds in the Rigveda



is a common symbol for Maruts [1.37.9]. They travel together, acquire more and more power, and finally return to the originators with their power augmented by the power of the kindred thoughts. Thus a person who radiates a thought of love and harmony receives in turn the thoughts of love and harmony and thus this tendency in him/her becomes stronger. Similarly, a person who is always critical of others is radiating continuously thoughts of criticisms and recriminations and he/she continuously receives these kindred thoughts. Mind organizes the thoughts, analyses the situation and takes appropriate action. The action may be on the physical plane like travel from one place to another, or the action may be on the mental plane like preferring one intellectual viewpoint to another. When the mind makes up its decision, it gives the appropriate instruction to the organs of action to carry out the task and at the same time the mind releases the relevant thought when it has formed.

The originators of thoughts, which are mental movements or carriers of ideas, need not be human beings on earth. In *vedic* psychology, we have the three lower worlds of matter (*anna*), life-energy (*prana*) and the mind (*manas*). The beings on these worlds - who are called as *typal* beings since they are not subject to evolution as the beings on the earth - also radiate thoughts or mental movements which will impact on the minds of earthly beings. There are *typal* beings, called as Gods, who are the source of wisdom, harmony, beauty, strength, perfection in all aspects and who help the humans to develop these qualities. There are also the *typal* beings called as demons, *rakshasas*, who encourage and foster the opposite qualities in man and retard the march of evolution. These demonic forces can be classified roughly into three categories - those which encourage the mind in its feeling of self sufficiency and in its doubting and disputing every influence at enlightenment and change; these which encourage the vital in man in its refractory and petty desires and its ill-will toward every divine influence, and these that encourage "the power of incapacity, inertia and *tamas* in man's physical consciousness which obstructs and clings to its pleasure in smallness and darkness and cries out against every touch which disturbs its dull sloth or torpid slumber." These demonic forces go by the names of Vrtra, Vala, Panis and Dasyus in the Rigveda.

Only the Divine mind signified by Indra can battle and vanquish these forces using the weapons of the powers of the potent word; the *vajra*.

Maruts, the thought-Gods, are the helpers of Indra in his battle against the demonic forces. They are called as the younger brothers of Indra (Indrajyesthah, 1.23.8). The Maruts begin the work of Indra in introducing the harmonious thoughts and mental movements in man.

The Maruts make their appearance in the Rigveda very early (1.6.5, 1.6.6).





"The Maruts are particular gods who set a divine pace to the mental movements of fierce speed and brilliance." All the Gods have two births as it were. The first birth is in the collective creation for their own function. Their second birth is their birth in man when their faculties find expression in man. The rebirth of Maruts in man follow the birth of Indra in man. The first step in the manifestation of the divine mind of Indra is the birth of mental movements of fierce speed and brilliance which are needed to counter the influences put forth by the demonic forces.

One entire *sukta* RV(1.19) is dedicated to Agni requesting him to come with the Maruts. The psychological meaning of this request is straightforward. Agni is the God of aspiration, the divine will manifesting in man. The work of this will can only be strengthened when there is an abundance of mental movements signified by Maruts who break down all petty impediments to the work of Agni. The adjectives to Maruts in this *sukta* are revealing: "Maruts, who know the great mid world" (RV 1.19.3). "The brave Maruts unassailed by the might of others" (RV 1.19.4). "Maruts, who are radiant, awful in form or mighty and devourers of foes" (RV 1.19.5). "Maruts, the gods who are in the luminous world above the Heavens" (RV 1.19.6). "Maruts, who move mountains and scorn the ocean of waters" (RV 1.19.7).

The last epithet needs some explanation. Maruts, who are the sons of Vayu, the life force, become powers of luminous intelligence. "They set in movement the inert body heaving with *tamas* (or gross knowledge gone inert) symbolized by the term mountain in whose womb lies the being of knowledge, power, etc. That brings about the blossoming of knowledge, power, etc. By the movement of the whole being, unmoving and difficult to cross, potent with all powers, the infinite substances symbolized by the term ocean, the manifestation of its parts, is effected."

Mountain in the *veda* specifies the heavy crust of materialism in whose womb lies the true knowledge symbolized by the cows. The Maruts along with Agni and Indra break down the *tamas* and the mountain of ignorance in man and allow the beneficent streams of higher consciousness to purify all the parts of being and raise them to a higher level of consciousness. Borne by spotted deer, with revealing weapons of speech. The Maruts are self luminous (RV 1.37.2). "*ye prshatibhi rshtibih sakam vashibih anjibih ajayanta svabhanavah*" (RV 1.37.2). The spotted deer are the vehicles of Maruts. Their triple hues indicate the physical, vital and mental. Often the deer are described as red (RV 1.39.6) which signifies the principle of life-force of action and enjoyment. As for all the other Gods, the word is their weapon. Words arising from their tempestuous movement bring out what is hidden.





The benefits of the *mantras* addressed to Maruts are described in the next *mantra*. *na eheva shrnva esham kasha hasthesu yadvadan ni yaman chitram runjate*. (RV 1.37.3). Words are their whip in hand, I hear instantly the moment it is uttered. Their speech works wonders in my journey. (RV 1.37.3) Just as a charioteer guides the vehicle with his whip, the words of the Maruts guide the aspirant. Their help is immediately apparent to the aspirant. Note that when the God utters the *mantra*, the Seer hears it and he repeats it himself. Word is the vehicle and force in all these transactions.

A brief word on Rudra is appropriate since Maruts are described as children of Rudra. The *puranic* trinity of *brahma*, Vishnu and Shiva has its root in the Rigveda where the rough correspondences are Brahmanaspati, Vishnu and Rudra. Brahmanaspati is the creator who fashions the light and the visible cosmos out of the darkness of the unconscious ocean and he does it by the Word. For the upward movement of Brahmanaspati's formalians, Rudra supplies the force. Rudra begins his work on this earth and supplies his force on all the planes of existence for evolution. He is the "violent one who leads the upward evolution of the conscious being; his force battles against all evil, smites the sinner and the enemy; intolerant of defect and stumbling, he is one God of whom alone the *vedic rishis* have any fear." For the formation of Brahmanaspati's word and for the actions of Rudra's force, Vishnu supplies the necessary static elements.

The Maruts, the children of Rudra are not divinities superior to their mighty father; but there are more hymns addressed to them and they are more commonly mentioned because the function they fulfilled was of constant and immediate importance in the *vedic* discipline. During the initial period of the spiritual ascent of the aspirant, the hostile forces strive to block or undo the spiritual progress by causing doubts in the mind of the aspirant such as "Gods may not exist; even if they do, they are not relevant to man; even if they help, it may be very limited; their help may be useful in life after death, but they are irrelevant in this life." The *rsshi* repeatedly calls upon the Maruts to ward off such attacks. "The *rakshasas* who rush to the attack in the birth of the Godheads (in the aspirant), O Maruts, him assail in your wheeless cars." (RV 5.42.10) Such attacks by the *asuric* forces are not products of our lurid imagination, but daily happenings noted in the diaries of spiritual aspirants. For instance, Sri Aurobindo in his record of yoga of January 9, 1917, quoted this *mantra* as indicative of his experience. There are many such prayers in the Rigveda. We will quote one more *mantra*: *mo shu nah parapara nirriti dorhana vadheet padeeshta thrishnaya saha*. (RV 1.38.6) May not the *nirriti*, sin-spirit, highly powerful difficult to overcome, strike me down; May she be consumed by her (own) thirst. Again, "O ye, who have the flashing strength of truth Manifest that by your might; Pierce with your lightening the *rakshasa*. Conceal the concealing darkness, repel every devourer, Create the light for which we long (RV 1.86.9, 1.86.10).



The powers of Maruts is so strong that they create the *rasa* of life even in the physical sapless, inert, physical body. This power is imaged in the Rigveda as "causing windless rain in the desert" (RV 1.3.87). Just as the desert is a piece of land where nothing grows, similarly the body of the beginner aspirant is inert. Maruts pour the nectarous essence of on the desert like body of aspirant and in becomes supple and pliant. "Maruts represent the progressive illumination of human mentality, until from the first obscure movements of mind which only just emerge out of the darkness of the subconscious, they are transformed into an image of luminous consciousness. Twilight, half-lit or turned into misleading reflections they surmount these deficiencies and put on divine brilliance." (Sri Aurobindo, Secret of the Veda, p. 261). The Maruts are energies of the mentality, energies which make for knowledge. "They carry with them the sweetness of the *ananda* as their eternal offspring and play out their play, brilliant in the activities of knowledge." (RV 1.166.2). Maruts in later Indian literature.

Maruts play a very important role in the shaping of the spiritual life of the beginning aspirant. Only after the birth of Agni and Maruts in man have been stabilized, the other Gods can take birth in man manifesting their corresponding powers. When the age of the Rigveda in general and *vedas* in particular come to an end, the knowledge and powers of the *vedic* Gods were lost to mankind as it were.

The later *puranas* have Gods by the name Maruts. They are also brothers of Indra. But there is a fundamental difference between the *puranic* Gods and *vedic* Gods. The *vedic* Gods are pure, completely harmonious with one another, friends for man and urge the aspirants to move speedily on the roads of evaluation. The *vedic* Gods do not have any of the petty human qualities like jealousy and discordance. However, the Gods of *puranas* appear to have many of the human qualities. Of course, there is a symbolism in the *puranic* Gods. But it is difficult to unravel them.

The power of Maruts of Rigveda is again unravelled under the name of Maruti, Hanuman, the leader of the monkeys and the assistant and collaborator of Sri Ramachandra in the epic *Ramayana* composed by Valmiki. Sri Ramachandra signifies the divine mind, Indra of the Rigveda and he is a personification of discrimination endowed with knowledge. In every situation, he always opts for the decision or action which upholds the high tenets of *dharma*, the principle that upholds the universe. The great battle between Sri Rama and the demon king Ravana is reminiscent of the Indra-Vrtra battles of the Rigveda. It is also one of the perpetual battles fought in different periods of time, between the forces of good and the forces of evil. Ravana, the demon king, has ten heads. In the battle between Rama and Ravana, when Rama cuts off one head by an arrow, another head automatically appears. This incident clearly indicates the symbolism



of Ravana as the storehouse of all evil mental movements. Destroying the evil mental movements one by one is not possible. They have to be destroyed together in one stroke. Sri Rama gets this intuition, acts accordingly, and destroys the demon king.

Just as the Maruts help Indra in the Rigveda, Maruti helps Sri Rama in the Ramayana. Maruti is the son of wind God Vayu. His mother is anjani, reminiscent of Prishni, the mother of Maruts of Rigveda. The adjectives of Maruti in Ramayana are self explanatory: "speedy like the mud, unmatched in speed, one with perfectly controlled sense organs, superior among the ones endowed with intelligence," etc. Thus he is both a God of action and God of knowledge. In the *tantrik* works associated with Sri Rama, Maruti plays a role very akin to that of Ganesha in the *tantrik* works associated with Shiva. All the children pray for Maruti to grow them both physical and mental godly strength which is brilliant, harmonious and forceful. Maruti provides the foundations of spiritual life for all the youngsters and prepares their bodies for the manifestation of the powers of the other Gods.





## Usha

 [Usha](#)

 [The Divine Dawn](#)

## Usha

Usha is the Goddess of spiritual consciousness whose outer or physical symbol is the physical Dawn. The symbol is so amenable for poetic metaphors at the hands of the inspired poets of Rigveda that one is apt to view Usha simply as the physical dawn and miss the deeper meanings of these hymns. As Sri Aurobindo says, "In the *veda*, there are no merely ornamental epithets. Each 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."

The deity Usha is lauded in about twenty *suktas* of the Rigveda. She is also prominently mentioned in the ten *apri suktas* and other *suktas*. A careful reading of all these *suktas* indicates that many of the functions and characteristics attributed to the Goddess do not make sense if we simply interpret her as the physical dawn as many of the Western indologists and their Indian followers are wont to do. Usha signifies the dawn of divine consciousness in the individual aspirant. The physical dawn which we see every morning is a physical symbol of this divinity. The onset of the divine consciousness indicates to us the existence of the higher worlds of bliss and perfection which are beyond the pale of our ordinary consciousness. By divine consciousness we mean the consciousness of the various Gods like Indra, Varuna, etc., both individually and in toto. When the God Varuna's power manifests in man - symbolically referred to as the birth of Varuna in man - the consciousness of the human aspirant is widened by Varuna's power since wideness is characteristic of Varuna. The narrowness of outlook characteristic of our ordinary human condition is washed away, as it were, like the tropical monsoon washes away all the dirt in the streets. We are less prone to be critical of other people, less prone to magnify the limitations of people around us, have more faith in the ability of the divine to bring about greater harmony and progress among all of us, and in our collaboration with the divine. Similarly, when Indra is born in man, the person becomes fearless and mighty. The God Mitra's influence endows the aspirant's atmosphere with friendship, love and harmony among all the beings of the universe, both animate and inanimate. The Goddess Sarama endows us with the power of intuition and the Goddess Ila, the power of revelation of the divine happenings which are covered by our ordinary consciousness. Of course the manifestation of the full power of each God in man is not instantaneous. It takes time. There are periods of rapid advance and there are periods in which nothing changes. Again the light of Usha



dawns prior to the complete realization of truth light.

We will give here just one *mantra* to show that the Usha cannot be limited to the physical dawn. Lover of praises, O Usha, deathless one, which mortal is fit to enjoy thee? O luminous one, whom does thou attain? (1.30.20).

To see and enjoy the ordinary physical dawn, no special capacity is required. Only the eyesight is enough. The exclamation "which mortal if fit to enjoy thee" clearly implies that only rare persons have the good fortune of having the experience of Usha. Thus Usha cannot be the ordinary dawn.

How does the Dawn emerge? The answer is in several *mantras*, one of which is given below. *satyamantra ajanayan ushasam*. (7.76.4). By the truth in their thoughts, they brought to birth the Dawn. (7.76.4)

The seeker has to open himself systematically to the reign of Truth, rejecting the rule of falsehood. His mind and its activity of thinking must be filled with the movements of truth. Truth in thought, truth in feeling, truth in speech, must become normal to his life. It is only then that the Dawn consents to manifest and open the gates of Heaven. Just as the physical dawn and day do not last long, alternating with the night, similarly the dawn of divine consciousness in man does not last long. It is followed by the condition of ordinary consciousness, appropriately termed "*nakta*" or "night."

The Goddess Usha is often with the deity "*nakta*" (night) and the combined phrase "*nakta-ushas*" or "*ushanakta*" occurs more than twenty times in the Rigveda. We need to understand the relationship between these two deities. *nakta* is the same as the deity "*ratri*" for whom there is a *sukta* (RV 10.127). The first reference to Usha in the Rigveda is in (RV 1.13.7), one of the *mantras* of an *apri sukta*, where she is paired with the night. *naktoshasa supeshasa sman yajna upahvaye idam no barhira sade*. (RV 1.13.7) I call in this sacrifice Night and Dawn, beautiful of form, to arrive at our seat. (RV 1.13.7) Dawn and Night, we seek with desire Two mighty mothers of the Truth with their fair front to us, who increase our beings space. (RV 5.5.6) Common, unending is the path of the sisters; Guided by the Sun alternately, they travel; Well-lighted, different in hues, common-minded, Night and Dawn do not clash, neither to they tarry. (RV 1.113.3)

In all these *mantras*, *nakta* or *naktas* stands for our ordinary consciousness which is open to all sorts of forces and influences, including that from the great darkness "*tamah*." Note that the *rig vedic* seers make a clear distinction everywhere between "*naktas*" and "*tamah*," the enveloping darkness which is the haunt of inertia and forces of darkness like the demons, *rakshasas*, *pisachas*, etc. When Usha, the divine consciousness arrives, so do all other Gods except Agni,



the leader of our journey, the God of aspiration, who is always active and is putting the pressure on us and propels us toward the higher goals. When the human aspiration reaches a certain level, Usha makes her appearance, signifying the onset of divine consciousness and she brings the other Gods or powers. Usha literally opens the doors in our inner being and allows the divine light to flood our inner beings. The opening of the doors of inner being which are usually closed is a capital experience in spiritual life, popularized later in the *tantrik* literature. We find this experience mentioned repeatedly in the Rigveda as in (RV 1.113.4) below and (RV 1.48.15), etc. The opening of the inner doors is mentioned explicitly in all the *ten apri suktas* to be mentioned later. *bha svati netri sunrtanam acheti chitra vi duro na avah. prapyar jagadyu no rayo akhyat ushah aji ga bhuvanani vishva.* (RV 1.113.4) Brilliant guide to happy truths is Usha of many hues. She has opened our doors. Lighting up the entire world, she has illuminated wealth for us. She issues forth all the worlds. (1.113.4)

When the divine consciousness dawns on us, it cannot last very long because the human vital which clamours for excitement cannot appreciate the bliss of the divine consciousness which is suffused with calm and is untinged with sorrow. The ordinary human mental personality which loves to wallow in doubts is not comfortable with the certitude offered by the divine consciousness. Thus Usha, the divine consciousness, recedes from the human and in its place, *naktas*, the night or the ordinary consciousness takes its place. During this period, the great God Agni keeps up the pressure on all the members of the human personality and prepares it for another onrush of the divine consciousness, Usha. Thus dawn and night alternate, as indicated below. *apasvasaram sanutarthuyoti* (RV 1.92.11). In secret she separates her sister (RV 1.92.11). *arai kkrishna sadani asyah* (RV 1.113.2). The dark night has vacated dwellings.

The two sisters do not clash nor do they tarry (RV 1.113.6). "There is a constant rhythm and alternation of night and dawn, illuminations of the Light and periods of exile from it, openings up of our darkness and its settling upon us once more, till the Celestial Birth is accomplished and again it is fulfilled in its greatness, knowledge, love and power. These later nights are other than these of utter darkness which are dreaded as the occasion of the enemy, the haunt of the demons of division who devour; these are rather the pleasant nights, the divine and blessed ones who equally labour for our growth. Night and Dawn are then of different forms but one mind and suckle alternately the luminous child". They are commonly referred to as "two sisters," beautiful of form (RV 1.13.7, 5.5.6). They are both called as "mighty mothers of the Truth" (RV 5.5.6). Usha is associated with Aditi, the mother of undivided consciousness, the mother of Gods, the supreme creatrix. *nakta* is associated with "Diti," the mother of divided consciousness. Their path is said to be unending (RV 1.113.3) and they are said to increase our beings space (RV 5.5.6).





The goddess Usha is termed as having many hues (RV 1.113.4) or variegated since she helps in the manifestation of (or brings in) the various other deities or powers. The wealth she gives us is not limited to the material. She allows all the latent powers to manifest and hence issues forth all the worlds (RV 1.113.4).

Usha and *nakta* are also referred to as "different in hue," "*viuupe*" (RV 1.113.3). This phrase is often interpreted as its external meaning, namely night is characterized by darkness whereas the Dawn is associated with the rosy color of the rising Sun and other multifarious colors. Here the hue refers to the psychological character of the divine and ordinary consciousness.

There is always the mention of the Usha who has dawned in the past. Phrases like these would not be used by the Seers who display extraordinary abilities if they were merely referring to the regular recurring physical dawn and night. Before the full illumination of the solar glory of Truth Light, the sacrificer has several experiences of the consciousness of the dawns of knowledge. These are termed as the dawns of the past. The divine Ushas had dawned and dawned again. (1.48.3) She follows the path of the Dawns that are past. *parayati nam anveti sadhu*. (RV 1.113.8) First of eternal dawns to come.

There are several verses in which Usha is lauded as dispelling the thick darkness. *pratyarchi rushadasya adarshi vithishtate bhadhate krishnam abhvam*. (RV 1.92.5) Her radiant lustre beheld again, spreads everywhere and dispels darkness. (RV 1.92.5) *atarishma tamasah param asya ushah ucchanti vayuna krnoti*. (RV 1.92.6) We have crossed over to the other shore of darkness, Leaving darkness, she prepares discoveries of knowledge. (RV 1.92.6)

In the first line of 1.92.6, the *rishi* Gotama Rahugana praises the deity in joyous exultation after having her experience in his inner being. Some modern commentators think that this line only indicates that the seers were afraid of the darkness and all the beings associated with it like the goblins. The *vedic* seers do not know that dawn and night alternate and they perform the *vedic* ritual. When the physical dawn arises, they feel the effectiveness of their ritual and this gives rise to the explanation in the first line of 1.92.6. A moment's reflection will reveal the hollowness of the argument. Morning *vedic* ritual - *yajna* - is performed only after the onset of physical dawn. There is no need to pray for the dawn when it is already there. The *vedic* sages were very well aware of the alternations of the physical night and physical dawn as given by the *riks* "The actions of the Gods are undeviating" (RV 1.124.2), "It (dawn) follows well the path of Truth."

Note also the next line of 1.92.6 which clearly says "Dawn prepares fresh discoveries of knowledge." Clearly what is meant here is not the physical dawn, but the Goddess of Truth who brings fresh revelation of knowledge at each





advent.

Let us mention some other specific descriptions used for Usha which clearly indicate that Usha is not merely the physical Dawn, but is the goddess of solar radiance who manifests herself in advance before the rise of the Sun which symbolizes the rise or beginning of the Sun of Truth hymned on the *Vedas* as the "Supernal Light."

Words connected with *rta* (Truth)

The word *satya* signifies that which is the eternal, the supreme, existence in its own from *sat*. *rtam* signifies that which is evident or perceptible, manifested out of the *satya*, what has come to be in accordance with *satya* or that which represents the *satya*. *rta* is the Truth in manifestation. Usha is the guardian of this *rta* and she manifests it.

*rtapa*: guardian of Truth (1.113.12)

*rteja*: one who manifests the Truth (1.113.12) {*rtasya~passtham*} under *anveti sadhu... ..praja nativa na diso minati* (1.124.3). She moves according to the path of the Truth And, as one that knows, she limits not the regions (1.124.3) *dyutad-ya ma nam brhatam rtena rtavarim svar a vahantim* (5.80.1) Of a luminous movement, vast with the Truth, Supreme in the Truth, bringing with her *sva* (5.80.1).

Note the use of the word "*sva*," the fourth *vyahriti*, the *mahas*, the vast, the world of solar light. *vyusa a vo divija rtena, aviskrnva na mahimanam a gat* (7.75.1)

Dawn born in heaven opens out things by the Truth, She comes manifesting the greatness. (7.75.1) *bhadra rtaja tasatyah* (4.51.7). Happy and true born from the Truth (4.51.7). *rtasya devi hi sadaso bhudhana*. The Goddesses who awake from the seat of Truth. (4.51.8) Horses of Usha are yoked to Truth. (4.51.5) She is born from Truth. (4.51.5) Usha and night are mothers of Truth. (5.5.6) Usha follows the path of Truth. (1.124.3) *satya satyebhir mahati mahadbhir devi devebhih*. (7.75.7) Dawn, true in her being with the Gods who are true Vast with Gods who are vast. (7.75.1)

"*sunrtanam netri*": impeller of happy truths (1.113.4)

"*sunrta i rayanti*": impeller of true and happy words. Giver of wealth.

*rayah* in *veda* always denotes spiritual wealth which does not exclude material wealth. *saha vamena...uccha...dyumnena brhata,...raya*. (1.48.1) Dawn on us



with great blissful prosperity, with the glory of the vast, with divine wealth. *nah rayah vyakhyat*. She has illumined the spiritual wealth for us. (1.113.4) Other adjectives of Usha.

*yuvati*: eternally youthful (1.113.7).

*shukravasah*: robed with light (1.113.7).

*subhage*: blissful one, rich in joy (10.70.6, 1.36.6).

*yavayad-dvesha*: scatterer of foes (1.113.12).

*sumangali*: most auspicious (1.113.12).

*devavi bartim*: manifests the advents of Gods (1.113.12).

*shreshtatama*: most excellent (1.113.12).

Usha, the goddess of illumination first activates the inner being or the soul (*jiva*) to come forward and she prepares the path for all the Sun's powers to pervade all the parts of our being, physical, vital, mental, etc., and carry us to the supramental home of Truth which has an abundance of the powers of life and other powers. Note the use of the word "*jiva*" which in the esoteric expression always means the "soul," the essence of man which participates in divine action. Usha propels the "soul" toward divine action and gives expression to the thought of the soul in the form of inspired speech or *mantras*.

*"jivam udarayanti"* impels the *jiva* to move upward and forward (1.113.8). *"mritam bodhayanti"* awakens someone who is like dead, devoid of the glow of immortality (1.113.8). *praminati manusya yagani* (1.124.2, 1.92.11). *devi martasya ayuh jarayanti* (1.92.10). She strikes at the mortal span, and replaces it with immortality.

Each advent of the Goddess Usha gives fresh spiritual experiences for the seer which manifest in the form of speech or *mantras*. *vishvam jeevam charase bodhayanti vishvasya vacham avidan mana yoho*. (1.92.9) Awakening every person (*jiva*) she propels them towards divine actions. She creates expression for the thought of the soul. (1.92.9)

In the translations where Usha is identified with physical dawn, this verse (1.92.9) is translated to mean that the physical dawn activates all the living beings like birds, animals, etc., to movement and speech. This translation ignores the word "*manayoh*", which can only mean thought of humans. The use of the word "*jiva*" exclusively for the "soul" and not to an ordinary living being is



clear in (1.113.16). *udirdvam jivo asurna agadapa pragattama a jyotireti araikpantham yatave suryayaganma yatra pratiranta ayuh* (1.113.6). Arise! Our inner being (*jiva*) has emerged; The darkness has departed; light approaches, It (soul) opens the way for the sun's rays (to permeate us). Let us repair to the home of truth where life increases. (1.113.16) *mata devanam aditeh ani kam yajnasya ketuh brhati vibahi prashastikrt brahmane nah viuccha a nah jane janaya vishvavare*. (1.113.19) Mother of the Gods, face of the infinite, the vast vision that awakes from the sacrifice, she creates expression (*mantra*) for the thought of the soul and gives us universal birth in all that is born. (1.113.19)

The word "Aditi" is translated here as "infinite." "*brhti*" always stands for the plane of the vast, the plane of *mahas*, the fourth *vyahriti*. Usha's vision is vast. *ketu* can only mean ray or vision. Its translation as "ensign" is typical of the translations which emphasize the outward ritual associated with the *yajna*. *brahmana* always means *mantra*. She creates the appropriate *mantra* for expressing the thought of the soul. The seer prays to Usha to be born or manifest amidst us so that we can march to the higher worlds.

In the earlier *mantras*, we have spoken of the role played by Usha in helping the seers who have already taken to the spiritual path to go forward. But what about the persons who are beginners or who are not even aware of the existence of spiritual vistas? "Opulent Usha sets the lazy on the right course - one for enjoyment, one for sacrifice, one for wealth. To those seeing little, she gives extended vision. Usha issues forth all the worlds." (1.113.5) One to hero-strength, one to divine hearing, one to great sacrifice, one to pursue high gain - all to follow their different vocations, Usha issues forth the worlds. (1.113.6)

Usha creates the appropriate conditions for each person to progress. One who has propensities toward heroism gets the appropriate opportunity. Persons who want enjoyment or physical wealth or occult powers obtain the desired ends without being aware of the help provided by the Goddess. Slowly she extends the vision of these persons and brings to their attention forces and powers of which humans are only instruments. Thus Usha creates a separate world, as it were, for each individual.

Another common descriptor of Usha is "Ashvavati Gomati" (1.48.2, 7.80.3). It is often translated as "giver of horses, giver of cows" without making much sense. How does the physical dawn give horses or cows? Ashva in the Veda always stands for the life-powers or vital energies leading to the actions for the enjoyment of the all pervading bliss. "Go" in the *veda* stands for the rays of consciousness of knowledge. Therefore, the *rishi* prays to Usha for the grant of the powers of life and powers of intelligence. *sa asmasu dha gomad-ashvat uktyah usho vajam suviryam*. (1.48.12) Usha, do thou establish in us the plenitude of intelligences, life powers and hero might lauded in the hymns.



(1.48.12).

"*vajram*" denotes plenitude. The seer prays to Usha to establish in him all the powers so that he may progress onward in his quest toward perfection. *praja vato nrvato ashvabudhyan usho govgrah upa ma si vajan*. (1.92.7) O Usha thou gives the bounty of progeny, heroes known for steeds, fronted by cows. (1.92.7)

Progeny always stands for the transmission of knowledge, not merely biological children. The seer prays that the divine knowledge may be preserved in his community aided by a high level of vital and mental energies signified by horses and cows.

Let us consider the mantras in which the words *dvipada* (translated commonly as two-footed) and *chatuspada* (four-footed) are used which are interpreted as the humans and animals activated by Dawn. *dvipade* used in (1.49.3) refers in the esoteric interpretation to the two states of consciousness of the human aspirant, the ordinary consciousness, the condition of obscurity and the divine consciousness, the condition of Light. Similarly the word *chatuspade* (1.49.3) refers to the four planes of earth (*bhuh*), mid region (*bhuvah*), the mind (*suvah*) and the great vast (*mahas*) which have been attained by this seer. Again the phrases "*patatrinah*" (1.49.3), "*ut patayanti pakshinah*" (1.48.5) and "*paptivamsah vayah*" are interpreted as "birds" which are activated by the onset of dawn in the external sense. However, "birds" in the Veda always stand for the upward movements and seeking for knowledge which soar upward to the heavenly regions. This point is made very specific in the 1.49.3. *vayahchitte patatrinno dvipachhatushpadarjuni usha praran rtun anudivo antebhyaspari* (1.49.3). Twin stationed, four stepped with high soaring energies Moving fast beyond the heavenly regions, the sacrificer follows thy advents, O fair Usha. (1.49.3)

We have interpreted "*vayahchitte patatrinno*" as high soaring energies and not merely as birds because of the subsequent phrase "moving fast beyond the heavenly regions." Clearly this phrase has to be interpreted as a poetic exaggeration for birds. When the mantra is interpreted in its spiritual sense, the meaning flows smoothly.

Similarly in 1.48.6, the phrase "Soaring birds rest not" "*vayah nakirasate*" can only mean the seekings of knowledge of the inner sacrificer which soar upward. The symbolism of birds for the powers of knowledge soaring upward to the higher planes is fairly common in Rigveda. See, for instance, the hymns to Varuna (1.25.4, 1.25.7). The mantra of Vamadeva (4.51.5) explicitly mentions that the phrases "*dvipad*" and "*chatuspad*" refer to the movements of the *jiva*, the soul. "*dvipachatuspada-charayayah jivam* (4.51.5). "*jivam*" is used in the Rigveda only for the soul. Hence, "*chatuspad*" cannot mean "four-footed." It



can only mean the soul which can traverse the four planes or *vyahritis* mentioned earlier. Again consider (1.164.41) dealing with speech which uses the words "one-footed," "two-footed," "four-footed," "eight-footed," etc. Clearly animals or insects are not referred to here, but the spiritual meanings mentioned earlier. *gauri mimaya salilani takshat akapadi dwipadi sa chatushpadi ashtapadi navapadi bhabhu vushi sahasrakshara parama vyoman* (1.164.41). Fashioning the waters, the radiant cow of speech hath lowed, one-footed, two-footed, yea, four-footed. She of the eight feet hath become nine-footed, the thousand immutable letters in the sky supernal. There is another complementary interpretation of the twin deities Night and Day suggested by Sri Kapali Sastry, while discussing a set of *suktas* in Rigveda entitled *apri* hymns. *apri* means "to fill." During the inner worship or sacrifice, the human *yajamana* implores Agni and the other higher powers of God, through Agni, to come down and fill him with their powers. The primary deity in these hymns is Agni even though these hymns mention and invoke other gods like Indra, Ila, Saraswati, Mahi, Usha, etc. A special feature of Agni is that in his heavenward activity he is endowed with attributes that distinguish severally the other gods of the *vedic* system while retaining his distinguishing feature of the Divine will that is initially born as the flame of human aspiration to the divine.

There are about ten *apri suktas*, viz 1.13, 1.142, 1.188, 2.3, 3.4, 5.5, 7.2, 9.5, 10.70, 10.110. Each *sukta* has ten to thirteen *mantras*, the sixth or seventh *mantra* is dedicated to the twin deities Night and Dawn.

Day, in another way, represents the broad open light, the light of consciousness in which the different powers or the different deities are beheld severally. Usha is said to bring in all the other Gods. Each God has a distinct power. Wideness characterizes Varuna. Mightiness characterizes Indra. Moon is full of charm. Rudra is fierce and terrible. Maruts are impetuous and swift. Mitra is tender, kind and loving. Brahmanaspati is the great harmonizer, etc. "Night represents a concentration and self absorption in the consciousness, an intensity of self-gathering in what we may call the immobile, static existence in which all is absorbed". All the powers are latent in the condition. Night represents the "seed" condition whereas the "Day" represents the manifested condition. The seers realized the need for both the states of consciousness. Hence in the *apri mantra* (1.13.7) quoted earlier, both the deities night and day are called upon to their seat for worship and they both have auspicious form "*supeshasa*".

The need for their appearance is clear from the other *apri mantras*. *sadhvapamsi sanata na ukshite usha sanakta vayyeva rnvate, tantum tatam samyanti samichi yajnyasya peshah sudughe payasvati* (2.3.6) Milch cows, good milers, pouring out on us, may Night and Dawn, eternal and equal sisters, come like weaving women, full of gladness, weaving out the weft that is spun, the weft of our



perfected works into a shape of sacrifice. (2.3.6).

Note the phrase "eternal and equal" sisters. Both of them together weave the cloth of our works, make it perfect and render it a *yajna*, translated as sacrifice, which is an arrangement of works reflecting the harmony of all the powers of Universe.

Both Night and Day prepare the *yajamana* for the manifestation of the various powers of Gods in him. This idea is clear from the *apri mantra* (3.4.6). May night and dawn differently formed in their body, Be joined close and smile on us in their gladness, So that Mitra may take pleasure in us and Varuna or Indra with the life gods. (3.4.6).

Notice that here the night and day are prayed to be "joined close." Note the significance of invoking both night and dawn together so that the consciousness of the *rishi* becomes familiar with both the forms. *uta yoshane divye mahi na ushasanakta sudhugheva dhenuk barhishada puruhu te maghoni a yagniye suvitaya shrayetam.* (7.2.6) May too dawn and night, matrons great and divine, like good milch-cows, queens of sacrifice, queens of plenty called by many seekers, sit on the sacred grass And lodge with us for our happiness. (7.2.6)

Both Usha and Dawn together bring happiness to the *rishi*. *surukme hi supeshasa adhi shriya vira jatah, ushasa vaha si datam.* (1.188.6) With gay adornment, fair to see, in glorious beauty shine they forth Let night and morning rest them here. *sushilpe brhati mahi pavamano vrshanyati naktoshasa na darshate* (9.5.6). Night and Dawn, beautifully formed, vast and lofty beauteous maidens, *pavamana* longs for. (9.5.6). *devi divo duhitara sushilpe usha sa nakta sadata mni yonau, avam deva sa ushati ushanta urau si dantu subhage upaste* (10.70.6). Let the two divine daughters of heaven, formed beautifully, dawn and night, sit in their native seat. O dawn and night, O you who aspire, O blissful ones, may the Gods aspiring sit on your wide lap. (10.70.6)

As Sri Kapali says, "It is this twin aspect of consciousness with necessary variation in its connotation that is the origin and support of the dictum of the upanishad that both 'knowledge and ignorance' must be known together. He who knows THAT as both in one, the knowledge and ignorance, by ignorance crosses beyond death and by the knowledge enjoys immortality" (*isha* upanishad).

This *isha* upanishad passage clearly says that both knowledge and ignorance have to be known together, and "We have heard it from the wise ones of your, who explained thus to us" *iti shushruma dhi ranam ye nastad vicacaksire* (*isha* upanishad)





Who else could be these wise ones but the mystics of *vedic* wisdom, "dhirah"?

We may also note that this concept of Day and night is expressed figuratively in the famous passage of the *Bhagavad gita* (2.69) *ya ni sa sarvabhutanam tasyam jagarti samyami yasyam jagrti bhutani sanisapasyati museh*. "That (higher being) which is to all creatures a night, is to the self mastering sage his waking (his luminous day of true being, knowledge and power); the life of the dualities which is to them their waking (their day, their condition of activity) is a night (a troubled sleep and darkness of the soul) to the sage who sees" (2.26).

To confirm the different interpretation of the deity night, we will quote two other mantras, one taken from the *ratri sukta*, the *sukta* dedicated to the deity night by the seer, daughter of Bharadwaja (10.127) and the other from the fifth book (5.84) of the Atri family of seers. *O vipra amartya nivato devyudvatah; jyotisha badhate tamah*. (10.127.2) The Goddess immortal, she fills the vast, the high and the low places; she repels darkness with light.

This (10.127.2) is the *rik* used by the *tantriks* for invoking the goddess Kali. *varshantu te vibhavari divo abrasya vidyatah 1 rohantu sarvabijanyava brahmadvijo jahi* O Night, disguising the light, May the lightnings of thy divine cloud pour down. May all the seeds grow; strike down the haters of the Divine (appendix of 5.84)

Usha is mentioned along with the twin-deities Ashvins in many hymns as their beloved, again indicating the psychological character of Usha. Ashvins are gods "full of capacity for enjoyment, drinkers of the honey of the soma, donors of the health to the sick, physicians. They speed like buds." Usha, their beloved, goes riding in their chariot. Usha is also mentioned as the daughter of Surya, the supreme Truth-Light (7.75.5)

### The Divine Dawn (RV 3.61)

1. Dawn, richly stored with substance, conscious cleave to the affirmation of him who expresses thee, O thou of the plenitudes. Goddess, ancient, yet ever young thou movest many-thoughted following the law of thy activities, O bearer of every boon.

2. Dawn divine, Shine out immortal in thy car of happy light sending forth the pleasant voices of the Truth. May steeds well-guided bear thee here who are golden-brilliant of hue and wide their might.

3. Dawn, confronting all the worlds thou standest high-uplifted and art





their perception of Immortality; do thou move over them like a wheel, O new Day, traveling over an equal field.

4. Dawn in her plenitude like one that lets fall from her a sewn robe moves, the bride of the Bliss; creating Swar, perfect in her working, perfect in her enjoying, she widens from the extremity of Heaven over the earth.

5. Meet ye the Dawn as she shines wide towards you and with surrender bring forward your complete energy. Exalted in heaven is the force to which she rises establishing the sweetness; she makes the luminous worlds to shine forth and is a vision of felicity.

6. By heaven's illuminings one perceives her a bearer of the Truth and rapturous she comes with its varied light into the two firmaments. From Dawn as she approaches shining out on thee, O Agni, thou seekest and attainest to the substance of delight.

7. Putting forth his impulsions in the foundation of the Truth, in the foundation of the Dawns, their Lord enters the Vastness of the firmaments. Vast the wisdom of Varuna, of Mitra, as in a happy brightness, orders multitudinously the Light.

### COMMENTARY

Surya Savitri in his task of illumination follows the progress of the Dawn. In another hymn the movements of the mind have been described as growing conscient and brilliant by the bright power of the continuous Dawns. Throughout the Veda Usha, daughter of Heaven, has always the same function. She is the medium of the awakening, the activity and the growth of the other gods; she is the first condition of the Vedic realisation. By her increasing illumination the whole nature of man is clarified; through her he arrives at the Truth, through her he enjoys the Beatitude. The divine dawn of the rishis is the advent of the divine Light throwing off veil after veil and revealing in man's activities the luminous godhead. In that light the Work is done, the sacrifice offered and its desirable fruits gathered by humanity.

Many are the hymns, indeed, in which rich and beautiful figures of the earthly dawn veil this inner truth of the goddess Usha, but in this hymn of the great rishi Vishwamitra the psychological symbolism of the Vedic Dawn is apparent from beginning to end by open expressions and on the surface of the thought. "O Dawn rich of store in thy substance," he cries to her, "conscient cleave to the affirmation of him who expresses thee, O thou who hast the plenitudes." The



word *prachetas* and the related word, *vichetas*, are standing terms of Vedic phraseology; they seem to correspond to the ideas expressed in later language by the Vedantic *prajnana* and *vijnana*. Prajnana is the consciousness that cognizes all things as objects confronting its observation; in the divine mind it is knowledge regarding things as their source, possessor and witness. Vijnana is comprehensive knowledge containing, penetrating into things, pervading them in consciousness by a sort of identification with their truth. Usha is to occupy the revealing thought and word of the rishi as a power of Knowledge conscient of the truth of all that is placed by them before the mind for expression in man. The affirmation, it is suggested, will be full and ample; for Usha is *vajena vajini, maghoni*; rich is the store of her substance; she has all the plenitudes.

This dawn moves in her progression always according to the rule of a divine action; many are the thoughts she brings in that motion, but her steps are sure and all desirable things, all supreme boons, the boons of the Ananda, the blessings of the divine existence, - are in her hands. She is ancient and eternal, the dawn of the Light that was from the beginning, *purani*, but in her coming she is ever young and fresh to the soul that receives her.

She is to shine wide, she that is the divine Dawn, as the light of the immortal existence bringing out in man the powers or the voices of Truth and Joy, (*sunrtah*, - a word which expresses at once both the true and the pleasant); for is not the chariot of her movement a car at once of light and of happiness? For again, the word *candra* in *candraratha*, - signifying also the lunar deity Soma, lord of the delight of immortality pouring into man, *ananda* and *amrta*, - means both luminous and blissful. And the horses that bring her, figure of the nervous forces that support and carry forward all our action, must be perfectly controlled; golden, bright in hue, their nature (for in this ancient symbolism color is the sign of quality, of character, of temperament) must be a dynamism of ideal knowledge in its concentrated luminousness; wide in its extension must be the mass of that concentrated force, *-prthupajaso ye*.

Divine Dawn comes thus to the soul with the light of her knowledge, *prajnana*, confronting all the worlds as field of that knowledge, - all provinces, that is to say, of our universal being, - mind, vitality, physical consciousness. She stands uplifted over them on our heights above mind, in the highest heaven, as the perception of Immortality or of the Immortal, *amrtasya ketuh*, revealing in them the eternal and beatific existence or the eternal all-blissful Godhead. So exalted she stands prepared to effect the motion of the divine knowledge, progressing as a new revelation of the eternal truth, *navyasi*, in their harmonised and equalized activities like a wheel moving smoothly over a level field; for they now, their diversities and discords removed, offer no obstacle to that equal motion.



In her plenitude she separates, as it were, and casts down from her the elaborately sown garment that covered the truth of things and moves as the wife of the Lover, the energy of her all-blissful Lord, *svasarasya patni*. Full in her enjoyment of the felicity, full in her effectuation of all activities, *subhaga sudamsah*, she brings into existence in us by her revelations Swar, the concealed luminous mind, our highest mental heaven; and thus from the farthest extremities of mental being extends herself over the physical consciousness.

As this divine Dawn pours out widely its light upon them, so have men by submission to the law of her divine act and movement to bring forward for her the fully energised completeness of their being and their capacities as a vehicle for her light or as a seat for her sacrificial activities.

The rishi then dwells on the two capital works of the divine Dawn in man, - her elevation of him to the full force of the Light and the revelation of the Truth and her pouring of the Ananda, the Amrita, the Soma-wine, the bliss of the immortal being into the mental and bodily existence. In the world of the pure mind, *divi*, she rises into the full force and mass of the Light, *urdhvam pajo asret*, and from those pure and high levels she establishes the sweetness, *madhu*, the honey of Soma. She makes to shine out the three luminous worlds, *rocana*; she is then or she brings with her the beatific vision. By the effectual illuminations of the pure mentality, through the realising Word, *divo arkaih*, she is perceived as the bearer of Truth and with the Truth she enters from the world above Mind, full of the delight, in a varied play of her multiple thought and activity, into the mental and bodily consciousness, those established limits between which man's action moves. It is from her, as she comes thus richly laden, *vajena vajini*, that Agni, the divine Force labouring here in body and mind to uplift the mortal, prays for and attains to the Soma, the wine of the Beatitude, the delightful substance.

The supramental world in us, foundation of the Truth, is the foundation of the Dawns. They are the descent upon mortal nature of the light of that immortal Truth, *rtam jyotih*. The Lord of the Dawns, Master of Truth, Illuminer, Creator, Organiser, putting forth in the foundation of Truth, above mind, the impulsion of his activities, enters with them by this goddess into a bodily and mental existence no longer obscured but released from their limits and capable of vastness, *mahi rodasi*. The Lord of Truth is the sole Lord of things. He is Varuna, soul of vastness and purity; he is Mitra, source of love and light and harmony. His creative Wisdom, *mahi mitrasya varunasya maya*, unlimited in its scope, - for he is Varuna, - appearing, *candрева*, as a light of bliss and joy, - for he is Mitra, - arranges, perfectly organises, in multitudinous forms, in the wideness of the liberated nature, the luminous expansions, the serene expressions of the Truth. He combines the various brilliancies with which his Dawn has entered our



firmaments; he blends into one harmony her true and happy voices.

Dawn divine is the coming of the Godhead. She is the light of the Truth and the Felicity pouring on us from the Lord of Wisdom and Bliss, *amrtasya ketuh, svasarasya patni.*





### Nature of Pushan

Pushan is one of the Adityas. He nourishes both the *yajamana* and the Earth. Though the home of all the Gods is high above, *urdhvam ayatanam*, yet their main station or field of action differs. Thus the abode of Indra, Lord of the Divine Mind, is the Mind Station, *Svar*. Agni is stationed on Earth. The Maruts belong to the mid-region, the Life-world. Similarly the other Gods preside over their respective places and carry on their activities. Pushan belongs to the third station; still his station is taken as the Earth because he is the lord of mother Earth, supports and nourishes her. When he nourishes by his Aditya power the outer Earth-field, physical Matter, and the inner physical consciousness and is himself nourished and manifest, then comes Usha, the Deity of the Dawn of higher Consciousness. And when the Ashvins espouse Usha, he adopts these health-givers who effect increasing nourishment as parents (10.85.14). Nourished thus, Pushan Aditya showers the bounty of Indra and becomes his brother (6.55.5). Ultimately he becomes the brother of Earth and the space (divided into quarters) (6.58.4).

Even after the slaying of Vrtra, the demons or Panis obstruct the path of the sacrificer, steal or cover the knowledge (cows); other haters of the Gods harass the devotee in his upward course, directly or indirectly, by robbing him of his wealth-Rays, veiling the path, showing wrong directions etc. It is here that the work of Pushan is specially seen. The traffickings of the *Pani* and the like do not affect God Pushan. He is the lord of the Paths *pathaspati*. He does not lose cattle. Pushan aids in the effort of the sacrificer to reach the sun-world, even while living (6.53.3, 6.53.5, 6.56.5).

Pushan nourishes the sacrificer as well as the Earth. He is the progeny of Aditya as Indra who showers the wealth of knowledge, light, strength; elder to Usha, he protects the Earth; brother of Indra, master of the route of the sacrificer, he guards the path, searches out the sacrificer, urges his effort (10.17.3).

